

The ethics of sport coaching  
Alun R. Hardman and Carwyn Jones (Eds), 2011,  
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As a coach educator, I have tried for years to legitimise ethics as an essential topic for the development of sport coaches in university and coach education curriculums. *The ethics of sport coaching*, edited by Alun Hardman and Carwyn Jones provides such a legitimisation through a useful, provocative resource for undergraduate and postgraduate students. They have commendably gathered a number of well renowned ethics, philosophy and sport researchers to address the subject from a range discourses. The book is divided into four quite unique parts in an admirable attempt to systematically address the concepts of ethics for sport coaches, first defining the nature of coaching and the character of the coach, then discussing coaching specific populations and coaching in the current contexts.

The nature of sport coaching examined in Part I offers a somewhat narrow perspective and reflection about the complexity of sport coaching. I was disappointed in the limited attention given to the authentic contextual critical analysis of what a sport coach is or does. Throughout the first parts, there are assumptions made and examples given of sport coaching within the realms of sport science disciplines (including traditional practices of learning techniques), with little acknowledgement or understanding of the recent shift for coaches to be more educational focused (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2009; Jones, 2006; Jones, Potrac, Cushion & Roglan, 2011; Kidman & Lombardo, 2010; Lombardo, 1987). This shift is initially acknowledged in Chapter 1 by Sigmund Loland, where he addresses the need for an holistic approach to train athletes, but the focus of most of the nature of sport coaching ethics discussion is from a contemporary *competitive* sport perspective which largely overlooks the educational intent to develop athletes.

The first few chapters provide sound critical analyses of philosophical discourses of ethics and moral development as relevance for contemporary competitive coaching. I believe the essence of how our highly competitive athletes train and learn is embedded in the social construction of their holistic development from youngsters when they experience a range of coaches and are exposed to a range of ethical situations. These first chapters do not engage with the pedagogical discourse or research of the essence of coaching as means to enable athletes to develop and learn. The examples and contexts therefore lack in the intent in the act of coaching as a real educational value that develops embodied intelligences (although Chapter 7 has an excellent discussion of this concept) of children. Surely the impact of ethical practice is reliant on the coach's duty to enable learning life values in sport from athletes' entry into sport?

In Chapter 2, Mike McNamee introduces the notion of 'rule-based ethical theories' (p. 26). He suggests that coaches have a responsibility to train their athletes about the 'rights' and 'wrongs' of sport, and he provides a critical analysis of how deontology concepts (ethical issues which are humanly constructed as 'good' or 'bad') pervade current coach education practices. McNamee discusses how many of the sport industry constructed coaches' codes of conduct in coach education programmes where 'agendas are narrowly conceived in instrumental and technicist terms' (p. 38) are impossible to implement. This sentiment is believable within such technocratic programmes, but

he fails to acknowledge that some programmes are shifting to a humanistic focus (see Cassidy & Kidman, 2010). This humanistic, educational intent, however is more openly discussed in Parts 3 and 4, where broader issues of ethics are suggested to be largely based on an influence of professional sport and the social construction of youth sport through an adult-structured sport paradigm.

In chapter 3 Oyvind Standal and Liv Hemmestad begin to address the complex nature of coaching for contemporary competitive sport. They discuss the unpredictability and the transcending, narrow beliefs that have been embedded into the act of coaching around the natural sciences and the technical processes. They advocate for an educational perspective to be foregrounded in coaching and draw attention to the context specific role of dealing with the individual and unpredictable situations that arise in the sporting context. The concept of phronesis is defined and explained as a means to explain why coaches have and practice certain ethics and morality, where coaches rely on experience and immersion into situations for learning to occur. The chapter reinforces that implicit learning and informal learning are means for coaches to gather the abilities to face particular situations (phronesis) and how the nature of the contemporary competitive sport environment continues to influence our decision making.

Chapter 4 by Paul Davis, highlights that coaches make ethical decisions largely based on personal experiences. Due to the nature of humanity, our morality is embedded into the unpredictability of life, even though the supposed scientific objectivity is perpetuated through sport competition. Alun Hardman and Carwyn Jones in Chapter 5 reinforce the negative values in how sport is practised and the omission of our actions about the virtue and humanistic qualities sought in the participation in sport. Davis suggests that coaches have a responsibility to understand their actions and ways of coaching and reinforce the intrinsic virtues of sport.

'Jealousy of emulation' and 'grudge' are introduced as two concepts by John Russell in Chapter 6 as prospective reasons for coaches making certain ethical decisions in children's sport. Jealousy of emulation is perpetuated by the concept of socially, adult-structured competition in that people try to compare themselves to others to the detriment of actual personal development; that is, if coaches' intentions are about preparing athletes for life, then the process of sport participation would be more important than the product or results of the competition. Unfortunately, many coaches perceive their role as one who is trying to be better than others (jealousy of emulation) thus limiting the moral growth and development of children.

To my delight Dennis Hemphill demonstrated in Chapter 7 an understanding about the humanistic qualities of sport participation. He discusses that children need autonomy and self-determination to feel confident and excited about sport. He suggests that coaches should focus on the production of embodied intelligences in learning and highlights the delight of sport and how children need to take ownership and responsibility for their learning using sport as a context.

A further four chapters focus on the 'well-trodden' ethical issues acknowledged in sport, such as sexual exploitation and power constructs of a coach's position; disabled sport (mostly around classification and economic abuse (sponsorship) and not allowing very disabled to compete); drugs in sport; and coaching dangerous sports. Most of these issues raised in these chapters have a deontological focus of 'right' or 'wrong' ethical challenges that coaches face. These chapters reinforce coaches' practice in making choices, but are limited in critical analysis of the ethical acts.

When I picked up chapter 10 on 'talent ID', I had an expectation that the chapter would focus on ethical and moral analyses of talent identification systems and the act of talent identification and early specialisation of children. I was surprised to read that Richard Bailey and Martin Toms took the approach to discuss nature of political and economic issues for implementing existing Talent ID programmes focusing on costs to societies, rather than ethically critiquing the process of talent identification and children development. However, the chapter still provides useful discussion about the issues of implementing talent ID programmes.

Cesar Torres authors the final chapter in *the ethics of sport coaching*, where he delves into the ethical issues of expatriates coaching national teams outside their native countries. Essentially he justifies those who coach for different countries do so for the sake of sport, that is it not unpatriotic, but rather provides an opportunity to foster intercultural interactions.

*The ethics of sport coaching* is a valuable resource from which students and researchers will be able to provoke discussion and debate to further legitimise ethics as a subject for developing coaches.

**Lynn Kidman**, AUT University, School of Sport and Recreation, Auckland, New Zealand. Email: [lkidman@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lkidman@aut.ac.nz).

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