Why do children take part in, and remain involved in sport? A literature review and discussion of implications for sports coaches

Edward J. Cope  University of Bedfordshire, UK
Richard Bailey  RBES Ltd, Birmingham, UK
Gemma Pearce  Queen Mary University of London, UK

Abstract

Recent academic literature on sport coaching has acknowledged the importance of domain specificity, emphasising the significance of participant motives and the coaching environment in determining appropriate coaching practice. Although children’s motivations for taking part in sport have been a popular research area, there has been no attempt, until now, to review the research literature that specifically addresses this issue. This review found that children’s participation in sport is mediated by five primary factors: perception of competence; fun and enjoyment; parents; learning new skills; and friends and peers. These findings suggest that, in addition to the generally acknowledged psychological factors, the social-cultural context in which children play influences their motivations to participate. If children are to remain involved in sport, it is vital that coaches’ behaviours and practices match the needs of the young participants. Coaches are responsible for creating a developmentally appropriate learning environment that ensures children maintain active sports participation. If this is to be achieved, coaches need to think carefully about the behaviours they use, and how they structure their coaching sessions. Coaches should use more positive than negative behaviours, and emphasise fun and enjoyment, teamwork and effort, over winning and competition.

Keywords: motivation, children, coaching, learning, sport
Introduction

There is a broad consensus that the principal goals of children’s sport are to provide intrinsically rewarding experiences, and to maintain interest so that they are inclined to continue playing throughout their lives (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Kirk, 2005; McNamee & Bailey, 2009). It is widely believed that taking part in sport and other physical activities from an early age is important if children are to develop a foundation for lifelong physical engagement in healthy sporting experiences (e.g., Bailey et al., 2009; Keegan et al., 2009; Kirk, 2005). In order to achieve this, a social environment is needed that reflects children’s motivations for taking part in, and remaining involved in, sport for these goals to be achieved. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to review children’s motivations for engaging in, and remaining involved in sport, in order to inform the practice of coaches; more specifically, making recommendations about coaches’ behaviour and practice that increase the likelihood that children will remain active sporting participants.

Studies have identified a number of factors that facilitate participation in sport, including such things as a supportive family, accessibility to local sports clubs, and the construction of appropriate learning environments (Bailey & Toms, 2010). However, not all children are fortunate enough to be benefactors of such opportunities. Evidence suggests that not all sporting contexts are equally valuable in supporting children’s engagement in sport (Bailey & Toms, 2010). For example, a study of swimmers (Pelletier et al., 2001) found that children had dropped out because they perceived their coaches as less encouraging and supportive, and more controlling and autocratic than coaches of children who had maintained active participation. Moreover, when coaches promoted intra-team rivalries, favour the most talented players, and punish players for making mistakes, children become de-motivated (Newton, Duda, & Yin, 2000). Other reasons identified as leading to children becoming de-motivated are when: 1) coaching sessions are too serious, with an over-emphasis placed on winning by parents, coaches and peers (Orlick, 1973); 2) children are judged in a competitive environment, resulting in a fear of failure due to being assessed against peers (Sager, Lavellee, & Spray, 2007; 3) and, there is a lack of enjoyment (Weiss, 1993). These are scenarios that coaches involved in children’s sport would want to avoid, given the negative affect they have on children’s motivation to participate.

Coaching practice is likely to be ineffective, or even harmful, if the coaching environment is not aligned to the needs of children (Bailey, 2012). From the limited research that has been undertaken on children’s coaching, it seems that many coaches of children attempt to emulate the practices of those who work in elite or professional sport (Muir et al., 2011). This is obviously problematic as these practices might not align with children’s developmental needs (Wiersema, 2000). What results is developmentally inappropriate coaching, which fails to consider children’s distinctive learning needs within the coaching contexts. There is ample evidence to support the principle that effective coaching of children is premised
on the coach acknowledging and addressing the particular needs and wants of the young athlete within the distinctive coaching context (Côté et al., 1995). Lyle (2002) suggests three distinct coaching domains; development, participation, and performance, with each of these having its own contextual requirements. For example in a performance domain, coaches will likely plan short, medium and long term objectives, with coaching centred on preparation for competition. On the other hand, in participatory domains, coaching will likely be characterised by short term episodic sessions, where the focus is on fun and enjoyment, and inclusivity. Our primary concern in this paper is with the participatory domain.

Historically, the practices and processes of coaches of children have received relatively scant attention in the coaching literature (Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007). Instead, researchers have been more interested in situating themselves within performance sport-orientated contexts (e.g. Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004). This bias should be viewed with some anxiety given that the coaching workforce is predominantly characterised by coaches working with children in varying capacities (North, 2009). In fact, fifty percent of the entire coaching workforce operates with children between the ages of 5-12 (Sportscoach UK, 2011a). These data provide further support for the need to increase the level of research activity in children’s coaching contexts in order to better understand children’s developmental learning needs and motivations for participating (Wall & Côté, 2007). Sportscoach UK (2007) has acknowledged the need to consider the “common core of knowledge and skills required by all coaches working with children” (p.33). This is an explicit call for children’s coaches to be better prepared to manage the complexities of their coaching role. Policy initiatives by Sportscoach UK (2009) have led to the construction of parallel coach and participant models, both of which locate children’s sport as a central component. Informing this participant model is a participant development academic review (Bailey et al., 2010), which highlights the need to recognise the distinctive biological, psychological, and social development of children and young people. The participant development model is based on the argument that participants’ needs should be placed at the heart of the coaching process (Sportscoach UK, 2009). It is, therefore, timely and necessary to examine the motivations of children and their reasons for remaining as active sporting participants.

Method

A search for literature was first undertaken using the terms children and motivations, sport, and coaching from the earliest record until June 2011. The databases searched included Academic Search Complete, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycINFO, and SPORTDiscus with Full Text. A hand search of relevant articles and book chapters was also carried out to ensure that all relevant articles were obtained. Finally, reference lists of the articles obtained were read through to make sure that articles that satisfied the search criteria were included. Additional search criteria were that the articles were peer reviewed and
focussed on children who were coached in sport between the ages of 5-12. Any child over the age of 12 was deemed to have moved into their adolescent years, and therefore any article, which focussed on the motivations of young people in this age range, was not considered for review.

Figure 1. Flow chart of review process
Results and discussion

What motivates children to take part in sport?

Children’s motivations for participating in sport have received a steady flow of research interest and continue to do so (e.g. Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Light & Lemonie, 2010; Sapp & Haubenstricker, 1978; Weiss & Petlickhoff, 1989). In this research literature, children report a number of different motives for taking part in sport (Sit & Lindner, 2006). This section discusses the main themes that emerged from reviewing the literature on children’s motivations for participating in sport.

Perceived competence Harter’s (1978) competence motivation theory professes that individuals are motivated to be competent in sport in order to satisfy their aims of mastering a skill. When this results in success, children get a sense of positivity, which increases their motivation levels to participate in sport (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001). However, when children perceive that they are not competent, motivation levels decrease, which increases their likelihood of dropping out of sport (May et al., 2007). Klint and Weiss (1987) suggest that there are two forms of competence: physical and social. Children’s physical competence is related to their performance of skills, whereas social competence is related to such things as making friends. Children attempt to demonstrate their competency in line with what they perceive equates to personal success (Roberts, Klieber & Duda, 1981). However, a study conducted by Weiss and Duncan (1992) found there to be a relationship between a child’s perception of physical competency and their perception of social acceptance amongst peers. This finding suggests that these two forms of competence are related.

Fun and enjoyment It is commonly presumed that the primary motive for children taking part in sport is to have fun and enjoyable experiences (Chalip & Green, 1998; Green, 2005; Wankel & Kreisal, 1985; Weiss & Amorose, 2008). However, different children understand fun in different ways. For example, soccer players stated that fun was experiencing freedom and self-expression (Piggott, 2009), whereas swimmers experienced fun when competing in activities which were inherently challenging (Light & Lemonie, 2010). Dismore and Bailey (2010) found that young children tended to define fun as playing games providing hedonic pleasure. Further findings from this study demonstrate how the activity being participated in can affect fun and enjoyment levels. Some children perceived some activities to be boring because of their repetitive nature. Weiss and Amorose (2008) present a conceptual model that suggests how different sources contribute towards sporting enjoyment (Figure 2.0). This model highlights the individualistic nature of sport enjoyment, as fun and enjoyable experiences will not be the same for all children.
Parents have considerable influence on their children’s motivation to take part in sport (e.g. Brustad, 1992), as well as their overall development (Anderson, Hughes & Fuemmeler, 2009). The role of parents and the behaviours they exhibit directly affect children’s perceived level of competence and motivation to participate (McCarthy & Jones, 2007). Research suggests that when parents are physically active they increased their children’s motivation to participate in sport (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). This view is supported by Light and Lemonie (2010), who reported that most of the children in their study were influenced to join a swimming club because they wanted to follow in the steps of older family members, who were active sporting participants.

The extent to which parents become involved in their child’s sports participation influences their
level of motivation (Byrne, 1999). Under-involved parents, who show no or little interest in their child’s sporting endeavours, will have a de-motivating impact. Similarly, over-involved parents can have just as detrimental influence by placing too much pressure on their children, thus making their sporting experience less enjoyable (Light & Lemonie, 2010). From a coach’s perspective, parents who over-emphasised winning are more likely to negatively affect their children’s motivation levels, whereas parents who emphasised effort, teamwork, and fun were more likely to positively affect children’s motivation levels (Gould et al., 2008). Consequently, a caring and supportive family environment where sport is not taken too seriously best motivates a child to take part (Allender, Cowburn, & Foster, 2006).

**Learning new skills** One study of motivations for joining and remaining in a swimming club found that the majority of children stated that their primary motive for participating was to learn new skills to make them better swimmers (Light & Lemonie, 2010). MacPhail, Gorely and Kirk (2003) found that children enjoyed learning new skills because of the inherent challenge it presented.

**Friends and Peers** Research suggests that social interaction is an important motivating factor driving sports participation, including opportunities for working together, gaining social acceptance (Smith, Balaguer, & Duda, 2006), making friendships (Light & Lemonie, 2010), and meeting new people (MacPhail et al., 2003). Peers were found to influence motivation through competitive behaviours, working in collaboration and evaluative communication (Keegan et al., 2009). Alternatively, being judged or compared against peers determines why some children become de-motivated to participate in sport (Sagar et al., 2007). The influence of peers on motivational levels has been found to be greatest during late childhood and adolescence (McCarthy & Jones, 2007).

**Explaining children’s motivations**

The two most commonly used theories to explain children’s reasons for taking part in sport are achievement goal theory (Nicholls, 1984), and self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Achievement goal theory (Nicholls, 1984) is based on the principle that children’s motivations are situated along a task- or ego-orientated continuum. Motivation to take part in sport is dependent upon a child’s orientation. Those who are primarily task-orientated are concerned with personal improvement though the learning of new skills, whereas those of an ego-orientated disposition are more motivated by achieving superiority in the form of winning competitions and gaining accolades (Quested & Duda, 2011). However, just because a child has a high task-orientation does not necessarily mean that ego-orientation will be low (Quested & Duda, 2011). Duda and Whitehead (1998) suggest that athletes can have either high task-and ego-orientations, low task-and ego-orientations, or high in task, low in ego, and vice versa. Nonetheless, it seems that children tend to be inherently task-orientated (Nicholls, 1989); in other words, they judge
success against the amount of effort that they exert, as opposed to proving themselves more competent than their opponents. This has important implications for coaches, as the learning environment created will largely influence children’s motivations.

SDT explains why the reasons given for participation are motivating factors. These reasons (i.e. fun, learning new skills, making friends) are called children’s motivational regulations (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Placed on a continuum, at one end is intrinsic motivation, which explains how children participate for their love of playing sport, and at the other end of the continuum is a motivation, which describes the experiences of children who cannot recognize why it is that they play sport, and therefore do not want to take part (Quested & Duda, 2011). Located between intrinsic motivation and amotivation is extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Extrinsic motivation comprises of two types: self-determined and non-self-determined (Mallett, 2005). Within self-determined motivation is identified regulation, which according to Deci and Ryan (2000) is achieved when the sport or activity undertaken is internalised, with children realising how engagement will satisfy their reasons for participating. Non-self-determined motivation is further broken down into introjected and external regulations. Introjected regulations describe instances where children participate through feelings of guilt (i.e. their parents want them to play sport). For children who are motivated by external regulations, such things as financial rewards, media attention and winning will dictate their participation in sport. Introjected and external regulations are likely to result in many children becoming disinterested, as these regulations do not align with their reasons for participating (Deci & Ryan, 2000), or cannot be universally attained. Ensuring there is a positive alignment between the coaching environment and motivation regulations is important if a child’s basic psychological needs are to be met.

As has been highlighted, the extent of children’s self-determined motivation depends on what it is that motivates participation. For example, a child who is motivated to play sport because he or she is given the opportunity to interact and socialise with friends is intrinsically motivated. However, the same child, if placed in an environment where they are not given the opportunity to socialise, but instead competition is emphasised, will likely be amotivated and not want to take part (Quested & Duda, 2011), unless there is some other inducement to take part. Therefore, children’s self-determined motivation to participate in sport will be significantly influenced by the type of coaching environment created.

**Ensuring that children remain motivated**

Basic psychological needs are made up of three interrelated components: autonomy; competence; and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For children to remain motivated to participate, each one of these components must be satisfying. Children’s autonomy is assured when they are given decision-making and problem-solving responsibilities. If children feel as though the sport in which they are engaged allows them to demonstrate their capabilities, they will achieve competency. Finally, relatedness occurs when children are
made to feel cared for and wanted. In this way, relatedness is directly associated with children’s affections.

Adhering to these principles creates a motivational climate which is task orientated, guaranteeing that the coaching environment is aligned with most children’s motives for taking part (Cumming, et al., 2007). As such, skill development, making friends, and putting in maximum effort is prioritised over competition and winning (Smoll & Smith, 2006). Positive changes in attitudes toward coaches and sport have been observed in children who played for coaches who were more reinforcing, encouraging, and autonomy supportive than coaches who were critical of performance (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2007).

An autonomy supportive environment seems to be most suited to satisfying children’s basic psychological needs (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). To be autonomy supportive requires coaches to: (1) provide as much choice as possible within specific limits and rules; (2) provide a rationale for tasks, limits and rules; (3) inquire about, and acknowledge others’ feelings; (4) allow opportunities to take initiatives and do independent work; (5) provide non-controlling competence feedback; (6) avoid overt control, guilt inducing criticisms, controlling statements and tangible rewards; and (7) prevent ego-involvement from taking place (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003, p. 886).

Many coaches of children have relatively low levels of qualifications and work on a voluntary basis (Sportscoach UK, 2011b). Therefore, the extent to which they would be able to construct the coaching environment that Mageau and Vallerand (2003) propose is questionable. While an autonomy supportive environment provides a suitable template to which children’s sport coaches can refer, it is perhaps too far detached from the reality of most practice. Cushion, Armour and Jones (2006) suggest how coaching scholars need to represent the coaching process in a manner to which coaches can relate. They argue that coaching lacks a conceptual base, as a result of an overrepresentation of models ‘for’ coaching practice, rather than models ‘of’ coaching practice. The benchmarks highlighted by Mageau and Vallerand, as those which constitute an autonomy supportive environment, are perhaps an unrealistic expectation for children’s coaches, given their voluntary or part-time coaching roles (Sportscoach UK, 2011b).

A consequence of this is that the training and education of coaches needs to place greater emphasis on the development of pedagogical knowledge and skills (Jones, Morgan, & Harris, in press). Only by doing so, can children’s coaches attempt to provide an autonomy supportive coaching environment. However, we also need to acknowledge the limited scope of coach education, and also recognise that the coaching environment is not solely determined by the coach. Parental pressures and the expectations of sports administrators and employers may reinforce a performance orientation in some children’s sport.

**What can coaches do to promote positive learning environments?**

Although it has been argued that an autonomy supportive coaching environment can be challenging to achieve, and that children’s coaches need progressively to implement the key tenets of this approach, the behaviours utilised by coaches in practice are an important factor in ensuring that children’s coaching needs
and wants are met (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). A consistent finding within the literature is that coaches who mostly use positive coaching behaviours increase effort, whereas coaches who mostly use negative coaching behaviours reduce the effort of children (Amorose & Weiss, 1998; Barker & Graham, 1987; Bartholomew, et al., 2011; Keegan et al., 2009). Controlling behaviours, where coaches fail to include children in any decision-making processes, or appear to be overly authoritarian, have also been found to have adverse effects on children’s motivation levels (Amorose & Horn, 2000; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

Research into coach’s behaviour using systematic observation has found that, regardless of context, the predominant behaviours used are instructional (e.g. Cushion & Jones, 2001; Lacy & Darst, 1985; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976). Ford, Yates and Williams (2010) contend that the overuse of instruction limits the potential for children to be involved in problem solving tasks, which are critical for their psychological development. Further to this, when coaches use high levels of instruction, they are giving children little choice in their own learning (Hollembek & Amorose, 2005), which might subsequently impact on the motivation to remain active. Harvey, Cushion and Massa-Gonzalez (2010) suggest that coaches tend to use these instructional pedagogies because they view them as ‘safe’ and ‘tried and tested’.

The traditional, coach-centred approach has been criticised for restricting children from being able freely to express themselves when playing sport. Mageau and Vallerand’s (2003) description of an autonomy-supportive environment in that children are given ownership, and thus feel in control of their own learning, are set personally achievable goals which are not related to winning, and become self-aware and self-sufficient which prevents them from relying on their coach, should serve as key indicators of developmentally appropriate coaching for children.

Although adopting a facilitative approach is a challenging task, coaches can take practical steps towards it by limiting the amount of instructional and negative behaviours that they use (Ford, Yates, & Williams, 2010). Smith and Cushion (2006) suggest the use of silence as an effective coaching strategy: it allows coaches the opportunity to observe their children practising, so that when they do intervene, the messages have increased clarity and meaning; it gives children the opportunity to work problems out for themselves without constant input from coaches. The use of questioning has also been recommended as an effective coaching intervention strategy in the quest to increase children’s decision-making opportunities (Jones & Turner, 2006). In practice, coaches of children invest only a small percentage of their time questioning their participants (Smith & Cushion, 2006).

**Structuring the learning environment: deliberate play and deliberate practice**

The importance of what coaches do (their coaching behaviour) has been discussed in terms of best ensuring that children remain motivated to continue participating in sport. However, how coaches structure the learning environment also needs careful consideration. Côté and Hay (2002) proposed three distinct developmental stages; sampling years, specialising years and investment years, and that each stage needs to
be structured differently in order most appropriately to meet the needs of sports participants. In the sampling years (aged 6-12), it is recommended that children should get the opportunity to sample a range of different activities and sports in a way that promotes fun and enjoyment (Côté, et al., 2007). As children move into the specialising years (aged 13-16) they start to focus on two or three sports, with the investment years (aged 17+) being characterised by a focus on only one sport in a competitive environment (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007). These age limits resemble the different transition points of the Canadian school system leading Bailey et al. (2010) to question the literal accuracy of the ages and stages of development in a UK context. Nonetheless, these developmental stages provide a useful framework with which to consider developmentally appropriate coaching environments.

When children actively participate in a range of sports, with an emphasis on promoting intrinsic motivation, deliberate play is said to be occurring (Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2003); engagement in deliberate play during the sampling years thus promoting children’s self-determined motivation and endorsing their continued participation in sport. Additionally, some studies have suggested that children described activities that required little input from coaches to be most enjoyable (Strean, 2009). However, it is largely agreed that regardless of context, the coach is a crucial component in ensuring optimal development (e.g. Abraham & Collins, 2011). Certainly, an approach in which ‘success’ is defined by skill development over winning is something which coaches need to become aware of and promote (Abbott, et al., 2002), given that the weight of evidence supports such an approach.

An alternative coaching approach, in which children do not participate in a range of sports, and where fun and enjoyment are not primary initiatives, has been termed as deliberate practice. Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Romer (1993) suggest deliberate practice to be highly structured activities the principal goal of which is to improve performance rather than be inherently enjoyable. Because the focus of deliberate practice is not primarily on children having fun and enjoyable experiences, this type of practice structure has been associated with an increased risk of children dropping out of sport (Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007). We reiterate, one of the main purposes, if not the main purpose of children’s sport in a participation domain is to ensure their continued participation. An overemphasis on deliberate practice could potentially result in this not being achieved.

Sports that emphasise deliberate practice characteristics have been termed ‘early specialized’. Research by Côté and colleagues and others with children of a different age (Baker, Cobley, & Fraser-Thomas, 2009) has found that early-specialised sports are more likely to have a negative effect on children’s well being. Côté (2004) suggests that if specialization occurs at a developmentally inappropriate age, benefits (e.g. improved skills) are potentially outweighed by physical, psychological, and social disadvantages (e.g. overtraining, injury, failure to develop transferable skills, decreased enjoyment, burnout, depression, decreased self-esteem, increased sensitivity to stress, fear of competition, sense of failure, missed social opportunities).
Implications for coaches

While it is recommended that children’s coaches adopt deliberate play practices, it cannot be assumed that this is an easy or straightforward process, or that it will suit all sports, coaches or, indeed, children. Coaches’ practices are underpinned by a plethora of socio-cultural factors ranging from their own personal beliefs and philosophies, to the expectations placed on them by external agents (see Jones, et al., 2010). Therefore, it is important to develop an understanding as to what factors inform coaches practices, and the ways in which they can learn to adopt developmentally appropriate approaches.

We suggest that for coaches to be able successfully to implement developmentally appropriate practices requires a commitment to continued professional development (CPD). However, as we stated earlier, coaches of children often work in a voluntary capacity and as such time and resources are likely to be limited. Consequently, their ability to undertake CPD in the form of National Governing Body (NGB) coach education awards may not be possible given the cost and time requirements to complete these awards (Gilbert & Trudel, 2006). Although it is important that coaches are subjected to, and become accredited as competent coaches through NGB awards, it has been consistently reported that these may not be the leading contributor towards coach learning (e.g. Abraham & Collins, 1998; Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003; Lemrye et al., 2007). Instead, it has been suggested that coaches prefer to learn mostly through interacting with other coaches (e.g. Gould, Werthner & Trudel, 2009; Stephenson & Jowett, 2009), and more specifically, when working alongside a mentor (Cushion, 2006). We propose that if the practices of coaches of children are to improve to the point where they can be considered developmentally appropriate then a greater consideration is needed of how coaches operating in these contexts are educated. There is of course no easy solution to this problem, bearing in mind the issues we have already raised. However, we do believe that one possibility is for coach educators to support coaches of children within the contexts that these coaches are working. Therefore, rather than coaches going to coach educators, the opposite ought to happen where coach educators work with coaches in their contexts over a longitudinal period. There is no doubt that contextual learning is most effective, especially when dealing with complex and varied needs like those of the coach of children (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000). By doing so, individual coaching practices can be better understood, with recommendations for practice given which are more meaningful to the coach. In the first instance though, what is needed is a greater understanding of what it is coaches of children do, and what knowledge it is that they require. We have argued throughout this paper that coaches of children are distinctly different from coaches in any other coaching context. As such, a greater appreciation is needed of what it is they are actually doing at present, and how they believe they can be supported in their future development. While the purpose of this review is not to discuss coach learning and development, we do believe that further research in this area is important in understanding how coaches are able to adopt developmentally appropriate practices.
Conclusion

The purpose of this review was to summarise children’s motives for taking part in sport, and to identify some of the practices that coaches of children adopt to ensure they remain active participants in sport. Five key factors emerged as a result of the literature review: perceived competence, fun and enjoyment, parental influence, learning new skills and influence of friends and peers. Achievement goal theory and SDT were used as theories to explain how these factors influenced children’s motives. By understanding what motivates children to take part in sport, a discussion emerged that provides suggestions to improve the practices of coaches of children. An important finding from this review is that children’s motivations to participate in sport should be considered within the socio-cultural contexts in which sport takes place, as well as from a psychological perspective.

It should not be surprising that carefully constructed learning environments can have positive benefits on the psychosocial development of participating children and youth. The weight of evidence from the review of relevant literature suggests that coaches of children need to start to move away from the more traditional technocratic methods of coaching to appreciating more holistic, child-centred methods of coaching that are better aligned with children’s motives for taking part in sport. The challenge for coach educators and policy makers is how they can support coaches of children to ensure their practices are suitable for the young people they are coaching.
References


