

Developing Botswana Coaches' Competencies Through the LifeMatters Programme: Teaching Mental Skills Through Games

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Abstract

This study aims to determine if participating in a train-the-trainer version of LifeMatters, a programme combining games and mental skills, influenced the competence, confidence, connections, character, or caring (5 Cs) of sports (e.g. football, athletics, basketball) teachers/coaches in Botswana. Coaches' perceptions of the programme were also investigated. Coaches (50 males, 12 females, 1 unspecified) in 2015 participated in intensive LifeMatters training. Ages ranged from 24 to 62 ($M = 37.63$). They completed a pre and post questionnaire measuring the 5 Cs, and a qualitative programme evaluation. Coaches showed significant increases in competence, confidence, and connection. Content analysis classified the 434 qualitative data units obtained from the evaluation of the programme. Skills most frequently mentioned were goal setting, self-confidence, imagery, and relaxation. Additional comments related to beliefs that the programme should be taught throughout Botswana. The coaches felt that LifeMatters was a valuable programme that had a positive influence on their coaching as well as their own lives.

Introduction

Coach education through workshops, conferences, and a variety of courses plays a fundamental role in coaches' training and their role in positive youth development. It is important for coaches to be able to engage in a variety of learning experiences, although generally they are not satisfied with didactic and classroom-oriented coach education (Mesquita *et al.* 2014). South African coaches have indicated that in addition to physical training techniques, they want to learn more about psychological factors such as motivational techniques (Kubayi *et al.* 2016). Cultural sport psychology research provides additional evidence that socio-cultural factors have a direct and indirect effect on coaches and athletes' perceptions, values, motivations, attitudes, and behaviours (Tshube and Hanrahan 2018 and 2016; Schinke and Hanrahan 2009). In addition to these factors, research in Sport Psychology and Sociology of Sport demonstrates that gender, experience, cultural values, and coach education are factors that directly and indirectly influence athletes and coaches' perceptions and experiences (Kroshus *et al.* 2014; Norman 2010; Lorimer and Jowett 2010; Messer and Knoppers *et al.* 1993 and Ogunneyi 2015).

In this study, we look specifically at Botswana coaches' experiences of the LifeMatters programme. Hanrahan established the LifeMatters programme in 2005 to enhance the psychological well-being of youth through games and mental skills. There is evidence that the programme enhances life satisfaction, self-worth, and happiness of disadvantaged youth (Hanrahan 2005; 2012; 2013; Hanrahan and Francke 2015). Even though the programme was designed for youth, it was delivered to coaches in Botswana (i.e. Gaborone, Francistown and Kasane). The aim was to tailor LifeMatters, which had previously predominantly been used in Latin America (i.e. Argentina and Mexico), to suit the objectives of coaches in Botswana, who could then impart the skills to students and athletes. Coaching experiences in Botswana and the Southern Africa region are different from those in industrialized nations. Coaches in Southern Africa work with youths who face serious problems of unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and lack of proper sport facilities and training. Consequently, there has been a surge in policy frameworks, programmes,

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and research targeted specifically at youth development (Ayikwa and Jager 2017 and Toriola and Brits 2008). Lack of empirical evidence to inform policy and programmes has led to limited impact on these programmes and policies.

Botswana and the Southern African region are some of the least studied countries in Sport Psychology. An online search done in 2017 using the keywords; 'Botswana sport', 'South Africa sport', 'Zimbabwe sport', and 'Namibia sport' on ProQuest databases produced a total result of 18,967 studies. Most of the scholarly journal articles were published in the *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance* and other international journals such as *International Journal of the History of Sport* and *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. It is worth noting that additional literature can be found in respective national libraries, archives, and other online databases. However, ProQuest is one of the most popular online database providers globally. Almost 19,000 publications may sound like a lot, but in comparison the keywords 'Australia sport', for instance, yielded almost 500,000 studies or entries. 'American sport' resulted in over three million publications while 'English sport' produced almost 15 million publications. These statistics indicate that there is need for further research in the Southern African region.

Research that has been conducted in the Southern African region includes the impact of political history on sport development particularly in South Africa and Zimbabwe, the role of sport in nation-building after independence (Amusa and Toriola 2010), and the use of sport to address social problems and fight HIV/AIDS (Lindsey and Banda 2011). South Africa has demonstrated to the Southern African region and the rest of the world that it has made economic and political progress to accord its athletes success at major games. In addition to success at major international games or sporting activities, South Africa became the first African country to host the prestigious FIFA World Cup in 2010. The 2010 FIFA World Cup budget was R15 billion (US\$2bn) with R8.4 billion (US\$1.1bn) spent in building five new stadiums and upgrading some existing facilities, while R6.4bn (\$800m) was invested in public transport initiatives and supporting infrastructure (Wium *et al.* 2011). None of the countries in the Southern African region, including Botswana, have the capacity to host events of this magnitude.

It is worth noting that even though Botswana started participating in the Olympic games in 1980, the country won its first Olympic medal at the London 2012 Olympic games. Other successes in the Southern African region include Namibia's four Olympic medals in 100 and 200m at the 1992 and 1996 Olympic games respectively (BNOC 1981). Botswana, like other countries in the Southern African region (with the exception of South Africa), does not have a national certification and accreditation programme for coaches. National sport federations heavily rely on international federations such as FIFA and International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) for certification of coaches (Tshube and Hanrahan 2016). Some of these federations conduct coaches' workshops and conferences, but do not certify coaches. Most industrialized nations have robust coach-education programmes for a variety of sports from grassroots to elite. For example, United States Track and Field provides educational opportunities for all levels of coaches, from grass roots to elite levels (Wulf 2012). These coaches acquire extensive training in sport science, technique, and tactical instruction. This type of training is not available to coaches in Botswana. Another noticeable difference is that all sports in Botswana are amateur, with the exception of a few track athletes who draw a salary from their sport, and the national Premier League football players and coaches who also draw a salary from their sport. It is worth noting that even though premier league players are considered professional athletes, teams struggle to pay player salaries (*Mmegi* 6 October 2017). All other coaches are volunteers or coach youth as an addition to their teaching activities in schools. In Botswana, over 90% of athlete development is done in schools (Tshube 2014). Therefore, enhancing the education of coaches in schools could have a positive effect on athlete development in Botswana.

Studies in youth sport have made significant progress, particularly on effective ways of addressing

problems with which young people struggle (Lerner *et al* 2005). An effective approach to working with young people is that of positive development, working to develop the capabilities of youth so that they can make positive contributions to society (Lerner 2002 and Lerner *et al.* 2011). Research in youth sport recommended a collaborative effort between youth, coaches, and parents when addressing these problems (Clay 2007; Gledhill and Harwood 2015). Young people are considered 'a capable partner' in the tripartite relationship (Lerner *et al.* 2005). One of the widely used theoretical models is the Five Cs. The Five Cs model of positive youth development (Lerner *et al.* 2005) suggests that positive youth development requires healthy development in competence (positive view of one's action in domain specific areas including social, academic, cognitive, and vocational), confidence (an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy), connection (positive bonds with people and institutions), character (respect for societal and cultural rules), and caring (a sense of empathy for others) (Lerner *et al.* 2005). Hanrahan's LifeMatters programme potentially addresses these Five Cs by combining games and mental skills training (Hanrahan 2012).

Participation in LifeMatters has been shown in Argentina, United States of America, and Mexico to enhance the self-worth and life satisfaction of orphaned teenagers (Hanrahan 2005) and teenagers living in poverty (Hanrahan 2012), and has also been used effectively with former gang members (Hanrahan 2013). The programme is based on self-determination theory which states that supporting the basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence is critical for almost all aspects of functioning (Ryan and Deci 2000). LifeMatters includes components specifically designed to enhance the basic psychological needs of autonomy (through peer-led activities), relatedness (through team building), and competence (through success achieved in challenges, homework, and structured activities) (Hanrahan 2013). These basic psychological needs conveniently overlap some of the Five Cs as they both focus on competence, connection and caring links well with relatedness and aspects of confidence relate to autonomy. Hanrahan has run the programme with orphans, impoverished teenagers, and former gang members in Mexico, adolescents in the slums of Buenos Aires (Argentina), and inner-city youth in Cleveland, Ohio (USA) (Hanrahan 2013).

Instead of running the programme directly with youth in Botswana, we decided to trial a train-the-trainer approach consistent with Goodman 2000's recommendations to enable the building of resources and knowledge within the community. For the first time we ran the LifeMatters programme with groups of coaches with the idea that they could, in turn, run the programme with youth. We wanted the coaches to be familiar with a questionnaire designed to measure the Five Cs for their future work with youth, so they completed the questionnaire themselves. The purpose of this study was to determine if LifeMatters influenced the Five Cs of coaches involved in the training programme and to investigate the coaches' perceptions of the program.

Methodology

A total of 63 coaches (50 males, 12 females, 1 unspecified) based in Gaborone, Francistown, and Kasane participated in the training. The Botswana Integrated Sports Association (BISA) invited coaches to participate in the project. Most coaches were senior teachers in sport, a position in Botswana schools for teachers with the additional role of managing sport in the school. The ages of coaches ranged from 24 to 62 ($M = 37.63$). They had between 2 and 29 years of coaching experience ($M = 11.66$ years). The main sports coached were football, softball, and athletics.

Geldhof *et al.* (2014) created and validated a Short Measure of the 5Cs of Positive Youth Development (PYD-SF), with separate versions of the PYD-SF for early adolescents and for middle or late adolescents. The middle/late adolescent version was used for the LifeMatters project in Botswana. The measure has a separate scale for each C.

The items measuring competence, as well as some of the confidence items, use a forced choice

format where respondents indicated which of two descriptions is most like them, for example, 'Some teenagers are happy with themselves most of the time' versus 'Other teenagers are often not happy with themselves', and then indicate whether the statement is 'really true for me' or 'sort of true for me'. The remaining items use 5-point Likert scales with responses ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' (for example, 'All in all I am glad I am me'), 'not important' to 'extremely important' (e.g., 'Helping to make the world a better place to live in'), 'not at all like me' to 'very much like me' (e.g., 'Knowing a lot about people of other races'), 'not well' to 'very well' (related to how well the statement describes them; e.g., 'It bothers me when bad things happen to any person'), or 'always true' to 'almost never true or never true' (e.g., 'My friends care about me). In a different study, Mueller (2014) evaluated the instrument we used in the study and found the measure to be valid and reliable. The internal consistency of the scales in this study were acceptable (Cronbach's alphas ranged from .70 to .78) with the exception of the character scale (alpha = .23).

During the training programme, there were regular checks to ensure that the content of the programme was culturally relevant. Modifications were made where necessary. For example, one of the icebreaker activities had coaches discuss three favourite Cs (i.e. cartoon character, cuisine, and colour) they have in common. The programme had to be modified early because most of the participants did not fully relate with a cartoon character. The cartoon character was replaced with their favourite car. After the training programme, the teachers/coaches were asked to complete a questionnaire containing open ended questions about their perceptions of the potential uses/issues/benefits of running the programme with athletes. For instance, teachers/coaches were asked evaluation questions such as, 'Please list three things you learned from this programme', 'What did you like most about this programme?' 'What did you like least about this programme?' 'In one year, what, if anything, do you think you will remember from this programme?' and 'What, if anything, that you learned in this programme will you use in your life in the future?'

In terms of procedure the Botswana National Sport Commission (BNSC) was the first review board to give the study ethical clearance. Following the ethical clearance from the BNSC, the University of Botswana and the University of Queensland review boards also granted the study ethical clearance. Copies of the ethical review board consent as well as information sheets and consent forms were shared with all participants. No funds were requested to support the collection or analysis of data from BISA for Gaborone workshops. BISA requested workshops also be held in Francistown and Kasane, and volunteered to provide the funding for these additional locations. BISA was responsible for the recruitment of teachers/coaches who participated in the study across the three research sites. In addition, BISA was responsible for the general logistics of how coach/teachers attended the workshops (for example, it requested leave from schools for participants) because the workshops were conducted during working hours. Teachers/coaches in Gaborone were trained first, followed by Francistown and Kasane respectively.

Ten (10) 90 minute sessions were held over three or four days in Gaborone, Francistown and Kasane. In pairs or threes, the coaches in Gaborone and Francistown also had the opportunity to trial 75% of the programme with groups of youths over the following two days. The coaches in Kasane did not have the opportunity to trial the programme with youth because of the Good Friday holidays which coincided with the exercise. Coaches completed the PYD-SF at the beginning of the first session and at the end of the last session, but before any trials with youth.

In terms of results the pre-and-post measures of the PYD-SF indicated that the coaches had significant increases in three of the five Cs, namely competence, confidence, and connection (Table 1). Within the subscales that are added together to measure competence, it is evident that although all areas of competence improved, the improvement was only significant in physical competence. All three subscales that are added together to measure confidence showed significant increases. For the subscales

that measure connection, there were significant increases for school and peer connections, but not family or neighbourhood connections. Although the overall scores for character did not improve significantly, the subscale measuring the value of diversity did show significant improvements. There were no significant differences in the PYD-SF scores for coaches who had 10 or fewer years of experience compared to those with 11 or more years of coaching experience. When comparing the scores for coaches from different places, the only significant difference was for confidence at the post-test, $F(2,44) = 3.80$, $p = .030$, with coaches from Francistown scoring significantly higher ($M = 22.56$) than coaches from Kasane ($M = 19.33$), although coaches from all locations had higher confidence scores after the programme than they did before the programme.

Table 1: T-tests Comparing Pre and Post Scores on the Short Measure of the 5 Cs of Positive Youth Development

C	Pre M	Post M	T	Df	Significance
Caring	26.42	26.67	-.66	51	.510
Competence	17.32	18.45	-2.15	43	.037
Academic	5.72	5.98	-.92	45	.360
Social	5.85	6.20	-1.37	45	.179
Physical	5.59	6.35	-2.55	47	.014
Confidence	19.64	21.56	-3.88	44	.000
Self-worth	5.41	6.26	-3.19	45	.003
Positive identity	8.74	9.19	-2.20	52	.033
Appearance	5.63	6.06	-2.10	47	.041
Character	29.60	31.87	-1.85	46	.071
Values diversity	7.69	8.28	-2.81	53	.007
Connection	29.68	30.88	-2.04	55	.046
Family	8.39	8.45	-.20	55	.841
Neighbourhood	7.43	7.63	-.87	55	.388
School	6.88	7.36	-2.20	55	.032
Peer	6.98	7.45	-2.24	55	.029

Source: authors' 2017 field work

Content analysis was used to classify the qualitative data units obtained from the evaluation of the programme. Sparkes and Smith (2014) note that content analysis accords the researcher to examine the core patterns by examining the content of the stories told. The first and second author independently read and examined the manuscripts several times. Following this process, a total of 434 data units were deduced from the data.

The most frequently cited skills that participants mentioned having learned in the programme were self-confidence, goal setting, self-control, and self-talk (Table 2). By far what the teachers/coaches liked the most were the activities (for example, 'the activities/exercises to make sure we understand the topic'. Other top mentions were how interactive and inclusive the program was and learning about the importance of mental factors. For example, one participant stated that 'It taught me that you don't just need to be physically fit to win, your mental readiness is also important'.

In terms of what the coaches/teachers liked the least, almost half of the participants either left the

question blank or indicated that they liked everything (e.g., ‘No: it is a rare opportunity to get a chance to attend a workshop of this nature. Enjoyed every presentation all the way’. The most frequently cited complaint was that there was not enough time. The most frequently cited skills they thought they would remember from the programme in a year were goal setting, relaxation exercises, everything (e.g., ‘Every time I coach, I will reflect and implement all the techniques and strategies learnt’, and techniques for enhancing self-confidence. It is worth noting that over 75% of the comments related to confidence were from participants in Kasane. The next most popular response to this question was imagery (e.g., ‘The power of imagery and its practicality in all life situations’).

Table 2: Summary of Program Evaluations

Question	Responses	Total#
Things learned through the program	Self-confidence (27), Goal setting/Motivation (25), Self-control (22), Self-talk/Positive thinking (21), Teamwork/communication (17), Attention/concentration (16), Optimal activation (15), Imagery (14), Attitude (6), Relationship of mind and body (2), Other (7)	172
What did you like most about this program?	Activities (21), Interactivity/Inclusivity (7), Learning how important mental factors are (7), Learning how to deal with different people/situations (4), Everything (3), Self-control (3), Positive outlook (2), Having fun (2), Practicality (1), Supportive staff (1), How to motivate athletes (1), Critical analysis (1), Optimising activation (1), Knowledge of the presenter (1), Quotes (1), Teaching me things I wasn't aware of (1), Helping me as a coach and personally (1), Skills to help others (1)	59
What did you like least about this program?	Nothing (or left blank; 29), Not enough time (16), Too challenging (6), The space (Kasane; 3), Tiring (2), Too much writing (2), Need detailed written descriptions of everything (2), Need video (1), Listening (1), When people didn't pay attention (1)	63
In one year, what, if anything, do you think you will remember from this program?	Relaxation exercises (10), Goal setting/Motivation (10), Techniques for enhancing confidence (9), Everything/lots of things (9), Imagery (8), Attention activities/Focus (6), Quotes (6), Teamwork (4), Activities (3), Self-talk (2), Self-discipline (1), Importance of understanding your team (1), Smiles of our trainers (1)	70
What, if anything, that you learned in this program will you use in your life in the future?	Imagery (11), Goal setting (10), Improving confidence (10), Optimal activation/relaxation (10), Everything (9), Self-talk (9), Attention (4), Help change the lives of others (4), Controlling emotions/controlling the controllable (3), Factors that affect performance (2), Self-reflection (2), Team building (2), Make positives from mistakes (1)	77
Is there anything else you would like to say about the program?	Should be taught to all Batswana (13), Very important/benefited a lot (8), Eye opener (8), Provide more course materials (e.g., video; 6), Need follow up/additional sessions (5), Need more time (5), Excellent (4), Helps us work better (4), Loved the focus on practical activities (4), Thank you (3), Clear and well planned (3), Excellent facilitators (2), Helpful in developing me as a person (1), Teach at primary level (1)	67

Source: authors' 2017 field work

The facets of the programme most likely to be remembered in one year were reported to be relaxation exercises and goal setting, although many coaches stated they would remember everything about the programme. The most popular response regarding what from LifeMatters they would use in their lives related to imagery. But again, many coaches stated that they would use everything or almost everything from the programme. One coach from Francistown stated that ‘Almost all aspects as they

help make a better me'.

When the coaches were asked if they had anything else to add, the most popular response related to the suggestion that the programme be made available nation-wide. They felt that the programme was very important and provided them with new information. Constructive suggestions included providing follow-up sessions, allowing more time for the programme, and providing additional course materials such as video.

Researchers' observations and qualitative data revealed that Gaborone, Francistown, and Kasane are inherently different, hence explaining some of the differences observed in the programme. Gaborone is the capital city of Botswana and it is the most 'modernised' in Botswana. Teachers/coaches in Gaborone have more access to information, knowledge and facilities compared to teachers/coaches in other parts of Botswana. It is important to note that even though the BNSC has offices in some parts of Botswana, sport associations and federation offices are only found in Gaborone. These differences were observed in the level of knowledge shared by teachers/coaches in Gaborone compared to teachers/coaches in Francistown and Kasane. The qualitative responses indicated that teachers/coaches in Gaborone were more articulate in English than teachers/coaches in Francistown and Kasane.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine Botswana coaches' experiences of the LifeMatters programme. It should be noted that even though the programme was originally developed for youth in marginalized communities, the authors revised the programme to use the train-the-trainer model and examine its effects on coaches. The programme was revised to meet the needs of coaches in Botswana. As indicated earlier in the study, there is a need for coach education and certification in Botswana. Botswana heavily relies on international federations for the training and certification of the country's national coaches.

Consistent with previous research on youth (Hanrahan 2005, 2012, 2013; and Hanrahan and Francke 2015), the pre and post measures of the PYD-SF indicate that the coaches had significant increases in competence, confidence, and connection. The focus on physical games within LifeMatters probably explains why the increase in competence focused on physical competence. This possibility is underscored by the activities in the programme being what coaches like the most. The initially high levels of social competence may have created a ceiling effect causing the resulting increases not to be statistically significant. The increases in all aspects of confidence in the teachers/coaches is noteworthy because confident teachers are able to promote enthusiasm in young people and are likely to set challenging goals for themselves and their learners (Howard and Blackmore 2015).

It is logical that the connection subscales that significantly increased related to school and peers rather than family and neighbourhoods, because the participants were representing their schools and working with their peers during the LifeMatters programme. The significant increase in valuing diversity may have been due to the programme being led by an Australian, or more likely the structured interactions with all the other participants that lead to them learning from their peers. During the program they worked with people of the same and opposite sex, with a wide range of ages, from multiple schools, and from a variety of sports. Although the overall character scale had poor internal consistency ($\alpha = .23$), the valuing diversity subscale was a bit better ($\alpha = .57$), nevertheless the results relating to character should be interpreted cautiously.

The qualitative programme evaluations indicated that participants highly appreciated the programme and believed it made significant positive changes in their lives. Qualitative results from this study are consistent with outcomes from other studies that have examined the extent to which organized youth programmes serve as a resource for promoting development and social capital. For example, Jarrett *et al.* (2005) observe that youth reported a strong and meaningful relationship with community adults following

an organized community youth programme. The relationship observed provided youth with access to adult resources such as information, assistance, exposure to adults' world, support, and encouragement. Even though minor changes were made for contextual and cultural relevance, participants took part fully and had a positive reflection of the programme.

Results from this research are consistent with similar studies carried out in Botswana. For example, Shehu and Moruisi (2011) explored the role of sport in shaping Botswana Olympians' personal development and capacities for social investment. The authors observed that long-term sport participation was associated with self-realisation that required athletes to construct, alter, or acquire certain values in their lives. It is, therefore, important for national federations in Botswana to incorporate this knowledge in developing coach education programmes. Coaches need to be trained to understand that positive youth development and life skills are deliberately taught not 'caught' through sport.

The researchers intend to do further research in Botswana, looking particularly at the long-term impact of the programme. For example, there is need to follow teachers/coaches in their respective schools and observe the extent to which they incorporate the programme in their daily interactions with students and athletes, and the effects that the programme may have on the youth. Future research could also address the main limitation of the current study by including control groups. Again in the future, the train-the-trainer programme may be improved by contextualising the programme to specific sporting codes and communities as indicated in the Botswana experiences. It may also be useful to provide more materials to participants in the form of videos and pictures. There is also the need to accord the programme more time for participants to fully appreciate the entire program.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the LifeMatters program provides a foundation for the development of a coach education and accreditation program in Botswana. Coaches showed significant increases in competence, confidence, and connection. Additional comments related to beliefs that the programme should be taught throughout Botswana.

In the future, the train-the-trainer program may be improved by contextualising the program to specific sporting code and communities as indicated in the Botswana experiences. It may also be useful to provide more materials to participants in the form of videos and pictures. There is also the need to accord the program more time for participants to fully appreciate the entire program.

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