
Is the best rugby practice REST? Introducing the REST pedagogical principles to Advanced-level Rugby coaches in New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study provides insights into the case of 15 coaches' experiences of the New Zealand Rugby Union's (NZRU) advanced coaching course (the first of two courses for level 3 accreditation) delivered by one of the NZRU's regional Coach Development Officers (CDO). Generally, these coaches would have excelled in the NZRU's Developing Rugby Coaches (DRC) level 2 course in order to be nominated by their provincial unions for selection into the advanced course. After this course coaches must complete a further week-long course.

The coaches' use of various coaching styles, pre (T1), and post-delivery (T2) of the advanced course (i.e. the intervention), was self-reported by the participants and supported by observations and fields notes taken by the CDO. Along with these qualitative data sources, Mosston and Ashworth's (2002) teaching styles spectrum was adapted and applied to a coaching styles continuum to gather the data, analyse it and discuss the impact that the advanced course had on their coaching practice (before completing the final, week-long game planning course).

This paper also discusses the coaches' perceptions of the four pedagogical principles (REST) that underpin a Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) approach (Thorpe & Bunker, 1989 cited in Griffin & Patton, 2005). The importance of including these principles more explicitly into coach development curricula is highlighted in the findings and discussion sections with regards to these 15 coaches' uses of pedagogical styles pre and post 'intervention', especially if the NZRU aim to achieve their aspiration of empowering rugby (NZRU, 2013, p.1).

INTRODUCTION

The ‘REST’ acronym in the ‘best rugby practice’ title of this paper stands for Thorpe and Bunker’s (1989) four (TGfU) pedagogical principles of: Representation, Exaggeration, game Sampling and Tactical complexity. Briefly, the REST principles are: Representation, developing condensed games that contain (or represent) the same tactical structure of the advanced form of the game; Exaggeration involves manipulating the secondary rules of a game to emphasise a specific strategy; Sampling refers to exposure to various game forms whereby there are similarities and differences among games that enable transfer of learning from one game form into another; finally, Tactical complexity is about matching the game to the developmental level of the players, games are designed to be developmentally appropriate progressing from relatively simple to increasingly more complex (Griffin & Patton, 2005). Arguably, using these REST principles can help the NZRU (2013) achieve aspects of Goal 4 “develop exceptional players and coaches” (p.11) and Goal 5 “community rugby will be...well coached and organized” (p.12) as set out in their ‘Towards 2016: Empowering Rugby’ strategic document (NZRU, 2013).

The current structure of the NZRU’s level 2 and 3 courses, however, appears to privilege a technical knowledge base over a tactical one. Indeed, the specific details (i.e. the ‘key factors’ of ‘how to’ perform a skill) are promoted first and the ‘big picture’ content (i.e. tactical understanding and an applied appreciation of ‘why to’ do it) comes second in relation to their coach development courses. Given the NZRU’s ‘legacy to be leaders in world rugby’ (Johnson, Martin, Palmer, Watson, & Ramsey 2013a; 2013b) staff are questioning if this is ordered the right way around? Thus, an approach was made to the author to investigate the advanced course coaches’ perceptions of that very question. Other over-arching questions of what was presented and later examined throughout the duration of this two-part course (i.e. T1 and T2) included:

- Do the NZRU delivered courses provide coaches with the appropriate pedagogical tools to adopt empowering coaching styles?
- To what extent then do coaches adopt empowering principles in their coaching practice?
- What are the coaches’ thoughts of the REST pedagogical principles in relation to their current coaching practices?

The following sections of this paper highlight: key literature related to the application of the TGfU/Game Sense (GS) coaching approaches in rugby both nationally and internationally; the methods used to gather and analyse this study's data; and finally the results are discussed in an attempt to explore the questions above in a way that promotes further research and offers recommendations of best pedagogical practice for rugby coach education in New Zealand (NZ).

LITERATURE REVIEW

It has been suggested that, from a pedagogical perspective, following the REST principles may be considered best practice when using a TGfU/GS approach to coaching rugby (Cassidy, Jones and Protrac, 2009; Cassidy, Protrac & McKenzie, 2006; Evans, 2006; Evans & Light, 2008; Griffin & Patton, 2005; Kidman, 2001, 2005, 2010; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Smith, 2005; Thorpe, 2005). Although, within the NZ rugby context researchers Cassidy, Protrac and McKenzie, (2006) state that of the limited literature available on coach education, the issues addressed so far have been on: coaching behavior, effectiveness of coaches, coach development and the privileging of the psychomotor (physical), technical and bio-scientific knowledge over other forms of rugby knowledge (i.e. affective and cognitive). This belief was more recently reiterated by Cassidy, Jones and Protrac (2009) and other academics in the field.

A study with the Canterbury Rugby Union, for example, found that there is an absolute need to further investigate decision-based training in order to develop rugby players' cognitive processing ability so they can make better decisions. Indeed, the researchers state that "too much emphasis has been placed on the physical skills and too little on the players' awareness of game strategies and their decision-making capacities" (Parrant & Martin, 2010, p.69). This view that physical skill sets are still being afforded greater value than their cognitive counterparts is one shared by many other leading academics in the field, not always within NZ or the sport of rugby (Cassidy, et al, 2006; Cassidy, et al 2009; Evans & Light, 2008; Hermansson, 2011; Kidman, 2005; Kirk, 2005, Light, 2006; Slade, 2011).

Moreover, in Australia, researchers Zuccolo, Spittle and Pill (2013) believe that despite the promotion of using a TGfU/GS approach in the literature, limited progress has been made in challenging traditional technical skill approaches (TSA) in sport coaching practice:

The inclusion of the GS approach as a preferred coaching pedagogy is evident in sport specific coaching manuals, documents and accreditations. The GS approach now appears as part of the curriculum in some sporting organisations (p.188).

While there is some discussion in the literature internationally around the technical (TSA) verses tactical debate, some NZ-based researchers argue that there remains a scarcity of research which addresses the development of coach education curricula and how it is facilitated and assessed. Furthermore, they argue that current coach education courses in NZ fail to draw upon appropriate learning theories (Cassidy et al, 2006). In terms of athlete-learning Cassidy et al (2009) advocate that coaches consider themselves as teachers or educators and adopt a more holistic appreciation of their athletes:

with the growing recognition and acceptance of coaching as an educational or pedagogical enterprise...it would be helpful if coaches, and others, regarded what they did as teaching. Viewing it this way might mean that coaches would be in a better position to educate the whole person, since teachers [coaches] are expected to develop the cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling) and psychomotor (physical) domains of the...people with whom they work (p.32).

Insofar as empowering coaches and, therefore, empowering their players to become actively involved in decision-making for team protocols and policies, Kidman (2001, 2005) suggests adopting more TGfU/GS approaches would enhance the NZRU's chances of achieving the goals (4&5) they outline in their '*Towards 2016: Empowering Rugby*' strategic document (NZRU, 2013). Although, this is not to suggest that there is only one way, however, it is to offer and encourage other alternatives to the traditional approach(es).

Thorpe (2005), one of the TGfU and GS originators, states that 'traditional approaches' to coaching, where coaches wield the power, are the fountain of all knowledge, are analysers, providers of information and the sole source of any feedback, are actually disempowering. Moreover, that other innovative approaches which involve the performer (player) as an active contributor rather than a passive receiver, questioning and guided-discovery approaches for example, are more empowering (cited in Kidman, 2005). Furthermore, Thorpe (2005) suggests:

meaningful and appropriate games [Sampling] experience is a key to athlete learning. It requires the coach to move from one game to another using a progressive [Tactical

complexity], purposeful [Representation; Exaggeration] activity that meets the needs of the athletes... [REST] breaks away from the traditional approach of isolated skill practice, where athletes learn skills of the game separate from the actual game itself (cited in Kidman, 2005, p.229).

The NZRU's current High Performance Manager, Don Tricker, is also an advocate for athlete-centred, player-empowering, approaches. In his chapter about his own, highly successful, coaching reign with the NZ Softball team he states that players should be encouraged to reflect on their experiences, think about them critically and evaluate them (Tricker, 2005).

Similarly, in NZRU delivered courses coaches are encouraged to actively involve their players in team decision-making processes and allow them to take ownership of their own development. However, as highlighted in the Australian context (Zuccolo et al, 2013), are the advanced level coaches actually adopting such approaches to coaching and putting them into practice? Do the NZRU coaching courses provide the tools for coaches achieve their aspirational goals as set out in their strategic plan document (NRZU, 2013)?

As a past participant of the NZRU's *advanced coaching course* the author suggested to the CDO that the REST pedagogical principles be considered for addition into the coach curricula content as another tool or process for coaches to follow since they are encouraged (in principle) to be empowering and empower their players. It was decided, however, not to 'contaminate' the current course content as one of the purposes of this study was to evaluate and critique the status quo.

Instead, the decision was made to introduce the REST principles at the end of the formal *advanced coaching course* and assess the validity of it separately rather than including it within the course content which was already predetermined for that season. Especially given one of the intentions of this study was to determine the range of coaching styles already being used (post-level 2) and further promoted (through level 3) by the NZRU's *advanced coaching course*.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Essentially, this case study is a small part of a wider research project which uses a grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2010; Martin & Gynnild, 2011). As such, this study's data

collection and analysis methods attempted to identify the core elements and highlight the underlying principles that explain the phenomenon (or intervention) under investigation. Thus, this study adopted a logical inference approach which Scott and Usher (2003) state is when researchers make statements about the logicality of the nexus between characteristics, in this case the coaches and their pedagogical styles used pre (T1) and post-intervention (T2).

Data collection

Data were not only collected from the coaches' self-reported styles used, there were also subsequent 'follow-up' semi-structured interviews with the researcher and the NZRU's CDO also provided their observations and field notes taken from witnessing the coaches in action at training practices. In summary, a mixture of qualitative data collection strategies and methods were used to gather the raw data which included:

- Coaches' self-reported coaching styles used (adapted from Mosston & Ashworth, 2002);
- Survey: A ten item questionnaire (adapted from Thorpe, 2005 and the NZRU's CDO);
- and finally, follow-up, semi-structured interviews with a selected sample of the coaches.

Firstly, Mosston and Ashworth's (2002) explanation of teaching styles was adapted and modified for the study's coaching context and ranged from predominantly coach-centred to athlete-centred pedagogical approaches. Their first three styles (A, B and C) were situated at the coach-centred end of the spectrum. Meanwhile, styles D, E, F and G were in or towards the middle of the knowledge 'discovery threshold'. This threshold is positioned between Styles E and F, whereby athletes begin to become more active in the production of knowledge rather than re-producing it. Finally, styles H, I and J were at the athlete-centred end of the continuum, where the coach's role is relatively minor (adapted from Mosston & Ashworth, 2002).

Table 1:
Mosston & Ashworth's (2002) Spectrum of Teaching Styles
(Adapted for Coaching)

Style A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
<i>Command</i>	<i>Practice</i>	<i>Reciprocal</i>	<i>Self-Check</i>	<i>Inclusion</i>	Guided Discovery	Convergent Discovery	Divergent Discovery	Learner-designed	Learner initiated
<i>Coach</i>	<i>centred</i>	<i>Styles</i>		<i>Discovery</i>	<i>threshold</i>		<i>Athlete</i>	Centred	<i>styles</i>
<i>Knowledge reproduction styles (A, B, C, D, E)</i>					Knowledge production styles (F, G, H, I, J)				

Secondly, in Kidman's (2005) 'Athlete-centred Coaching' publication she poses the question: why do so many coaches still use predominantly traditional approaches? In response to this probe by Kidman, Thorpe (2005) offers a number of reasons why he believed coaches still used such disempowering pedagogical practices. His assessment was that:

- i. They know a lot about their area and feel it is important to pass this on to players,
- ii. For egotistical reasons, such as the 'buzz' of helping their players to learn,
- iii. Players, parents and other coaches expect the coach to be 'delivering',
- iv. When coaches are judged, their performance is measured, not the players' learning,
- v. Coaches and sessions are generally assessed in isolation to the wider team environment,,
- vi. The prescriptive approach produces quick performance changes within a session
- vii. The prescriptive approach does NOT promote learning to become deep-rooted learning.

Therefore, Thorpe's (2005) assumptions were used to formulate part of the questionnaire for identifying coaches' perceptions, beliefs and rationales for the practices they use.

Coaches attending the NZRU's *advance coaching course*, facilitated by the CDO, were invited to voluntarily participate in this study which aimed to explore past and current coaching styles they used. Once their informed consent was received, a series of interventions took place during the two different parts that made up the *advanced coaching course*.

The first part of the *advanced coaching course* (i.e. the intervention) and data collection process took place at the start (T1) of the rugby union season in New Zealand (February, 2013) and the second part of the course and data collection process occurred at the end (T2) of the course and rugby union season (November, 2013). (After successfully completing this course, coaches would still need to complete the week-long *game planning course* for Level 3).

The February 2013 (pre-T1) research introduction and invitation involved the following:

1. A letter of invitation was distributed to all NZRU course participants to become this study's participants. A one hour lecture-style presentation on Mosston and Ashworth's (2002) spectrum of teaching styles (adapted for the rugby coaching context) was delivered at the Events Centre at Massey University in Palmerston North. (See Table 1 for the teaching/coaching styles mentioned in this presentation).

The February 2013 (T1) data collection involved:

1. A self-reported coaching styles task which asked coaches to record in their coaching diaries a percentage out of one hundred (100%) to the 'coaching styles' mentioned in the lecture that they believed they used throughout their 2012 rugby coaching season. The coaches self-allocated these percentages then carried out the NZRU's course requirements in 2013.

In November 2013 (T2) data collection involved:

2. Asking the coaches attending the course at T2 ($n = 12$) to once again record their percentage allocation out of one hundred to the coaching styles (mentioned in the lecture during T1 that they were reminded about at T2) they believed they used during the 2013 season. Ten of the coaches responded to this request in full.

The November 2013 (T3) post-intervention REST introduction involved:

3. A practical, TGfU/GS-based session facilitated by the author after the official NZRU course concluded. The breakdown of this 3-hour session consisted of:
 - 1 x hour introduction 'lecture' style on TGfU's four pedagogical (REST) principles,

- 1 x hour practical session sampling three different games to represent lineouts/re-starts,
- 1 x hour hands on coaching (where coaches created and took their own games with their peers to represent a specific area of the game of rugby). All twelve coaches participated.

The November 2013 (T3) data collection involved a survey which was made up of the following:

4. For the purposes of this research, an adapted version of Thorpe's (2005) explanations of why coaches continue to use disempowering pedagogical practices were used in the first 7 questions of a 10 question survey administered to the coaches using a 5-point Likert-scale that required numeric responses ranging from 1 (Absolutely agree) to 5 (Absolutely disagree) with the seven statements (Denscombe, 2005).
5. A further three, open-ended, questions were formulated in partnership with the NZRU's CDO to gain feedback on the NZRU's course content and delivery style, and their perceived applicability of the REST principles to their coaching practice. The open-ended questions were:
 - Has the NZRU course information been useful for my coaching practice?
Why/Why not?
 - Have you enjoyed the block mode delivery (Part 1 in February and Part 2 in November)?
 - Do you see any transfer and/or are the REST principles applicable to your own coaching?

As well as responding to these questions in writing at T3, a selection of the coaches were approached after their initial responses were coded to elaborate further, by way of follow-up semi-structured interviews, on their written responses to the open-ended questions in the survey. This process of going back and forth between analysis and data collection is consistent with Charmaz's (2011) comparative method whereby researchers become active, engaged analysts: "grounded theory prompts us to study and interact with our data by moving

through comparative levels of analysis...we compare data...develop codes...categories...and concepts" (p.361).

Data Analysis

This process involved systematically arranging "the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others...working with data, organizing them, breaking them in to manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p.157). Data analysis involved coding the 'raw' data into recurring themes (codes) and categories. Moreover, in contrast to coding used with quantitative data, codes in grounded theory are more flexible and open to refinement as the research evolves (Charmaz, 2011; Denscombe, 2005). Once data were analysed, emergent themes/trends were confirmed with the CDO's field notes and observations.

It is argued that one of the biggest issues case studies face is that they are vulnerable to criticism in terms of the generalisations they make. The validity of case studies is often questioned when attempting to apply results from one case to other settings (Denscombe, 2005). A potential reason for this issue, faced by researchers using this method, is the 'halo' or observer effect. This viewpoint claims that the presence of an observer (or researcher) can influence participants to behave or respond abnormally. However, this study employed a variety of data collection methods (i.e. coaches' own diaries and self-reflections, CDO's observations and field notes, and the author's own interpretations) to support theoretical sampling and saturation (Charmaz, 2011a; 2011b) in an attempt to negate the 'halo' effect by using triangulation of these data sources (Denscombe, 2005).

RESULTS

Of the 15 coaches present at T1, all of them completed their self-reported coaching styles journal entries. Of the 12 coaches present at T2, nine coaches fully completed the self-reported coaching style question and ten coaches completed the survey in full. Afterwards, selected coaches were approached post-survey either in person or via telephone call for clarification and further elaboration on their responses to the open-ended questions in the survey. In terms of the individual coaching styles that coaches self-reported using in their

2012 rugby season, the pre-course (T1) results (see Figure 1) showed a large amount of time was spent at the extremities of coaching styles such as traditional or coach-centred approaches (styles A, B and C represented in red shades) and player-centred approaches (styles H, I and J represented in variations of green).

For some coaches (e.g., coaches 4, 7 and 14) traditional approaches were used between 70-80% of the time in 2012. In contrast, Coaches 12, 13 and 15, however, self-reported that they used predominantly player-centred (70-80%) approaches.

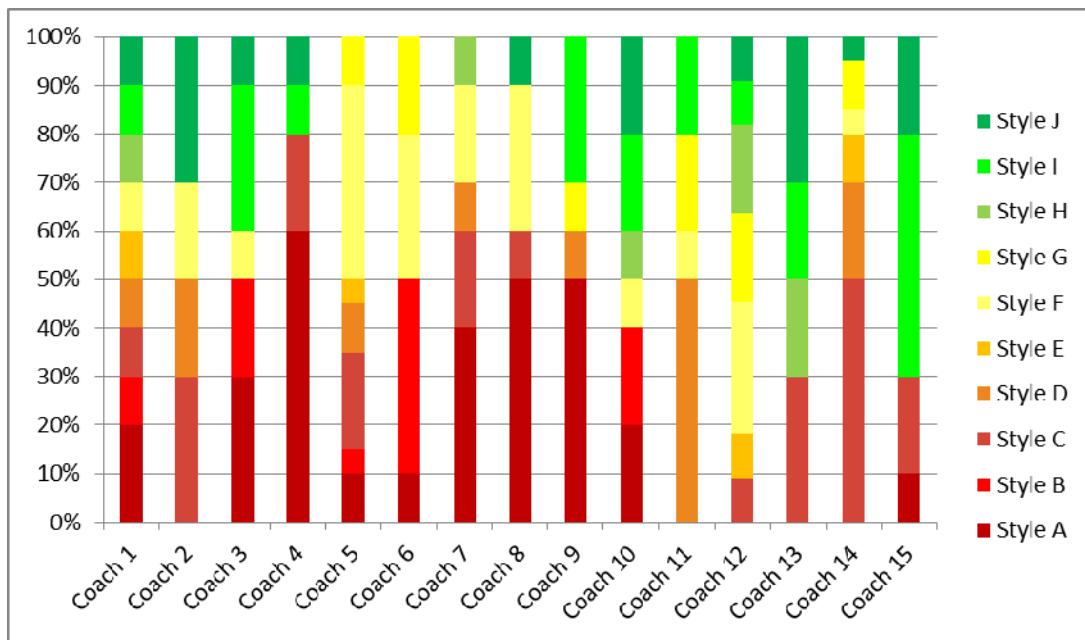


Figure 1
Pre-course (T1) Individual, self-reported responses to coaching styles

Looking at the collective trends (all of the coaches' responses combined) we can see a similar theme or pattern emerge. Over two thirds (69%) of the styles are at the extremities (see Figure 2) of either coach-centred (41%) or player-centred (28%) pedagogy.

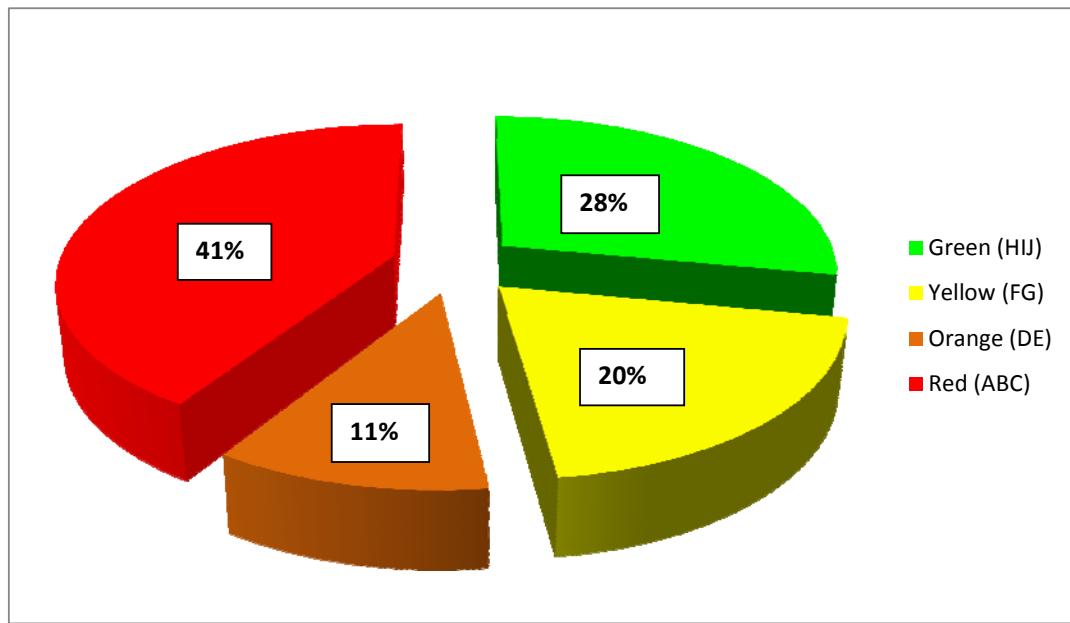


Figure 2
Collective, self-reported Coaching Styles T1

In regards to the post-course (T2) self-reported coaching styles used by the research participants during their 2013 season, Figure 3 at first glance depicts a similar pattern. On closer inspection, however, there appear to be subtle differences. There seems to be a decrease in shades of green and an increase in varieties of orange and yellow (which represent Styles D, E and Styles F, G respectively). There also appears to be a decrease in the amount of traditional coach-centred approaches (Styles A, B and C) that coaches self-reported using (see figure 3).

Indeed, these patterns are reiterated when looking at the collective responses of all coaches in the T2 pie graph below (see figure 4). Here we see that the two extremities of A, B, C (coach-centred styles) and H, I, J (athlete-centred styles) account for 61% of the coaching styles used down from over two thirds (69%) at T1. What has increased, up from less than a third (31%) to well over a third (39%), now is the ‘middle’ styles or those closer to the knowledge discovery threshold.

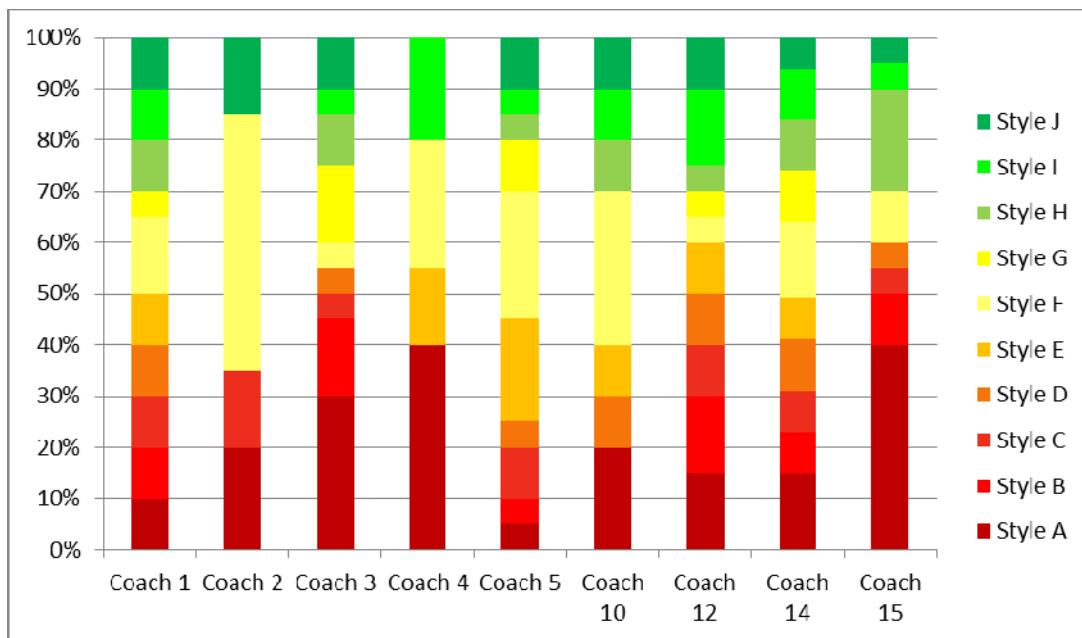


Figure 3
Post-course (T2) Individual, self-reported responses to coaching styles

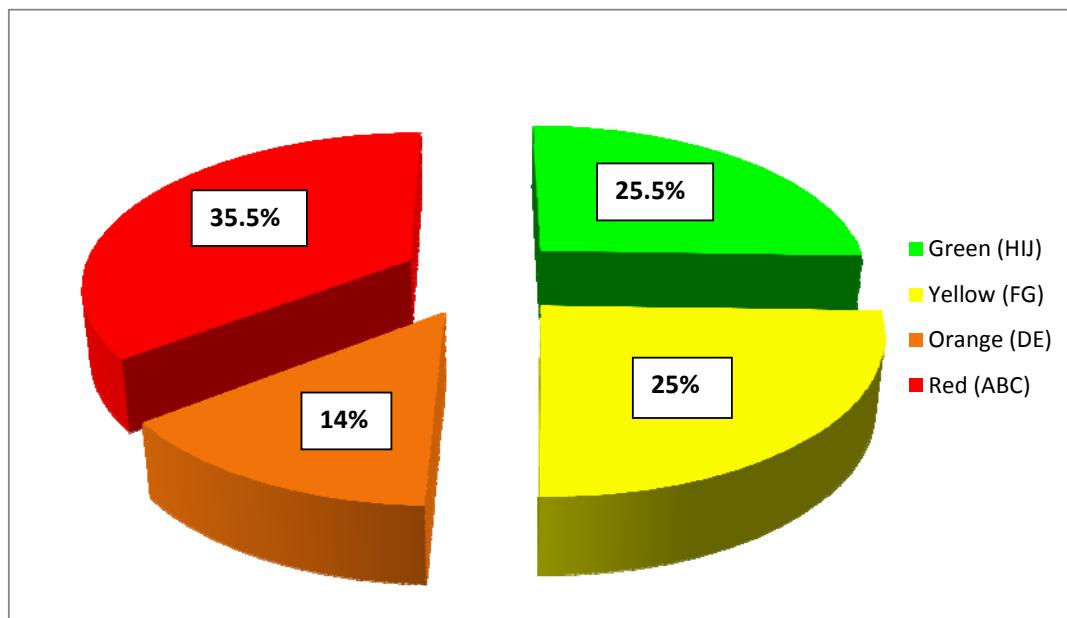


Figure 4
Collective, self-reported Coaching Styles T2

This shift away from the extremities and towards the middle, or ‘centering effect’, can be seen on both an individual coaching level in figures 1 and 3 and collectively in figures 2 and 4.

Table 2 provides a snap shot of the coaches’ responses to the survey questions posed to them post-course about their experiences of the NZRU’s (IRB Level 3) *Advanced coaching course* and post-TGfU introduction regarding the perceived applicability of the REST principles.

Table 2
Coaches’ responses to questions adapted from Thorpe (2005)

Questions	Responses to questions from Coach*:										Range	Mean	Overall average for ALL coaches
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
1	2	4	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	1-4	2.2	Agree
2	4	2	2	2	3	1	2	2	3	3	1-4	2.4	Agree
3	2	2	3	3	1	1	1	3	1	3	1-3	2.0	Agree
4	2	2	2	4	4	4	3	4	2	4	2-4	3.1	Neither
5	5	4	4	2	2	2	4	4	2	4	2-5	3.3	Neither
6	3	4	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	2-4	2.8	Neither
7	4	2	4	3	2	2	4	3	3	3	2-4	3.0	Neither

N.B. * Likert Scale responses: 1 = **absolutely agree**; 2 = agree; 3 = **neither**; 4 = disagree; 5 = **absolutely disagree**

For the first three questions the general consensus was that, collectively, the coaches tended to agree with Thorpe’s (2005) statements. In Question one (*Coaches know a lot about their area and feel it is important to pass this on to players*) for example, 8 of the 10 coaches either absolutely agreed (n.1) or agreed (n.7) with it, only one coach indicating neutral, while the remaining coach disagreed. In response to the second question, (*for egotistical reasons, such as the ‘buzz’ of helping their players to learn*), 6 of the coaches either absolutely agreed (n=1), or agreed with it (n=5). Three of the coaches were neutral, while only one coach disagreed. Insofar as *players, parents and other coaches expecting the coach to be ‘delivering’* (question 3) again 6 either absolutely agreed (n.4) or agreed (n.2) with this. Meanwhile the other four remained neutral, so none of the coaches actually disagreed or absolutely disagreed with the statement.

The next four questions produce a split and the collective average of ‘neither’ is not representative of the coaches’ experiences. For example, question four (*when coaches are judged, their performance is measured, not the players’ learning*), saw an obvious divide in that four of coaches agreed with the statement, another coach remained neutral while the other five coaches disagreed with it. Question five (*coaches and their sessions are generally assessed in isolation to the wider team environment*) produced similar results whereby four agreed with it and the other 6 either disagreed (n=5) or absolutely disagreed (n=1). For question six (*the prescriptive approach produces quick performance changes within a session*) four coaches agreed a further four were neutral and the final two disagreed (n2). Finally, question seven (*the prescriptive approach does NOT promote learning to become deep-rooted learning*) revealed another division in opinion, this time three agreed/four neutral/three disagreed.

A further three, open ended questions (designed in collaboration with the NZRU’s CDO) were asked of the research participants. These questions were more directed towards feedback on the NZRU’s course content and delivery style. However, one was specific to the applicability of the REST principles to pedagogical practice for coaching rugby:

Do you see any transferability and/or are the REST principles applicable to your coaching?

One respondent claimed:

“I already use this type of system in my coaching” (Coach #1, pers. comm., 2013).

A sample of other responses from coaches who do not use it included:

“It will be a good, new way to make trainings fun”

“Yes, it creates variety and progression of skills”

“I love how engaging they [REST principles] could be”

and finally “I will take some of the [REST] learning into my coaching”

Although the GS module in the Level 2 (DRC) manual includes one of these principles referred to as “modification for exaggeration” (NZRU, 2009, p.63), only one of the 10 coaches claimed to already use this system (or a similar one) in their coaching practice. The general consensus (90% of respondents) suggested the TGfU’s pedagogical principles of

Representation, Exaggeration, game Sampling and Tactical complexity (REST) were new to them and from their coded survey responses and subsequent follow-up interviews with some of the coaches, it became obvious that they felt learning the REST pedagogical principles in greater detail and depth would be of benefit their coaching practice in the future.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was an attempt to address the following three questions:

- Do the NZRU's courses provide coaches the tools to adopt empowering coaching styles?
- To what extent then do coaches adopt empowering principles in their coaching practice?
- What are the coaches' perceptions of the REST principles in relation to their coaching?

Firstly, in terms of the NZRU's goals and aspirations within '*Towards 2016: Empowering Rugby*', the literature reviewed (Evans, 2006; Evans & Light, 2008, Kidman, 2001, 2005) would suggest that the TGFU and GS approaches create empowered coaches and athletes who are better able to make decisions under pressure and in different contexts. The course content and current delivery style of the NZRU's *advanced coaching course*, however, appears not to prioritise TGFU/GS or the REST principles which would make achieving goals 4 and 5 within '*empowering rugby*' difficult. Indeed, the results show that most of the Advanced level coaches at T1 used predominantly coach-centred approaches.

While these results were self-reported the coaches' opinions also reflect the CDO's view and the DRC manual's (NZRU, 2009) emphasis of technical skills and scientific knowledge. A more in depth analysis of the NZRU's course content and delivery style is necessary to more fully address this question, but there does seem to be a 'gap' between what literature suggests as 'best' and how coach development courses in New Zealand rugby are currently delivered.

Analysis of the coaches' responses, to the open-ended survey questions regarding the course, identified that they were still satisfied with the content and delivery of the course and what it offered them in terms of: knowledge content, the coaching process, skill development, practical application, and the opportunity to learn from the facilitators and each other. Further

analysis revealed the majority (9/10) were predominantly positive about the TGfU/REST session at the end of the course. One coach reported already being an advocate for this type of approach.

The author intends to continue a relationship with the NZRU and follow up with the coaches during their 2014 coaching season to understand from their perspective how 'empowering' models of coaching are practically applied, and what the benefits and obstacles are when using these pedagogical principles.

In relation to the second question, (to what extent do coaches adopt empowering pedagogies), the results varied. On average there were a wide variety of styles used by all of the coaches. Although, at T1 over 50% ($n = 8$) of the coaches self-reported using only four of the ten different coaching styles. The single highest number of styles reported being used at that time (T1) were the traditional styles (A, B, C or disempowering styles) accounting for 41% of the time used by all coaches. This result had changed at T2 (A, B, C = 35.5%) which suggests that perhaps the coaches, through participation in the course and their practical coaching experiences, utilised coaching styles coaching more towards the middle or athlete-centred end of the adapted coaching continuum.

The variety of styles self-reported being used at this time (T2) had also increased with seven of the nine coaches stating that they now used between 8-10 of the teaching (adapted for coaching) styles identified by Mosston and Ashworth (2002). This time only two coaches self-reported that they used four styles. Moreover, the CDO's observations and field notes also confirmed this trend that the coaches were using a greater variety of coaching methods.

Thus, the results demonstrate some interesting findings in relation to the second question regarding the extent to which coaches adopted empowering approaches. Although 9 of the 12 coaches completed the survey fully, from those who responded it appears that after the NZRU's 'intervention' (i.e. Advanced-level coaching course) the coaches were using a greater variety of coaching styles overall. Some of which included those styles more central or towards the athlete-centred end of the continuum. Once again, further investigation is required to explore this pattern in greater depth. A further study may include a qualitative document analysis of the coaches' journals, reading more thoroughly through the observation field notes of the CDO and speaking with the coaches and their players.

Finally, in regards to the last question (what are the coaches' thoughts of the REST principles in relation to their coaching?) overall the introductory session was received positively (the session went for 3 hours even though it wasn't a compulsory part of the course). The findings suggest that there is a need to include all of the REST principles and TGfU/GS approaches into the NZRU coach curricula. Currently, there is only one principle ('modification for exaggeration') of the four explicitly discussed in the Level 2 DRC manual (NZRU, 2009).

The other three are implicitly scattered throughout levels 2 and 3 documents if you know what you are looking for. If the NZRU's desire is genuine for rugby to be 'empowering' then the individuals given the responsibility of coaching players and teams should be able to access the knowledge, understand the underlying principles, and practice the approach to reflect this.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The NZRU and All Blacks have maintained an impeccable, enduring record in relation to world rugby supremacy over the last 100 years (Johnson, et al 2013). If they wish to preserve their legacy then they will need to continue to adapt and adjust as they have done for the last century or more. One way they can potentially continue to remain as leaders in world rugby innovation would be to explore, develop and introduce the REST pedagogical principles and more empowering coaching approaches that academics and practitioners in other sporting codes embrace. One of the first steps towards doing this would be to refer to and endorse the REST pedagogical principles and TGfU/GS approaches more specifically in their coach development courses. Doing so more purposefully means an alternative option of 'best practice' is available for coaches to include in their coaching 'toolbox' and the aspirations and goals of *empowering rugby* become more tangible.

The implications discussed in the previous section of this paper suggest that the NZRU's intervention (Level 3 *advanced coaching course*) revealed some intriguing, yet exploratory results. The 'halo' effect warns that people may behave differently when they know they are being observed (Denscombe, 2005). The need to verify the coaches' perceptions and CDO's observations also raise another question of triangulation of sources, in particular asking the players for their perspectives.

Indeed, future research questions might ask the athletes how empowered they felt? Or if they have noticed a change in their coach's pedagogical style/s since they completed their level 3

accreditation? If they did notice a difference, did they perceive this to be a positive or negative change and why? Likewise if they did not notice any change at all in their coaches' pedagogical approaches.

It is the intention of this author to follow up with these coaches after their 2014 coaching seasons and at least invite if not recruit their players to gauge their perceptions of the coaches' pedagogical principles and styles. This study has been largely exploratory but has revealed that coach development would provide rich information with regards to research into TGfU and GS. From a practical perspective, it has also suggested that the teaching, learning and application of TGfU and GS approaches in rugby union needs to be further explored in more depth to determine if the best rugby practice is indeed the adoption of REST principles.

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