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High School Sports: The Perspectives of the School Principals

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High School Sports: The Perspectives of the School Principals

by

Richard Montreuil

THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in Human Kinetics

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Canada

High School Sports: The Perspectives of the School Principals

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Abstract

The Canadian School Sport Federation, responsible for interscholastic sport, provides a mission to extend physical and athletic development, as well as, moral and social development (Canadian School Sport Federation, n.d.). To reach this mission, participation is needed not only by the coaches, who's role is central to the athletes experience (Roy, Trudel, & Lemyre, 2001), but also the school principals. As part of a research program examining the practice of interscholastic sports, we conducted interviews with 11 school principals and documented 'who' are the high school principals i.e. documented their past experiences and their role and perspective regarding high school sports. The main results showed that (a) most school principals had experience in sport as an athlete or a coach, (b) being a physical education teacher often led to the position of school principal, (c) the principals were conscious of the importance of school sports, and (d) they preferred to select coaches from within their school.

Keywords: school sport/interscholastic sports, school principal

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Abstract

Without being as popular as our American neighbours down south, school sports in Canada has generated interest in the past few years. The Canadian School Sport Federation, responsible for interscholastic sports, has a mission to extend physical and athletic as well as moral and social development (Canadian School Sport Federation, n.d.). To reach this goal, participation is needed not only by the coaches, who are central to the athletes' experiences (Roy, Trudel, & Lemyre, 2001), but also by the school principals.

Little research exists examining the practice of interscholastic sports in Canada. An exhaustive literature review found only five empirical studies on the topic. A research program is currently in progress to fill this void and to further explore interscholastic sports at the high school level (ages 12–17).

As part of this research program, interviews were conducted with 11 high school principals to document 'who' are the high school principals (i.e. to document their past experiences in sport and their roles and perspectives regarding high school sports). The results showed that (a) most school principals had experience in sport as an athlete or a coach, and they believed that these experiences equipped them with the necessary skills to be a school principal, (b) being a physical education teacher often led to the position of school principal, (c) the principals were conscious of the importance of school sports for students, teachers and the school environment, (d) they supported the mission statement of their school and believed that the best way to attain the mission is to provide resources, (e) they were generally pleased with the actual sport étudiant structure and, (f) they preferred to select coaches from within their school.

Introduction

High school athletic events can provide excitement, competition, and challenge for those who participate. In the United States, sports have become as much a part of most schools as academic subjects, such as math or English, and generate a sense of pride for the communities, schools, and parents of the students (Harris, 1999). The interest in school sports is also noticeable in the academic field. According to Gilbert and Trudel (2004), nearly 70% of the empirical studies (N = 610) on coaches and the coaching process published in English, refereed journals worldwide were done on American high schools and colleges.

High school sports began in America in the late 1800s and were modeled after intercollegiate athletics. Early high school sports were organized through student initiatives and most, if not all, of these were ignored by faculty members and administrators (Hardy, 1982; Mirel, 1982). However, in the first two decades of the 20th century, there was a shift in the organization of athletics. Several factors, such as the students' inexperience in managing the details of coaching, scheduling, finances, rules, eligibility and other miscellaneous matters that led to constant altercations with faculty members and school administration, caused the students to lose control of the sports programs, and high school sports progressively came under the jurisdiction of school boards, principals and coaches (Massengale, 1979; Mills, 1979; O'Hanlon, 1980; Sage 1989).

As high school administrations took control of the athletic programs, they added a moral component to the physical aspect of sports. As suggested by Sage (1989), the students' inability "to administer their athletics was the movement in the public high

schools in the early decades of the 20th century to pursue a broader commitment for preparing students to take their place in a rapidly expanding industrial society” (p. 81).

The desire to develop students physically and morally is still noticeable these days in the mission statements of many schools (e.g., Hardwood Union High School, USA).

High school sports in Canada has gained popularity in the past few years. For example, in 2004-2005 there were approximately 290,257 student athletes in the province of Ontario and 143,599 in Quebec (OFSAA, 2005; FQSÉ, 2005). More high schools are developing specific sport programs within their schools, such as the ‘Sport-Études’ (e.g., John Rennie High School-Lester B. Pearson School Board). Despite this expansion, empirical studies on high school sports in Canada remain very scarce. To our knowledge, in the last fifteen years, there were only five empirical studies conducted (James, 1995; Lepage-Simard, 1999; Rizak, Ventre, & Moore, 1990; Savard, Nadeau, & Lachance, 1996; Trudel, Boudreau, & Proulx, 1995).

To fill this void, Dr. Pierre Trudel and his group of researchers at the University of Ottawa are presently developing a research program on high school sports. Research is already underway and will take place over several years and encompass multiple phases. In the first phase, descriptive studies will be done to better understand the phenomenon (knowledge-for-understanding). In the second and third phases, studies will be conducted to sensitize the administrators (knowledge-for-action) and to put in place programs for change (a project of instrumentalism) (Jones & Wallace, 2005). The present study is situated in the first phase and focuses on the role of the principal in the school sport setting. The purpose of this study is to investigate, through interviews, school principals’ experience in sports (civil/school-athlete/coach), their perspectives on school sports, their

roles in school sports, and finally their relationships with the coaches, athletes, and parents involved with the school sports program.

Review of Literature

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, Canadian studies on high school sports will be presented. In the second section, two opposing discourses on the practice of sport will be discussed. In the third section, mission statements will be explained, and finally, our conceptual framework will be explained to better situate the present study in the overall research program.

Canadian Studies on High School Sports

In the last 15 years, there have been only five studies on Canadian high school sports. The first study, conducted in Saskatchewan, documented the perceptions and attitudes of teacher-coaches on their role in school sports (Rizak et al., 1990). The results indicated that they often felt pressured by school administrators to volunteer as coaches and that the time invested was perceived as being overwhelming.

The second study was conducted by Trudel et al. (1995) and analyzed the career profiles and work satisfaction of 26 French physical educators in the province of Ontario. Using semi-structured interviews, the authors reported that (a) the teachers saw their coaching role as an integral part of their work duties, (b) constant demands by the students often forced them to accept the role of coach, and (c) fatigue was common because of the overwhelming hours associated with their participation in school sports. The authors also reported that despite all the efforts by these physical educators to create a better athletic program, the athletic program was still perceived as secondary to other school subjects, and the criteria for school success were concentrated more on language, science and mathematics. However, when the principal of the school was an ex-physical education teacher, the sports programs tended to be better supported.

A third study was a master's thesis done by Lepage-Simard (1999). In this study Lepage-Simard distributed 1229 questionnaires to secondary V students in the Quebec city region with the goal of investigating the relationship between the importance a school gives to competitive sports and the sense of belonging students have in their school. The results indicated that there was a positive relationship between these two factors and that school sports were a tool to counteract school dropout.

The fourth study was an ethnographic study conducted on 29 African-Canadian student athletes (18 males and 11 females) in the metropolitan area of Toronto. In this study, James (1995) examined how sports are used to negotiate barriers to school participation and educational achievement and to compensate for academic failure. According to James, the student athletes used sports to develop friendships, gain recognition, challenge stereotypes and exercise leadership. Hence, "sports provided the students with an avenue to actively participate in the construction of their schooling process and to perceive their own efforts, abilities, and skills as sufficient to overcome systematic barriers to their success" (p.20). However, the study also suggested that sports can operate to reinforce stereotypes (e.g., African-Canadian people are genetically predisposed to perform well) and maintain the status quo.

The final study is centered on how the coaches in the region of Quebec employ goal setting with high school sports teams (Savard et al., 1996). Two different questionnaires were given to coaches (N = 16) and athletes (N = 143) involved in volleyball and basketball. Results indicated that school coaches often preferred using performance objectives (technical/tactical) to outcome objectives (win/loss). According to Savard and colleagues, this type of approach is appropriate, since it reduces the emphasis on winning.

These five empirical studies found in the Canadian literature have given us some information on high school sports. Another source of information on high school sports is the documents produced by schools, school boards and associations. Because these documents contain language used to describe and explain (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2004) school sports, they can be classified, at least partly, as discourses held by the administrators. To better understand this administrators' discourse on high school sports, we will briefly present two discourses that seem to characterize the practice of sport.

Two Opposite Discourses About the Practice of Sport

When looking at the literature on the practice of sport, and more specifically the coach-athlete relationships and the benefits of practicing sports, two discourses can be identified.

The rationalistic-performance coaching discourse. For Cassidy and colleagues (2004), "the prevailing rationalistic-performance coaching discourse has led to the development of language within the profession which is infused with the driving concepts of productivity, efficiency, prediction and accountability" (p. 155). Therefore, an athlete's body is often perceived as a 'machine' that can be developed and improved through appropriate exercises and training regimes (Prain & Hickey, 1995). This discourse views the athlete's body as a "biological object to be studied, manipulated and its movement minutely measured" (Wright, 2000, p. 35). This discourse also favours technical descriptions and procedures, and places significance on the specialist 'factual' knowledge of coaches to provide direction and progression (Prain & Hickey, 1995). In this context, "the current coach-athlete relationship is characterized by rank and power, with one party perceived as having knowledge, and the other as needing it" (Cassidy et al., 2004, p.

155). A concrete example of how this discourse affects the practice of high-performance sport can be found in the study by Johns and Johns (2000):

Coaches hold privileged positions in a performance discourse because of their claims to expertise, experience, wisdom and resources. This exalted position is one that grants them the right to expect athletes to sacrifice normal life, to engage in excesses of disciplined routine that people who are not sport participants would refuse to tolerate. (pp. 229-230)

A study conducted on a high school volleyball team by Griffin, Siedentop, and Tannehill (1998) is another clear example of the power hierarchy:

In summary, this sport setting has an explicit program of action with a clear philosophy that focused on fundamental movements and skills. Practices were carefully planned, orchestrated, and completely matched the coaching philosophy... Players understood the boundaries in this quiet, task oriented atmosphere, and chose to cooperate with the coach in a rather submissive manner. (p. 417)

The developmental value coaching discourse. In contrast to the rationalistic-performance coaching discourse, the developmental value coaching discourse focuses on how athletics is an educational medium for character and citizenship training (Sage, 1989). Over the years, there has been a significant amount of anecdotal information addressing various aspects of character building via participation in extra-curricular activities. This has led to the development of a language within the domain of education and, especially, in the profession of coaching, that is infused with the concept of “promoting social and moral attributes, contributing to the goal of effective citizenship” (Sage, 1989, p. 81). According to Rees, Howell, and Miracle (1990), there is a deep-rooted conviction that involvement in interscholastic athletics has a positive effect on pro-social behaviour and that sports can build character. An example of this discourse is found in the Dubin Report (1990) from the Government of Canada who states that:

We look to sport to build character, to teach the virtues of dedication, perseverance, endurance and self discipline. Sport helps us learn from defeat as much as from victory and team sports foster a spirit of cooperation and interdependence. We look to sport to impart something of moral and social values and, in integrating us as individuals, to bring about a healthy, integrated society. (p.499)

This developmental perspective discourse on sports is often spoken of by National Sport Organizations, Sport Canada, Fitness and Amateur Sport Canada, athletes, and parents. For example, in a report by Canada Fitness and Amateur Sport (1991) the authors, stated that athletes consider sports as a medium to inculcate rules, good values and ethics, personal discipline, and the pursuit of excellence. However, when asked about the values in high level sports, the discourse focused more on winning, being the best, competition, commercial profit and success: “winning is everything” (pp.28-29).

The direct benefits of sport participation on the global development of athletes have been questioned. For example, if sports contribute to the global development of the person involved in this medium by not only providing physical but moral development, professional athletes should be model citizens; however, this is not always true.

According to Staffo (2001), the implications of professional athletes in acts of violence outside of the sport setting is alarming, and Bernard (1998) maintains that cheating is prevalent in many sports (e.g., Ben Johnson, 1988; Tour de France scandal, 1998; Rafael Palmeiro’s steroid use, 2005). This reinforces the suggestion made by Ogilvie and Tutko (1971) 35 years ago that if you want to build character, try something other than sports.

This debate on whether or not sports build character is on-going.

Mission Statements

However, considering the various contexts in which young athletes can participate in sports (for example, inner-city and school sports programs), schools have a particular

interest in providing sports for their students, and, as illustrated by their mission statements, they want to help their student athletes develop into model citizens.

These mission statements are of particular interest because they reflect the values behind an organization's beliefs and principles (Campbell & Nash, 1992). Furthermore, as Reisman (1986) suggested, "when employees perceive the mission statement as 'noble or transcendent,' it can result in more commitment and an 'inspired' performance" (p.393). If employees (in this case, coaches) have a positive attachment (i.e., to the school) and a sense of shared values, they tend to be more dedicated and satisfied and are less likely to leave their position (Vardi, Wiener, & Popper, 1989).

However, if mission statements are not carefully formulated, they can affect the daily functioning of a school. Weiss and Piderit (1999), investigated the mission statements of 304 public schools, and found not only that missions vary, but also that "the choices that managers make in the content and rhetorical style of their mission statement can have consequences that facilitate or impair subsequent performance" (p.193). Hence, mission statements have direct effects on an organization: if values are not stated explicitly, then the actions and behaviours that logically follow are not clearly articulated, and the values can be seen as ineffective.

In brief, many researchers believe mission statements that are clear, well defined, value driven and relatively short will improve the performance of an organization (Bart & Baetz, 1998; CWLA, 1996; Cochran & David, 1986; Posner, Kouzes, & Schmidt, 1985; Vardi, et al., 1989; Weiss & Piderit, 1999). Other researchers have suggested that supporting the use of mission statements is an efficient management tool (e.g., Klemm, Sanderson, & Luffman, 1991), however, few empirical studies have examined how

mission statements influence organizations (Bart & Baetz, 1998; Cochran & David, 1986; Pearce & David, 1987; Weiss & Piderit, 1999).

To understand the mission statements that possibly exist within Canadian high schools and may affect school sports, we need to start with the national organization responsible for interscholastic sports, the Canadian School Sport Federation (CSSF). The CSSF seeks to “act as a national voice to encourage, promote and be an advocate for good sportsmanship, citizenship and the total development of student athletes through interscholastic sports” (CSSF, n.d.).

As the CSSF’s members are the provincial and territorial athletic associations, the flavour of the CSSF’s mission statement varies in each association. For example, the Ontario Federation of School Athletics Association (OFSAA) is dedicated to the “promotion and enhancement of the educational value of school sports.” It emphasizes fair play and values the “enjoyment, growth and personal achievement students realize through their participation in school sport and its contribution to life-long learning and a positive healthy lifestyle” (OFSAA, 2005). In the province of Quebec, La ‘Fédération Québécoise du Sport Étudiant’ (FQSÉ)¹ strives to promote sport ethics by favouring “la réussite académique, la santé physique et le bien-être, l’estime de soi, et la persistance scolaire” (FQSÉ, 2005).

It is worthwhile to also examine the mission statements in the school boards and in particular schools. Figure 1 contains examples of the statements of two school boards in the greater Montreal region, the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB) with 12 high

¹ It is important to distinguish between the sport étudiant and the sport étude. The sport étudiant coordinates sports programs for the elementary, high school, collegiate and university levels. The sport étude coordinates the pedagogical and administrative operations permitting high-level high school athletes to continue their schooling on a modified schedule.

schools and the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) with 16 high schools. Both school boards have similar mission statements: "...the fostering of responsible citizenship...maximizing potential" (LBPSB, 2005) and "continuous professional development... [to help students] develop their talent" (EMSB, 2005). What is notable in both these mission statements is that there is no mention of sport as a way to fulfill their stated mission. However, both school boards are involved in the same athletic association, FQSÉ, which has a mission statement that clearly states the value of student development through participation in sport. The essence of the mission statement can also be found on the websites of most schools in these two school boards. In Figure 1 we present the mission statements of the two schools considered in the present study.

We can summarize this section by saying that the mission statements of most high school sport constituencies, from the national level down to the local school, appear to operate within a framework that resembles more closely the perspectives of the developmental value coaching discourse than the rationalistic-performance coaching discourse. However, this does not mean that the high school sport leaders are

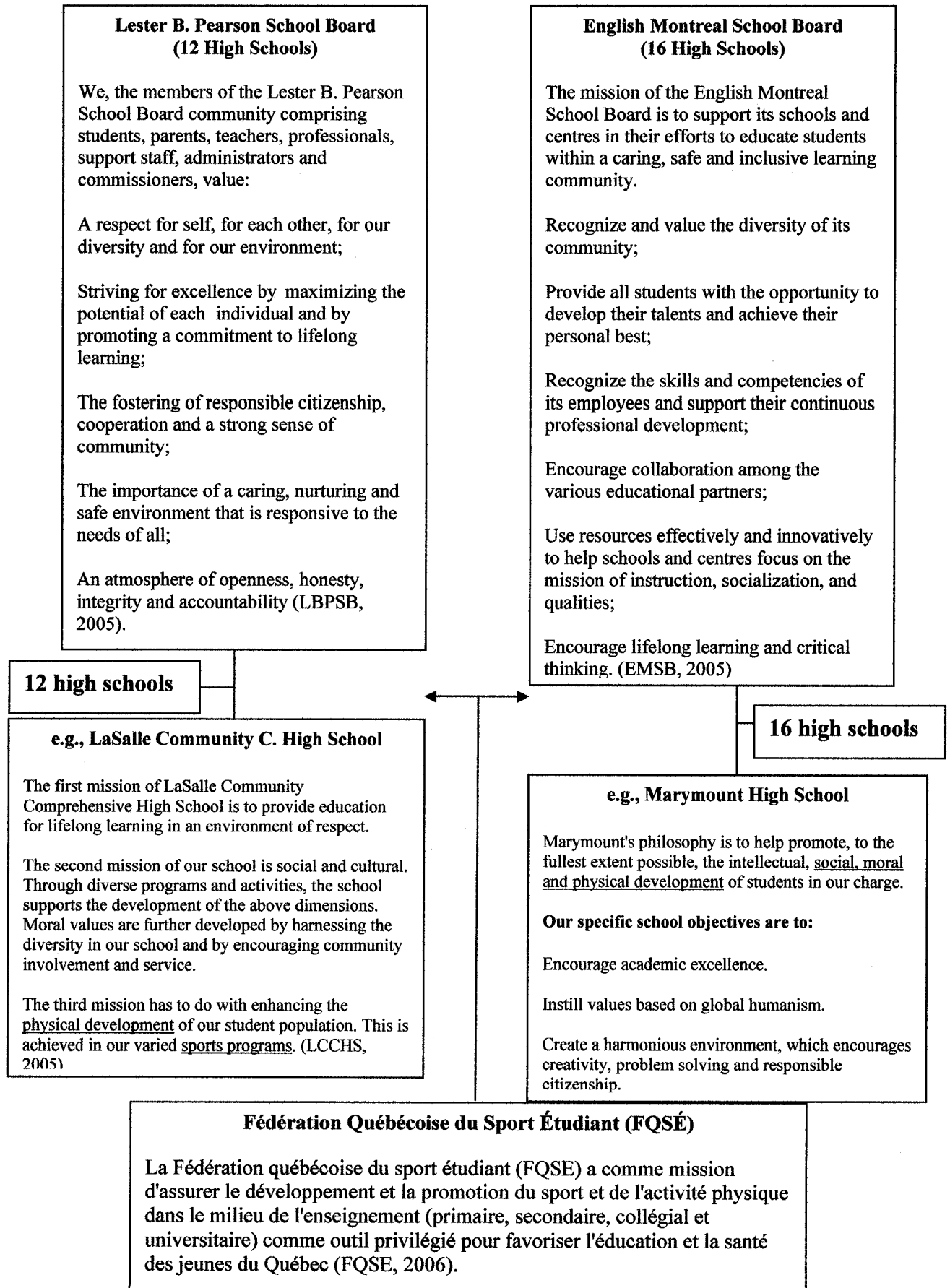


Figure 1. Examples of mission statements.

opposed to athletic performance. This quote from the CSSF's demonstrates a potential link between the two discourses:

The value of our school athletic program is to provide a large number of students with a great many experiences in a variety of athletic activities. In order to be consistent with our philosophy, specialization by a team or individual is difficult if not impossible to achieve in the School setting. The opportunity for those who wish to specialize, e.g., the outstanding or elite athlete, can be provided by the sports governing bodies who offer the opportunity to advance to National Championships. We, as a Federation, are prepared, as we have been in the past, to identify these athletes and to work in close harmony with Sport Governing bodies. (p. 14)

Although the two discourses are incompatible in some elements, they can both be used by the same person and/or organization. In fact, Cassidy and colleagues (2004) suggest that, although the discourses are very different, we should not select one and reject the other because "realistically, we are very aware that coaches and athletes require much self-sacrifice and commitment to be successful in sport. Consequently, compliance and productivity is needed" (p. 159). On the other hand, there is, specifically in the high school setting, a stated obligation to improve athletes not only physically, but also morally. Therefore, student athletes should be provided with a coaching environment where they will develop their athletic skills, but not at the expense of their ethical or academic development. As such, Cassidy and colleagues (2004) call such an environment '*holistic coaching*' meaning that "coaches [are] aware of the need to care for their athletes' well-being beyond the sporting arena, and of exercising social competencies to ensure the continuance of positive working relationships" (p. 178). Accordingly we "need to educate coaches to 'gamble' less on the compliance of athletes through claims to expertise, and alternatively to engage in a joint process of knowledge generation involving both parties which could tap into and develop deeper levels of potential" (p. 160).

Conceptual Framework: Holistic Coaching

The suggestion that the coaches must see an athlete not as a machine, but as a person with emotions, feelings, and needs is not a recent discovery (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2004). What is new is the recent efforts in the research to define what is a '*holistic coaching pedagogy*'. A dictionary definition of the term holistic states it is a "consideration of the complete person, both physically and mentally" (Collins, 2003). Cassidy and colleagues (2004) broaden that definition by suggesting that the "person is more than just the aggregate of mental and physical attributes, as he or she is also an emotional, political, social, spiritual and cultural being"(p. 174). Hence, to coach holistically is to coach with all of these considerations in mind. These authors also believe that the essence of holistic coaching is very contextual, which means that coach-athlete relationships are influenced by factors that are situational, political, ideological and moral in nature.

Taking into consideration the concept of 'holistic coaching' as suggested by Cassidy and colleagues (2004), certain characteristics of Canadian school sports, and our past work on youth sport outside of the school sport context (e.g., Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Lemyre & Trudel, 2004; Wright, Trudel, & Culver, in press), we have drawn a figure representing our conceptual framework for the study of holistic coaching within the context of high school sports.

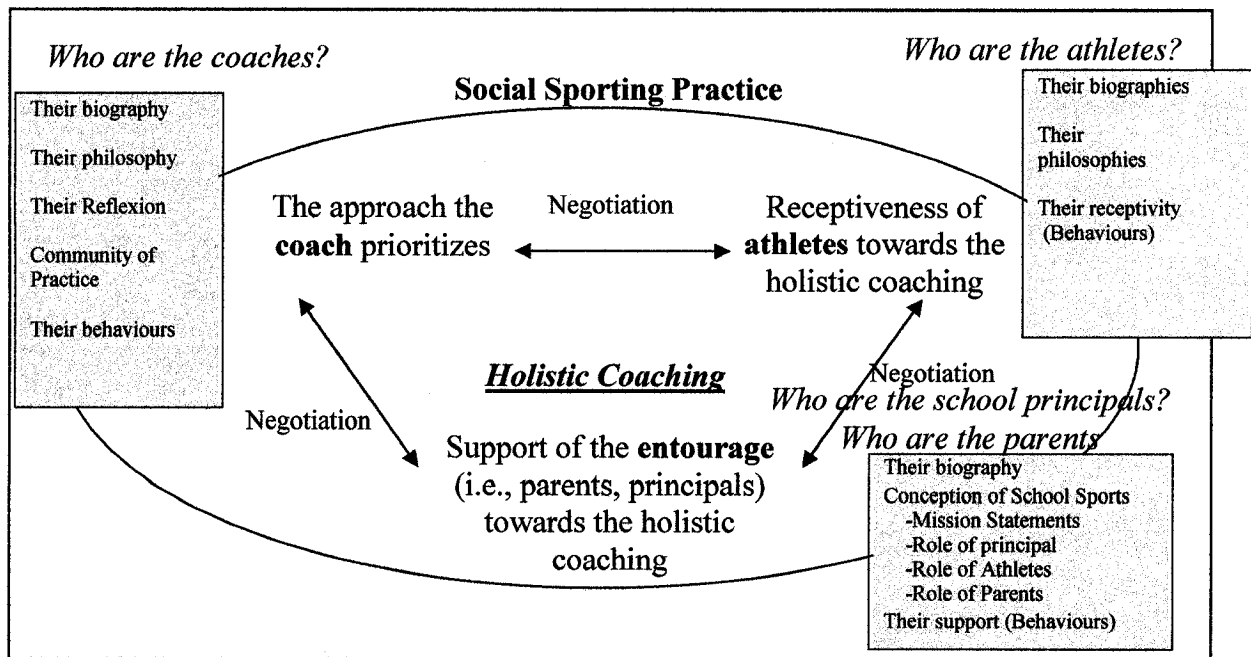


Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the Holistic Coaching in high school sports.

Sports at the high school level involve three major groups of actors: the coaches, the athletes, and the entourage, which includes the school principal and parents of the athletes. Within this conceptual framework, the coach plays a crucial role in the process of negotiation between the other actors. Unlike teachers, coaches in high school do not have a set curriculum to follow. Therefore, the coach is the primary person who proposes or imposes negotiation in the coaching approach. The student athletes, principals, and parents may or may not be receptive to this approach.

Our conceptual framework also stresses the importance of looking at ‘who’ the actors are. This decision is based on Jones and colleagues’ (2004) suggestion that “it would appear necessary for future inquiry into expert coaching practice [as well as high school sports] to expand upon the traditional focuses of ‘what to coach’ and ‘how to coach’ to more adequately examine the complex question of ‘who is coaching?’” (pp. 2-3).

Purpose and Research Questions

As indicated at the beginning of the review of literature, high school sport is under the responsibility of the administrators. In larger schools, there might be an athletic director who would alleviate the charges of the school principals, but in most cases it is the responsibility of the school principal to oversee the athletic department (Gray, 1995). The purpose of this study was to better understand the school principals' perspectives on sports and the role they play in those sports. To do so, we investigated '*who*' the high school principals are by asking the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of their experience in sport?
2. What perspectives do they hold regarding school sports?
3. What are their roles and responsibilities within the realm of school sports?
4. What do they do to realize their mission statements?
5. What is the nature of their relationships with coaches, students, and parents?

Methods

Participants

Eleven Quebec high school principals were recruited, representing the Lester B. Pearson School Board (6), the English Montreal School Board (2) and the Western Quebec School Board (3). A list of candidates was obtained from the school boards, and once a candidate was accepted, an interview date was established. If any candidate refused to participate in the study, a second group of candidates was selected from the list. This procedure was repeated until we reached our desired number of participants.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument, meaning that he or she is the one who collects and analyzes the data; therefore, it is essential for the researcher to go through a preparation phase (Thomas & Nelson, 2001). This was particularly true in the present study as the researcher had limited experience in qualitative research. Hence, a pilot study was performed to fine tune the interview guide and the researcher's interview skills. First, a preliminary interview guide was developed with the aide of Dr. Pierre Trudel and his research group, taking into consideration other studies conducted with coaches in the school sports setting (Lacroix, 2006). Then, four 60-minute pilot interviews with school principals were conducted. The analysis of these pilot interviews confirmed that the questions were well formulated and appropriate. Few changes were made and a final version of the interview guide was composed of four main sections (see Appendixes).

This first section of the interview guide was designed to create a welcoming atmosphere between the researcher and the participant. The questions in this section

permitted the collection of information on the participants' background and their reasons for becoming a school principal.

In the second section of the interview guide, a narrative approach was used in order to paint a portrait of the school principals' lives. A key element of the narrative approach is the sequence of events lived by the individuals under investigation (Langley, 1997). The school principals were encouraged to speak about their personal experiences in sport, starting from their experiences as athletes (if applicable) and concluding with their role as principal.

In the third section, we looked to understand the principals' perspectives on sport in their school. Furthermore, we wanted to know what influence their school mission statement might have on their school or themselves, and what they do to act in accordance with that mission statement.

In the last section of our interview guide, we looked to describe the social context in which the school principals lived, such as the interactions with coaches, student athletes, and parents from their own perspective.

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed verbatim and the Nvivo software (Qualitative Solution Research, 2002, version 2.0) was used to code and analyze the data. Data analysis commenced as soon as the first interview was finished, thus, data collection and analysis were performed simultaneously. Based on Smith and Sparkes' (2005) type of analysis of narratives, we considered that the content analysis type was appropriate:

Content analyses are useful and do have a contribution to make to understanding the lives of people over time within the domains of sport and physical activity. This kind of narrative analysis focuses on the *what* rather than the *how* of the telling. Thus, content analysis is valuable for examining the thematic similarities and differences

between narratives provided by a number of people. Moreover, for Sparkes (1999), the strength of this form of analysis lies in its capacity to develop general knowledge about the core themes that make up the content of the stories generated. (p. 230)

In an effort to increase the validity of our analysis, we used the technique of peer feedback. Peer feedback “has been suggested as a technique to help researchers stay aware of their assumptions and how these can potentially interact with the context and/or participants under investigation” (Gilbert, 2000, p. 94). Two types of peer feedback—peer debriefing and peer review—were used. Peer debriefing sessions were held on a regular basis with Dr. Pierre Trudel, where we discussed substantive, methodological, ethical and any other relevant matters. The second type of peer feedback came in the form of peer review, where members of our research group reviewed the study and discussed the analysis process and the results.

Results

The results section is divided into four parts. The first part contains demographic information about the participants. In the second part, we present the principals' views of school sports as well as their strategies to adhere to their mission statement. In the third part, we discuss the *sport étudiant* program and its implications, and finally in the fourth part, a brief description of the relationship between the school principals and the coaches is presented.

Demographic Information

The data presented in Table 1 provides a general profile of each school principal interviewed.

Schools' enrolment. All of our participants are principals of public high schools, which are called 'community schools'. Of the 11 schools, two (part. 6, part. 8) have an entrance exam and focus on core programs, such as math and science. These schools have a population of fewer than 500 students. The remaining nine schools are regular public schools, and three have over 1000 students. In these schools, it is common to find different academic levels of programming, such as a regular program, an enriched program, and a special needs program. For example:

We have an International Baccalaureate Organization program and we have a French immersion program, we have the regular stream program, and we have a Phoenix program, which is an alternative program for kids who are getting close to graduating, but are falling behind. (part. 4)

Gender and school experience. In our sample, almost an equal number of women (n=5) and men (n=6) were interviewed. Their experience as school principals ranged

Participant	School enrollment	Gender	# of Years Principal/Teaching	Teaching Domain	Sport Experiences			Coach
					Athlete		Coach	
					Outside of school	In school		
1	900	F	21	Physical education	Figure skating	Track and field	Yes	
2	900	M	26	Physical education	Football	Team sports	Yes	
3	1000	M	30	Physical education	gymnastics	Track and gymnastics	Yes	
4	1000	F	13	Physical education	Swim	Volley	Yes	
5	1365	F	19	Music	Gymnastic	Gymnastic	No	
6	500, Entrance exam	F	Approx. 20	French, Economics, food science	Skiing, golf, hiking	Team sports	Yes	
7	1200	M	7	Elementary / Technology / University	No	No	No	
8	450, Entrance exam	M	17	Elementary	Tae-Kwan-do	Football, soccer, wrestling	No	
9	500	F	28	Students with difficulties	Skiing	Multiple	No	
10	300	M	6	Moral Education	Basketball, football	Basketball, football	Yes	
11	300	M	13	Phys. edu., Math, Eng.	Football, hockey	Football, hockey	Yes	

Table 1. Participant general profile.

from 2 to 20 years. All of our participants had 6 to 30 years of prior teaching experience; only two (part. 7, part. 10) had fewer than 10 years of experience. Of the 11 participants, five had been physical education teachers, two had been elementary teachers, and the remaining four had taught moral education (2), music, and French.

The participants' main reason for becoming a school principal was that they felt they needed a change and this position allowed them to contribute to education by sharing the knowledge and experience they had gained over the years. For example:

- What made me decide to go into administration was that I felt a responsibility to education and that I had some qualities to contribute to education in another way. I just felt that I needed to get out of the circle of comfort. You know, I was enjoying teaching. I brought a lot to my students in the school I worked in and I believe that some of my strengths and qualities could be put to other places. At some point, somebody has to run with the ball and I said, "why not me?" (part. 4)
- The global philosophy that I felt that is part of my personal life was better served in this type of position. After a while, although I loved music, the music was getting in the way of being able to help people evolve to their highest potential. I mean you can certainly use music to do that, but being a principal you can work with so many types of people. You work with teachers, students, community members and staff. Just the whole possibility that everyone will evolve because of the interactions with them, or helping them to achieve, this is the place to be. (part. 5)

- I have been 28 years in the classroom and doing every other aspects of education and I thought it was time to try this. I think we can have more influence over programming, and by then I thought I felt I had a certain understanding of how education should work and I wanted to put my mark on that. (part. 9)

Sport experiences as an athlete. With one exception, all the participants experienced a wide range of civil and school sports when growing up. Figure skating, golf, skiing, and swimming tended to be common in the civil community environment because these sports are not often offered in schools. On the other hand, sports such as volleyball, gymnastics, and track and field tended to be more prevalent in the school setting. Our participants also mentioned that they played school sports as youths because “everything was taken care for you” (part. 10) and that there “were not many more sports available outside the school in those days, other than as I mentioned, at the higher levels” (part. 2).

What our participants remembered from taking part in school sports is that school sports was “what made school fun” (part. 4) and it allowed them to stay in school and be “dedicated to school” (part. 9). For some, it helped to create bonds and make friends “as you play on the same team, you do your homework together, you tend to cluster into the same courses and you become friends in school and out of school. It’s just a wonderful way to pass your youth” (part. 9). For others, it allowed them to gain valuable life skills:

They [school administrators] did not care if we won, because of the overall philosophy of the school. The school experience was always infinitely more enjoyable for me than anything else, just because it is about teaching, not about winning... In school, the focus is to get better, progress, learn those kinds of life

skills that will help you when you move out of the school setting. So that is why I think I enjoyed it more. I have not ever been part of a school team that's "win" first and everything else second. (part. 10)

They also mentioned that the valuable life skills gained as a school athlete helped them to assume their role as a school principal. For example:

- I believe leadership comes from it [sport]. It allowed me to realize that there is always some solution to an issue. Like many people have said, they don't see me reacting, for lack of a better word, in a "volatile" way. I approach things very calmly and orderly. I think I attribute a lot of that to the fact that I played school sports. (part. 2)
- I think, especially in individual sports, you really get to understand your strengths and limitations and I think because of that, you understand that everybody has strengths and limitations. As such, you know how to handle disappointment and how to handle success, so you can help other people to do it. (part. 1)
- The confidence that you develop from being on a team, the feeling that you have a responsibility to that team, the feeling that alone you are not the team, and also that you are supposed to perform, but also encourage, shine, work hard, and become better. You can't just sit back and expect to stay where you are. The level of competence, your level of expertise, and your level of proficiency should always be increasing. I feel that as an administrator and I felt that as a teacher, you should always be looking at the school and your

classes as a team, always getting better, always trying to stay on top of your game. I feel all of those things are important as an administrator. (part. 4)

Sport experiences as a coach. Seven of our 11 participants had been a head coach, and among these seven, five had been physical education teachers. Similar to what they gained from their experiences as an athlete, the principals attributed much of their success as principals to their experience as a coach and/or a physical educator. For example, “the thing I see about, well not just myself, but people in administration, who have been in physical education or have coached, they are like coaches and they continue to be a coach. You sort of see it as a team aspect” (part. 1). Furthermore, the following citation represents well the transfer of the participants’ experience as coaches and/or teachers to their role as a school principal:

To be an administrator you need to be a team builder. As a coach, a teacher, and an athlete, you are constantly involved in team building. You are looking for the right person for the right position, developing and honing skills. I think it’s been a tremendous addition to my administrative career to be able to see this. I don’t know if this is innate or if I developed it, but to be able to see a person, look at their skills and be able to place them in a specific position is very helpful. You do that in coaching and good coaches are not necessarily the best teachers, but the best personal strategist and in this case, I’ve developed that skill by doing sports. Of course, all of my participation in sports [physical education teacher, coach], organizing tournaments, being involved in big time competition, I think that has a great deal to do with administration. The personal skills, like being able to

communicate and be personable with people, are extremely important. The people skills, you developed that in sports. (part. 3)

Participants' Views on School Sports

Why a sports program? So that we could understand the importance the school principals placed on sports, we asked them to explain why they had a sports program in their school. In general, it seems that “there has to be another reason other than the academics to come to school... I think the sports program is imperative” (part. 2), and “if we did not have any extra-curricular activities, this school would be different and kids would just stay home” (part. 3). It is also an outlet for the kids: “they come into the building and go to the sports and are able to work their energies towards sports rather than in some other negative way...the fact that they enjoy the sport and the fact that they get some of that energy out of them is important for them and for the school” (part. 2). Hence, “I would say it’s one of the key ring(s). I mean if you consider what pulls this school together I would say that the sports are very big” (part. 5). As such, the schools have included in their mission statements a section on sports and extra-curricular activities.

Mission statements. As indicated earlier, a mission statement presents the values, beliefs and principles of the schools. As such, we visited the website of each of our participating schools to review their mission statement. The following four statements seem to summarize the schools’ missions:

- We offer students programs that will prepare them to become citizens with positive values and work ethics. (school of part. 1)

- We are committed to academic excellence and education for character. (school of part. 7)
- We provide a well-rounded experience to our students through various cultural and sporting activities. (school of part. 4)
- We prepare today's youth for tomorrow's world through a challenging curriculum and extensive extra-curricular activities that provide our students the opportunity to assume leadership. (school of part. 8)

During the interviews, we gave each participant their school's mission statement and questioned them on their involvement with and views of that mission statement. Although none of the principals had been involved in the creation of the statement, most principals, with the exception of one (part. 11), was aware of their mission statement and supported each and every aspect of it. According to one participant:

They [aspects of the mission statement] are like the five rings of Olympia. You really can't separate them. Anything that deals with universal humanitarianism is very important. So when you talk about fostering respect for the rights of others, individuals and for their communities, I mean, all the rest come into play. You just really want to create a human being that is going to take over the world and do the right thing. (part. 5)

Another participant stated that a mission statement corresponds with what is already happening in the school. For example:

This mission statement is a result of what happens in this building already. It's not because we have this mission statement, all of a sudden now we have to start doing things to match with this. This is what we are, this is what we always

fundamentally believed in, as a school and anything else comes from how people identify themselves. So it comes from the culture of the school. (part. 4)

For another participant, it was clear that mission statements are not only about academics, but should also make reference to sports:

It's a shame that in some other schools, the main concern of the principals is on math and science. Math and science are important for the students. But for me, combining art, physical education, sport, math and science programs in the school is better. You know the balance. So that is why we write in our mission that we are committed "to academic excellence and education for character...by including an expanded extra-curricular activities program in which all students are expected to take part". (part. 7)

However, one participant declared that we have to be careful with mission statements, because it is like "mom and apple pie. Anybody can write a mission statement, because it is what every educator believes" (part. 1).

Strategies used to attain the goals outlined in the mission statements. Following their comments on the mission statement of their school, we asked the principals to elaborate on the concrete strategies they use to act in accordance with that mission statement. According to our participants, the duties of the school principal in relation to the sports program are primarily to "facilitate" (part. 6), "oversee" (part. 3), and "remove barriers so that the coaches can deliver their program" (part. 4). One of the most important facets in facilitating the extra-curricular activities was the implementation of the budget. For example:

- The budget priorities towards sports are very important. (part. 10)

- In the last year, we transferred a lot more money into the sports program. We tripled the amount of money that we spend for teacher replacements, so the coaches could go with the kids and not have to worry about, “How do I raise the money to do that?” or “How do we upgrade the equipment?” (part. 9)
- I find money. So money is not an excuse. I say yes to what ever they want. If, for example, our wrestling coach wants to get a mat, first where can they get a used mat, or “Ok, here’s the money, let’s get a new one.” (part. 4)

Another important aspect of the mission statement is to provide an attractive environment for students, since the biggest challenge for the schools is to get the students involved. Consequently, the principals must focus on “getting them to participate” (part. 10). One strategy used was to increase the number of extra-curricular activities to “cover the range of kids, trying to get as many kids physically active as possible” (part. 7) and to “meet the needs of our clientele (students)” (part. 8). To get students involved in extra-curricular activities, one principal provided a point system in his school where “the goal there is if kids participate in the intramurals, they receive a point. For example, you get points for academics, for volunteering and community work as well as every team the students are in” (part. 7). By earning points, they get rewards, for example, school letters. Two principals commented since extra-curricular activities (sports) were important, they had chosen to make participation in such activities compulsory.

Finally, another way in which the principals met the goals of their mission statement was by promoting and sharing the benefits and the successes of the extra-curricular activities in the school with the staff members, the students, and the outside community. For example:

- When I started here at [name of school], we brought in all the staff members and we said the one thing we need is to get people active in sports and it has taken a couple of years, but we all bought into it. (part. 10)
- I've always believed in school sports. I participated in them myself and I thought they helped me. In fact, they helped me get an education, they helped me go away with a football scholarship and that type of thing, which you know, not many people experience that. So I've been very fortunate and I've always believe[d] in sharing and promoting the benefits [sport] has provided me with. (part. 2)

Of our 11 participants, nine chose to promote “the sport of the school via the local newspaper” (part. 3). Their belief was that it was an important measure to reward the students: “as you can see, there are a few banners hung in the windows. Well, we have a gentleman who, on a regular basis, writes in the local newspaper about our team success and it's been good for us” (part. 2). The principals also suggested using publicity to encourage future students to come to their school: “almost the first thing that comes out of my mouth is, ‘Hi everybody, I'm the principal of the [name] high school. Look at all the sports that you can participate in’” (part. 10).

The following quote from one principal sums up the roles and strategies school principals use to work in accordance with their mission statement through their sports program:

I think you have to put the money where your mouth is. There is no question if we don't have the money to run the sports, to buy uniforms, to pay for leagues, to pay for buses, we would not have reached our mission of providing extra-curricular activities...but the muddy part of it is you have to say we are going to set this

money aside. That's impacting, if you are looking at the big picture of your success rate. You also have to hire people who are willing to do that, and not just force them to do it. You have to love coaching if you're going to coach.

Otherwise, you are stuck in a gym with kids and a ball. I think, as a principal, you have to stick with it, you have to believe that getting kids participating in as many activities that we offer, and having the parents come out and show your school off is a priority for you. For me it has been a lot of work...So my role as a principal needs to be that, you sell the concept, you put the right people in place, and you give them the resources to do their job. (part. 10)

Sport Étudiant

In Quebec, the federation in charge of school sports is the Fédération Québécoise du sport étudiant. They “set up the schedule, they govern it” (part. 2), “they facilitate ...they provide the arena for competition” (part. 4) and they “deal with issues sensitive and non-sensitive...in a very real business-like way” (part. 2). This federation promotes itself using the following mission:

La Fédération Québécoise du sport étudiant (FQSE) a comme mission d'assurer le développement et la promotion du sport et de l'activité physique dans le milieu de l'enseignement (primaire, secondaire, collégial et universitaire) comme outil privilégié pour favoriser l'éducation et la santé des jeunes du Québec (FQSE, 2006).

Overall, the principals seemed to agree that “the values underlying the sport étudiant are important. Nobody in education would deny how important they are. For example, the fair play... the participation” (part. 10) and “the opportunities. I like the belief and value

system of the sport étudiant and I like what it does for school sports” (part. 4). However, outside of the educational aspect of the sport étudiant, some principals noted some issues.

For example:

It’s hard for them [sport étudiant] because they must cater to the English community and the English community is very dispersed. It’s hard to keep everybody happy and schedule games in certain schools and scheduling them with a school that is in Hudson or in St-Leonard you know. In certain schools, no matter what you do, you are at a disadvantage because you are not well situated to begin with. It all depends on the number of teams and particular categories that dictate where you are going to play. There are certain changes that happen and no matter what happens, after a while, another problem arises and new complications arrive. (part. 4)

Additionally, the sport étudiant does not seem to be concerned with the difficulties of “time constraints, leaving early and missing two periods. I mean we have teachers and we have an administrator that is on the sport étudiant and have definitely spoken about our difficulties with time, but I think it falls on deaf ears” (part. 5).

Two participants said that the sport étudiant favours a competitive environment rather than offering a non-competitive environment. For example, one participant states that “I’m not worried about the sport étudiant teams [students participating in his school], because those kids are really, really active, it’s the other 40-50 percent who don’t get to participate” (part. 7).

The following quote demonstrates an important concern:

...if you have a crappy team in sport étudiant, you will probably get pummelled every game, because no one will take any mercy on you. I totally support the sport étudiant. The problem I have with that league, with the whole concept of it, is it's political. It's political because there are certain things you can't govern. You can't pick your coaches [i.e., coaches from other schools], so when you have a league and you have coaches who are running the score up, or trying to find loopholes and even at the grade seven level, loopholes and rules, you know, I don't want to be a part of that, and the only reason that happens is because sometimes they are not educators. You know, when you hire a guy who is 17 or 18 years old to coach, it's not his fault, he only wants to win, that's all he knows. I'm not sure everybody adheres to the rules developed by the sport étudiant. (part. 10)

Relationship Between Principals and Coaches

Principals' selection of coaches. One of the roles of the school principal is to hire teachers who will participate in extra-curricular activities. For example, "when I interview new teachers, I look for what extra-curricula activities they can do; whether it's sports, the clubs, or tutoring. So we always expect our teachers to have enormous duties" (part. 7). However, all of our school principals mentioned that most of their sports were coached and organized by their physical educators and then the rest of the staff helps out if needed. Moreover, there seems to be several reasons why principals prefer to have teachers as coaches rather than to bring in volunteers from the outside community. One of the reasons is that volunteers from the outside community do not have a pedagogical background:

I prefer teachers because I think that coaching is education and sometimes coaches out there are not educators, they are coaches. They know the sport but they don't know the kids...they might be wonderful people but they don't know how to talk to kids when they come in this building, and they will say certain things that will make it worse, the teacher who coaches can still keep an eye on how you are doing in school, still using school and sports together to make this child into a whole child. (part. 4)

Another reason for having teachers as coaches is that it “creates that bond with the kids. It develops respect, it puts the teacher on a level where they feel approachable to the kids, and it is good for teachers in general. The kids see them differently” (part. 1).

Furthermore, it comes back to the mission of the school:

...if it's a coach from within the building, a teacher, the coaching doesn't end after the practice or after the game. That person is still keeping an eye on how you are doing in school, still using school and sports together to make this child into a whole child, to totally develop this person and through the sports they are encouraging academics. (part. 4)

For this reason, most school principals prefer teachers because “teachers who are coaches see the value in coaching” (part. 1).

However, one principal had a slightly different view than the others. This participant suggested that “in a vibrant school community I would say both teachers and community outsiders should coach because that means you are providing a wider variety to the students” (part. 8).

The issue of coach certification was also discussed. Coaches in school sport programs are not required to be certified. The principals felt that, since most of their coaches are physical educators, the physical educators meet the requirements to coach:

They are encouraged to [be certified], but not required. Not yet, no. Because we hired physical education graduates, a lot of them are level one or two. I'm a level three coach in basketball, [name] is a level three in volleyball, and there [are] a couple of level two[s] floating around. It was not a requirement, but it's encouraged and it's also part of their professional development. So if they say they want to take a level one course, or level two, we pay for it or at least they can apply for funds from the school board to pay for it. (part. 10)

Interestingly, coach certification is required in certain sports, such as "gymnastics, football, rugby, and swimming. To some degree, anything where there is a high risk, perhaps injury, you know that type of thing" (part. 2). Though the participants all felt differently about the issue of coach certification, they did all agree that certification in first aid was required to ensure the safety of their students.

Interactions with coaches. According to the principals in the present study, after a teacher or a community member was hired to coach, the interactions between the principal and the coach seemed informal or even non-existent:

'How is it going? Your team is looking great! When is your next game? Make sure I get a schedule so I can go to the games. So you're off today!' ...All that stuff. Well you asked them if there is any way you can help them. Sometimes we have a problem that we are worried about, getting a replacement, certain day-to-day concerns, more house work, house keeping stuff. (part. 1)

Or sometimes, “meetings at the end of the year and at the beginning of the year, and basically see where we want to go, but other than that no” (part. 2). Here are some examples of typical interactions between coaches and principals:

[I meet with the coaches] (a) when I have to sign the forms, (b) when they come for money, (c) to remind me which games to attend, and (d) if there is a letter of complaint from the sport étudiant. So there are often a lot of informal interactions. (part. 7)

The main reason why there are not a lot of interactions between the principals and the coaches is due to the time restraints. For example, “it would be nice, but there is just not enough time. There is one thing, where I know they get together and they talk about issues, I respond to some of those needs, but I don’t necessarily have the time to sit down with them” (part. 4).

Furthermore, we asked the principals if they evaluated their coaches. All of the principals said that they did not, partly because they did not have enough time and partly because the coaches are volunteers who sacrifice their time and effort for the students and the school. For example:

In this school, it’s voluntary and it wouldn’t be fair for the teachers. If, however, I start getting sport étudiant letters about unsportsmanlike conduct and something like that, then we have a chat. No, typically the kids will sign up for a sport, but will not sign up with a teacher they don’t get along with. So that is pretty much self-regulated. I’m not forcing them [coaches] to do basketball or rugby, so they pick the sport or they can tutor and then they run the team and it works pretty well. (part. 7)

Hopes and fears for the coaches. School principals oversee everything in the school and make sure that everything is working properly. We asked our participants what hopes, fears, and concerns they had for the coaches working in their schools. Three main hopes were identified. First, school principals hoped “that the coaches enjoy their experience and that the kids remember that they (the coaches) are there giving up their time and energy and everything else” (part. 2). Second, our participants wish that the coaches “continue to do what they do, and continue to do more...as well as hoping that coaches are following the play safe environment and that their instruction is safe and based on solid knowledge” (part. 4). Finally, principals hoped that “the philosophy of the coach meets the philosophy of the school, which would be to create an individual who has integrity and understand team sports, team spirit and achieves his or her highest potential” (part. 5).

As for fears and concerns, the principals replied that they hoped not to “have a coach [who] has an agenda that is not of the school or allows certain things to go on that would be contrary to the school’s philosophy” (part. 5). For example, “when there is a banner or a trophy, which takes away from the focus in any way” (part. 4) or:

You come across somebody who is there for self gain, is there because it’s a win-at-all-cost type of thing. I never believed in that. Sports are supposed to be fun at this level and you go out there and it’s part of the educational process and unless you’re learning from it, then there is no place for it. (part. 2)

Another fear is that the coach works too much and “gets a burnout...those things are set backs. You’ve got concerns” (part. 4). One of our principals proposed a solution to this fear:

As of right now, coaching is strictly voluntary. I would love that the extra-curricular activities that they do, [to] be part of their work load, so then they are validated. So, for example, you would be looking for me, and say ok, you are the rugby coach, during the season how many hours did you spend? You would come back to see me and say 80 hours. Then I'd say, you know what, during the year, let's break it up into 40 weeks at 2 hours a week. That's the time I'm giving you back, for coaching. It would be nice to make it part of their work load. For validating and showing that you appreciate their help. Furthermore, we are trying to work on that so maybe they can have less supervision. Maybe they can have the odd pedagogical day off in June. It would be nice to make that part of their work load for the ones that want to do it. (part. 7)

Relationship Between Principals and Parents

Based on our data, there seems to be very few interactions between parents and principals regarding the sport program and these interactions tend to be informal: "If I sit beside a parent during a game, we will chat, but not on an official basis. No one has ever complained or come to see me concerning the sports program" (part. 2). However, some principals mentioned that they will "see parents if there is a behavioural or academic issue, or I need something to be addressed. But I wouldn't say that we interact concerning the sports program" (part. 5).

Relationship Between Principals and Athletes

According to the principals in our study, they rarely communicate with the athletes, "except if there is a discipline issue, then there may be a consequence, such as not participating in their respective school sport" (part. 4).

Discussion

In this section, the major findings are presented and compared to the results from other studies in the literature. The discussion is organized into three parts: the characteristics of our sampling, the school principals' views on school sports, and the relationships between the principals and the coaches.

Characteristics of Our Sampling

The characteristics of our sample are divided into four areas: (a) types of schools, (b) gender of the principal, (c) principalship, and (d) prior teaching experience.

Types of schools. Quebec's education system offers a wide range of programs and services from kindergarten to university. In July 1998, the number of school boards in Quebec was reduced to 72, which were then organized along linguistic lines. Now, "there are 60 French school boards and 9 English school boards, with enrolments ranging from 750 to 75,000, for a median size of approximately 9,130 students" (QESAO, 2006, p. 13). As of the latest report (2003-2004) on the number of secondary educational institutions in Quebec, there were 441 public schools and 157 private schools. There are also 288 combined elementary/high schools, of which 229 are public and 59 are private (BSE, 2005). For this study, we used three English school boards. The first two are situated in the Montreal region and the third in the Outaouais region. In the Montreal region, we used the Lester B. Pearson School Board (6 out of 12 high schools) and the English Montreal School Board (2 out of 18 high schools). Finally, we used the Western Quebec School Board (3 out of 9 high schools). Therefore, our sample was composed of 11 public (community) high schools that are representative of English educational institutions in the broader population.

Gender. Based on documents from Statistics Canada, in the 2004–2005 school year there were approximately 15,200 elementary and secondary schools in Canada. During this period, about 8,000 men and 7,000 women were principals either in an elementary or secondary school (Statistics Canada, 2006). Men accounted for a significantly larger percentage of school principals (81%) in the Territories compared to the rest of Canada. Women accounted for close to half (47%) of principals overall. At the elementary level, women made up 53% of principals, and at the high school level 68% of principals were men (Statistics Canada, 2006). Therefore, we believe that our sample of five women and six men is representative of the gender repartition in the school principal population.

Though this study did not look for differences between men and women, it could be an interesting topic for future studies. According to Mertz and McNeely (1998), “the literature on women and leadership suggest[s] an either-or paradigm, that is, either they think and act like their male counterparts or they think and act differently” (p. 219). However, “the answer to the implied question is not as simplistic as suggested by the paradigm but rather requires a more complicated, multidimensional explanatory model, one that addresses sociocultural and contextual factors as well as gender” (p. 219).

Principalship. All of our participants were teachers prior to becoming school principals. According to Statistics Canada (2006), typically, “principals begin their careers as teachers, becoming principals once they have gained classroom experience and taken further training. As a result, school principals tend to be older than the average for the labour force as a whole” (p. 2). Hence, in the 2004–2005 school year, 57% of principals in Canada were 50 years or older and only 12% were between the ages of 20 and 39 (Statistics Canada, 2006). In our study, we did not ask our participants their ages,

but we do know that they had between 6 and 30 years of teaching experience with a mean average of 17. Therefore, on the criterion of age, our participants are most likely matching the profile of school principals in Canada.

Nonetheless, Allison (1997) suggests that the roles played by school principals have changed dramatically during the past few decades, mainly because of (a) numerous reforms to reach higher standards and greater accountability, (b) demands from parents, (c) increased paperwork, and (d) changes in global school management. Despite the fact that school principals have increasing responsibilities, salaries and benefits have not kept pace. Hence, these changes have led to an increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining individuals as school principals (Whitaker, 2003). We could therefore ask why, an individual will accept the position of school principal as our participants did.

Throughout the interviews, our participants indicated that after many years acting as a teacher, they felt a need for change and the position of school principal allowed them to still contribute to education by sharing their knowledge and experience. This is in line with what was published in the monthly newsletter of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (Communicator, Dec. 2005): “95 percent of principals begin their education careers as teachers before they enter administration. The reason why former classroom teachers decide that they are better suited for administration varies greatly” (p. 1), but the main reasons are (a) the possibility of facing new challenges, (b) the opportunity to have more influence in decision making, and (c) a desire to earn a higher salary. This is also congruent with Oplatka’s (2001) study of women principals which suggested that teachers become school principals because of a lack of self-fulfillment as teachers and because they want to set new goals, reframe their managerial

perspectives, replenish their energy, reinforce their innovative behaviours, and look for new sources of challenges.

Prior teaching experience. Of our 11 participants, five were previously physical education teachers, two were elementary teachers and the others taught various disciplines at the high school level. The over-representation of physical education teachers in the position of school principal can be explained by their close relationship to sport and physical education. In our study, many principals attributed their success as a school principal to the fact that they had previously been physical education teachers, which is in keeping with Trudel et al.'s (1995) study of French schools in Ontario:

Le travail des enseignants en éducation physique à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de l'école les prédispose à devenir directeur car ils sont appelés à rencontrer beaucoup de personnes et à animer plusieurs activités spéciales...ils occupent souvent un poste dans le comité exécutif de diverses associations et quand on leur demande ce qu'ils souhaiteraient exercer comme activité professionnelle dans cinq ou dix ans, plusieurs se voient dans un poste d'administrateur. (p. 76)

Mission statements. Our results show that every principal agreed with their school's mission statement, which articulates the values, beliefs and principles of the school. The principals believed that schools should not be solely academically oriented, but that extra-curricular activities play an important role in a student's life. This is because most schools want to offer programs that will prepare students to become citizens with positive values and work ethics, which can be only achieved by providing academics, sports and other activities. In their study on school climate and leadership, Dinham, Caine, Cragie, and Wilson (1995) found that, apart from the primary concern of academic performance,

engaging in interscholastic sports benefits the students, teachers, administration, and the community and is a source of pride for the school.

The notion of *initiative* proposed by Larson (2000) can help us see why sports can be a tool to meet the needs of mission statements. Larson suggests that initiatives are a key component to a youth's positive social development. He argues that, given today's job demands and basic lifestyle requirements, youths need to take charge of their lives through the development of initiatives. Larson states that there are three key components to the construct of initiatives: intrinsic motivation, concerted engagement, and temporal effort directed towards a goal. For Larson, structured voluntary activities, such as sports, arts, music, hobbies, and organizations offer the best conditions for initiative development. An example of an initiative is involvement in extra-curricular activities because it is voluntary (youths must be intrinsically motivated), requires attention (elements of challenge), and requires effort over time. Furthermore, Larson differentiates how sport (which requires attention and effort over time and is voluntary) differs from school (which requires attention and effort over time, but is not voluntary), and television viewing (which is voluntary, but does not require attention or effort over time). Therefore, offering a well-structured sports program to the students is one strategy to meet a goal of promoting the overall development and well-being of the students.

It has been recognized that school principals play an important role in the implementation of the school mission (Abolghasemi, McCormick & Connors, 1999; Smith & Holdaway, 1995). For example, in a study with Australian principals working with information and communication technology, Schiller (2003) demonstrated that many of them recognised the critical role they play in facilitating and implementing various

educational mediums and the importance of having a clearly defined and articulated mission. For Abolghasemi et al. (1999), “principals who demonstrate strong visionary behaviours receive more support from teachers towards their vision of the school” (p. 85). In our study, school principals stated that they are the first ones to promote their mission and how, using their coaching skills, they strive to have all of their staff working in the same direction based on the same values.

All our participants indicated that to offer sports programs, they need adequate financial resources. According to Smith and Holdaway (1995), “there is currently a great concern about the availability of adequate finances at all levels [because] education has faced major cutbacks at a time when international comparisons demand an increased focus on excellence” (p. 33). Therefore, with financial cutbacks, teachers must volunteer more of their time and are left with fewer resources.

The benefits of school sports. All the principals interviewed seemed to have experienced many positive developmental outcomes through their own sport involvement and believed that providing extra-curricular activities’, including sports, was an essential part of the development of both the school’s culture and the student’s character. For example, our participants remembered taking part in school sports because it was fun, it helped them to develop friendships, and it encouraged them to stay in school. This sense of belonging was reported by Lepage-Simard (1999) in her study in high schools in Quebec City, by James (1995) in his study on high schools in Toronto, and by Marsh and Kleitman (2003) in a longitudinal study on high school sports participation in the United States.

Considering that most of our participants had many positive experiences when they participated in school sports and that 7 of our 11 participants had coached in the past, it makes sense that they promoted the presence of a sports program in their school. In general, our participants were pleased with the way the sport étudiant was organized, although several of them had concerns with regards to participation, competition and time constraints. To assess to what extent the sport étudiant program is a structure that allows school principals to reach the goals of their mission statement is difficult to determine from our data. However, the work of authors such as Jones (2005), Kirk (2006, 2004), and Siedentop (2002), can provide an appropriate conceptual framework in which to investigate the appropriateness of a sports program like the sport étudiant in the future.

School Principals and the Coaches

A study conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals found that lack of time, too much paperwork, and insufficient financial resources are barriers to principals fulfilling their expected roles (NASSP, 2001). In fact, high school principals have little time to interact with their teachers and students and even less time for coaches in their school.

Coach selection. One of the roles of the school principals is to hire teachers who will participate in extra-curricular activities. In our research, several reasons arose why principals prefer for their coaches to be teachers rather than volunteers from the outside community. One of the main reasons is that teachers have a pedagogical background, which principals feel is an advantage. Not only do they teach their athletes skills, techniques and strategies, but, as educators, they can look beyond the competitive side of sport. Are teacher-coaches really able to play both roles? According to Jones et al.

(2004), the answer is “yes”. Following interviews with coaches, these authors concluded their study by saying that “[coaches] went far as to proclaim that ‘coaching is a form of teaching’ in that it primarily involves communicating, learning and maintaining positive relationships with those being taught” (p.21). However, Lee (1988) felt it could be difficult for an individual to play both roles because teaching or educating is seen to be more about the individual’s total development, and coaching has been viewed as the sequential attainment of physical skills and their testing in competition.

According to one of the principals, the best situation would be a mix of teacher-coaches and coaches from the outside community. That way, it will be easier for the school to establish communication with the outside community. Nettles (1991) defines *community involvement* as “actions that organizations and individuals (e.g., schools, parents...) take to promote student development” (p. 380). This can be linked to Hughes’ (1994) statement that “education is but one primary institution of society, and formal schooling is only a part of education. In a balanced, healthy society each institution contributes to the progress and well-being of the society [student]” (p. 260). As a result, schools and communities can work together to provide better coaching to the students. In fact, in 2002, Canada established the Canadian sport policy (Sport Canada, 2002) with the focus of improving sports by increasing the collaboration amongst stakeholders (i.e., government officials, community sports, school sports).

Regardless of whether those in charge of the student athletes are teacher-coaches or community coaches, the issue of training and certification is an important one. It has been said that coaches in general are not well prepared to teach moral values (Bernard, 1998, Bernard & Trudel, 2004).

Hopes and fears. A Canadian study by Hansen and Gauthier (1988) revealed that personal enjoyment, skill development, character development, and personal challenge were the top reasons for participation or involvement in coaching at the school and community levels. These motivations were also reflected in our data. School principals in our sample said that, even though they recruited teachers who would participate in extra-curricular activities, most teachers who coach do so because they have played the sport in the past and wish to share and continue their enjoyment of that sport.

However, school coaches are not immune to stress. Rizak et al. (1990), Trudel et al. (1995), and Lacroix (2006) all found that teaching and being involved in extra-curricular activities was overwhelming and could lead to withdrawal from coaching. The same finding has also been observed in the United States (Capel, Sisley, Becky & Desertrain, 1987; Stoner 1992). According to Pauline, Lund, Pauline and Weinburg (2004), if principals maximize coaches' enjoyment of their role, they will retain their coaches for a longer period of time. One suggestion for creating happy and satisfied coaches is to provide adequate resources for coaches to act in accordance with the school's mission. This can be achieved by getting the community to donate money to the school (Hughes, 1994), and by arranging periodical meetings with coaches. Unfortunately, this suggestion can be difficult to put into application because school principals have little time (NASSP, 2001) and coaches are reluctant to participate in meetings outside of their team activities (Lemyre, 2004; Wright, Trudel, & Culver, in press).

Revised Conceptual Framework: Holistic Coaching

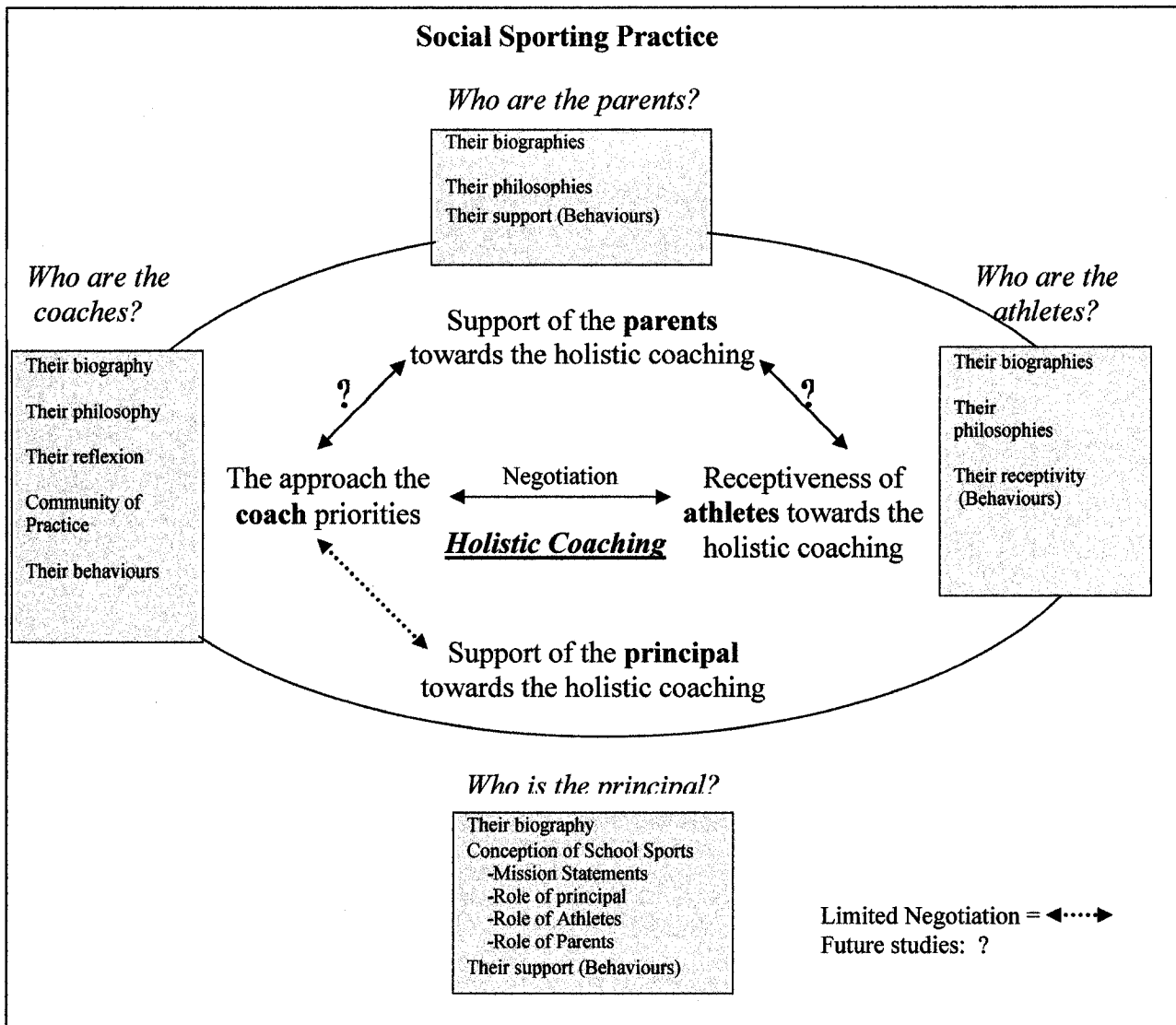


Figure 3. Revised conceptual framework of the Holistic Coaching in high school sports.

Taking into consideration the results of this study, we have reworked our conceptual framework for the study of holistic coaching in the context of high school sports. The new conceptual framework was modified in the following ways: (a) there is a dotted arrow representing a limited negotiation between the school principals and the coaches; (b) since there were no interactions between the parents and the school principals, we have moved the parents into a separate category; (c) we have drawn arrows depicting that

there may be negotiations between parents and athletes as well as between coaches and parents, however, these negotiations are indicated by a question mark and studies will need to be done to determine their place in the framework; and (d) there are no arrows showing negotiations between the principal and the parents or between the principal and the athletes.

Conclusion

We began this study by stating that high school sports can create excitement, competition, and challenge for those who participate in them, and generate pride in students and parents for the school and the community (Harris, 1999), but little is known about high school sports in Canada. Therefore, this research was an opportunity to investigate high school sports and specifically, '*who*' the high school principals are.

This study has shown that (a) most school principals have participated in sports as an athlete or a coach, and that they believe these experiences equipped them with some of the skills necessary to be a school principal; (b) being a physical education teacher often leads to becoming a school principal; (c) school sports are important to the students, the teachers and the school environment; (d) principals support the mission statements of their school; (e) principals are generally pleased with the actual sport étudiant structure; and (f) they prefer to select coaches from within the school.

Overall, we can conclude that the discourse with the school principals favour the developmental value coaching discourse as opposed to the rationalistic-performance coaching discourse.

The limitations of this study are to the scope of the principals' sayings, because we are unable to validate the truth of their sayings in our interviews. Furthermore, the findings and results of this study may not be generalizable to French schools or to English schools outside the Montreal and Outaouais regions.

Finally, one must remember that the school principals are only one component of the overall conceptual framework of school sports. At the high school level, there are three major groups of actors involved: the coaches, the athletes, and the entourage (i.e., parents

and school principals). Hence it will be important to continue to investigate the perspectives of these other actors as well as the relationships between the participants.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

Interview Guide (School Principals)

Section 1

Hello, I am a masters' student from the faculty of human kinetics, and I am presently working within a research group studying Canadian youth sports. Until now, studies on youth sports have focused more on sports outside of the school setting (i.e., civil; e.g.; hockey, basketball...) Therefore, our research group is embarking on a series of studies focusing on high school sports. In the studies to come we want to interrogate coaches, student athletes, and parents. However for my masters' thesis, I am limiting myself to studying the principals' perspectives towards school sports. Thus, we want to gather information on your perspective of school sports. I would like to paint a portrait of school sports by acquiring information on your experiences, and knowledge in this domain. To help us paint our portrait, I will ask you questions, on your experience, knowledge and feelings of school sport in your school.

Demographics

1. How long have you been the school principal at this school?
 - a. Have you been a school principal in another school before this one?
 - i. How many?
 - ii. Same school board?
 - b. So we can say that you have x years of experience as a school principal?
2. Were you a teacher prior to becoming a school principal?
 - a. What was your teaching domain?
 - b. How many years did you teach?
3. What prompted you to become a school principal?

Section 2

Narrative

4. In general, did sports or an active lifestyle play an important role in your life?
5. Do you or did you play any sports?
 - a. Which sport(s), the most significant and how many years, what level and context (civil, scholastic)?
 - b. What was the nature of your experience in sports outside of school?
 - c. What was the nature of your experience in school sports?
6. Where you ever a coach or still a coach today?
 - a. Which sport(s), the most significant and how many years, what level and context (civil, scholastic)?
 - b. What was the nature of your experience in civil sports?

- c. What was the nature of your experience in school sports?
7. Did your experience in sports help you in assuming your role as a principal?
- a. Please explain?

Section 3

Now my questions will focus on the sport in your school

Questions regarding the place of sport in the school
What is the principals' philosophy towards school sport?

- 8. What place does sport play in your school?
 - a. How will you compare it to the Physical education classes?
 - b. How will you compare it to other classes (English, maths..?)?
- 9. Is it important to have a sports program in your school?
 - a. Give examples?
 - b. What is your role in sports as a school principal?
 - i. Do you have an athletic director?
 - 1. What is his/her role?
 - c. What are the main issues you have to deal with regarding sports in your school?
 - i. Is budget an issue?
 - ii. Is the gym (time) an issue?
 - iii. Are other Profs' complaints an issue?
- 10. Does your sport program have a long tradition?
 - a. Do you know what year it started?
- 11. Do you use your sports program in your publicity about your school?
- 12. During the year do you have meetings with other school principals?
 - a. During these meetings do you talk about interscholastic sports?
- 13. How many sport teams do you have in your school?
 - a. Which sports?
 - b. How many of each gender?
- 14. Do your teams play within the sport étudiant structure? Do you think that the sport étudiant structure plays an adequate role?
- 15. On the web-site of your school we can see that mission.....
 - a. Were you involved in the definition of the mission statement?
 - b. (if yes), what do you find the most important aspect of the mission statement?

- c. (if no), if you were able to change it what would you change it for?
- d. Do you have in mind examples of concrete measures that are in place to support this mission statement?

Section 4

Questions specific to the coaches

16. Are you looking for a specific type of coach?
- a. (if yes) what type of coach are you looking for?
 - b. How do you recruit your coaches?
 - c. Are there any difficulties in recruiting your coaches?
 - d. Do most of the coaches return each year?
 - e. Are your coaches required to be certified?
 - i. Are they all?
 - f. Do you think your coaches have enough knowledge to coach in your program?
 - i. How do you think they have developed their knowledge?
 - g. Are there any interactions between you and the coaches?
 - i. Is it on a regular basis?
 - ii. What types of interactions occur?
 - iii. What are the themes discussed?
 - h. Is there any kind of evaluation done on your coaches?
 - i. We talked about the mission statement; do you think your coaches know the mission statements?
 - i. Do you think their coaching can meet this mission?
 - 1. All coaches? Some? None
 - j. Speaking in general meaning referring to all the coaches in the leagues in which your teams are involved, do you think that the coaching is good?
 - i. What is good coaching according to you?
 - ii. What should coaches' strive for in high school athletics?
 - iii. What is positive?
 - iv. What is negative?
17. Questions specific to the student athletes?
- a. Are there any important requests from the students regarding sport?
 - b. From your perspective: Why are students involved in your sport programs? What do they want to obtain from participating?

- i. Do you see any difference between genders?
 - 1. (i.e., participation, funding, views...)
 - c. Do you have any rules and regulations regarding the student athletes?
 - i. Are the students required to keep a minimum grade average?
 - ii. Maximum number of years and interdisciplinary sports the students are allowed to participate?
 - iii. Any code of conduct to sign? (may I have a copy)
 - d. Do you have a ceremony at the end of the year to celebrate your teams' performances? What is the focus of this ceremony? Why is it important for the school?

18. Questions specific to the athletes parents

- a. Are there any important requests from the parents regarding sport?
- b. From your perspective: Why do parents put their child in your sport programs? What do they want to obtain from participating?
- c. Are there any differences between fathers and mothers?
- d. Are there any rules and regulations regarding the parents?
 - i. Any fees to register their son/daughter in the sports program?
 - ii. Any code of conduct to sign?
- e. How do you see the parents being involved in the sports program?
- f. Do you interact a lot with parents concerning the sports program and what is the nature of the discussions?

19. Closure

- a. In an attempt to summarize this interview, I have two last questions;
 - i. If I was a new school principal calling you for advice regarding high school sport what would you tell me?
 - ii. Suppose that next year there is no sport in your school. Will it be very different in your school?
- b. Would you like to add anything that was not mentioned before?

Thank you for your time, and if possible if ever there is any information that is not understood (or more information is needed) is it possible to contact you by phone?

Appendix B



Université d'Ottawa • University of Ottawa

Faculté des sciences de la santé
École des sciences de l'activité physique

Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics

CONSENT FORM (school principal)

Name of researcher: Pierre Trudel Ph.D.

Name of co-researchers: Natalie Durand-Bush, Penny Werthner, Wade Gilbert, Marc Cloes

Institution: Ottawa University
Health Sciences Faculty
School of Human Kinetics.

Telephone number: 562-5800 (extension 4268)

E-mail address: pierre.trudel@uottawa.ca

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Dr. Pierre Trudel, professor in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa and his colleagues. The purpose of the research is to draw a general profile of interscholastic sports at the high school level. The data will be used by M. Richard Montreuil for his master's thesis.

My participation will consist essentially of participating in one (1) tape-recorded interview (lasting between 45 and 60 minutes). I understand that the contents of the documents related to my participation will be used only for Dr. Pierre Trudel's research and that my confidentiality will be respected through the use of a number and the alteration of minor context details where necessary.

I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, refuse to participate or refuse to answer questions. If I withdraw from the study, the data collected from me until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed and will not be used. I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. Anonymity will be assured where possible through the use of numbers on all documentation including original transcripts. Tape recordings of interviews and other data collected will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office and will be kept for five (5) years. Regarding using quotes from my interview:

- I wish to be cited but I want a number to be used _____
- I wish not to be cited at all _____

If I have any questions with regards to the ethical conduct of this research, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5, tel.: 613-562-5841, email: ethics@uottawa.ca. There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep.

Research Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

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