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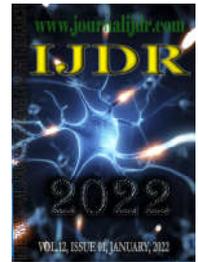
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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PERSPECTIVES OF PARALYMPIC COACHES ON TRAINING, QUALIFICATION AND CAREER

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to analyze the professional training in physical education of coaches since its beginning and what are the perspectives of training and career. The study participants were Brazilian coaches medaled in the summer Paralympic Games in athletics and swimming. Fourteen coaches participated in the study - nine working in swimming and five in athletics; all male, graduated in physical education, ten have graduate degrees, aged between 28 and 54 years old, and held positions from 1 to 31 years old. The research approach used was qualitative and the method of data collection was the semi-structured interview. The study showed that the professional training of coaches in physical education in the field of Paralympic sports was precarious for the majority and adequate for a minority. Only three coaches had intrinsic motivations of intentional choice to work in Paralympic sports, while the rest started occasionally. Although the coaches' perception valued the formal training given by the Brazilian Paralympic Academy, there is a lack of research on how this training impacts the development of coaches. As for career prospects, coaches consider them promising, although Brazilian high-performance sports, whether Olympic or Paralympic, do not have a well-defined career path.

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INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, a bachelor's degree in Physical Education (PE) enables one to provide specialized physical activity services in the leisure, health, and sports. In the sports field, the Federal Physical Education Council [Conselho Federal de Educação Física] and the Regional Physical Education Council [Conselho Regional de Educação Física] (CONFEF/CREF) are the authorities whose role is to supervise the exercise of the profession and guarantee the provision of qualified services to society restricted to PE professionals in the position of coaches in an ethical and competent manner. For PE professionals intending to pursue a coaching career, there are opportunities to acquire specialized knowledge through courses offered by sports federations (MILISTETD, *et al.*, 2014), from the perspective of ongoing qualification or training. This theoretical-practical professional improvement, related to the profession, may take place in institutionalized environments by means of curricular and certification programs, and/or in the workplace itself

(DANNEMANN, 2014; LAMPERT, 2005; LACOMBE and HEILBORN, 2010). Nevertheless, in the literature on coach training, according to Nelson *et al.* (2006), coaches acquire knowledge from different sources of learning, in a formal, informal or non-formal manner. Formal learning can be exemplified by certifications from federations or universities; informal learning, by experiences with peers and observation; while non-formal learning includes participation in seminars, workshops and conferences. As for Paralympic coaches, it is possible to perceive an amalgamation of sorts of learning among athletes, an informal process marked by successes and mistakes (DOUGLAS *et al.*, 2018), characterized by limitations as to access to information such as workbooks, guides or coaching courses (DEGHANSI *et al.*, 2020), and even when it does occur, it still presents a limited knowledge that can offer support and guarantee autonomy for athletes with impairment (BANACK, *et al.*, 2011). With respect to Paralympic sports, there are few records of their insertion in undergraduate PE courses in Brazil; they are restricted to initiatives carried out isolatedly by interested groups, being gradually inserted in the curricula in the mid-1990s, based on

experiences from other countries, but similar to sports for able-body athletes (COSTA and WINCKLER, 2012). In the organizational sphere, Brazilian Paralympic sports were structured after the creation of the Brazilian Paralympic Committee (CPB) in 1995, and have developed in recent decades, driven by public policies, such as Federal law No. 10.264/2001, known as “Agnelo-Piva”, a reference in the transfer of funds in favor of the development of high-performance sports, and in the professionalization of coaches, with political commitment to investment in resources within the sports field being a trend in several countries (MENDES and CODATO, 2015; LISTON, et. al, 2013; TAYLOR and GARRAT, 2010). When it comes to sport mega-events, with emphasis on the summer Paralympic Games (PG), one of the most important competitions for athletes with impairment at an international level, the success of Brazilian Paralympic sports is made evident, which since 2008, is among the top ten nations in number of medals. In addition to this notoriety, track and field and swimming are the flagship sports of the CPB in medal winning. Track and field, as of its first participation, reached the mark of 154 medals (CPBa, 2020), while swimming, in all participations in PG, secured 134 medals (CPBb, 2020). Under the sport management perspective, the CPB strategic plan in its essence is fundamental for orienting the goals and the achievements from the competitive field (SANTOS NETO et al 2017).

as to specificity and orientation regarding professional career. Training courses are scarce, the occupation of positions in the sports field has no defined criteria, and entry usually happens in an unstructured way (NASCIMENTO, 2002; 2006; SILVA and DRIGO, 2012). As for the development of sports events involving people with disabilities (PWD), as highlighted by Depauw and Gravon (2005), McMaster et al. (2012), and Duarte and Culver (2014), specifically in summer PG, there is a lack of investigations on Paralympic sports. For this reason, there is an imperative need for conducting research on this field of activity. Given the relevance that Paralympic sports represent, the objectives of this study were to analyze the professional training of Paralympic coaches in track and field and swimming, to reveal how they entered this field of activity, and to understand the prospects for training and career in Paralympic sports.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The study participants were Paralympic sports coaches who won the most medals for Brazil in summer PG, in track and field and swimming, with recognized expertise in their positions. Fourteen coaches joined the study – nine acting in swimming, and five in track and field; they were all male, had a degree in physical education – ten

Table 1. Coaches' participations and medals in Paralympic Games

Coaches	Seoul 1988	Atlanta 1996	Sidney 2000	Athens 2004	Beijing 2008	London 2012	Rio de Janeiro 2016
C1TF					2	3	3
C2TF					2	2	2
C3TF	1	-	-	2	6	6	8
C4TF					-		
C5TF							-
C6S							6
C7S							1
C8S							-
C9S					-	-	-
C10S					9	6	8
C11S					1	-	1
C12S						5	7
C13S							-
C14S							1
Total	1			2	20	22	37

Legend:  Participations in Paralympic Games
Total medals won

In full expansion, the CPB created the Brazilian Paralympic Academy (APB) in 2010, in partnership with universities, with one of its goals to develop training programs for professionals in the medicine, physiotherapy, nursing and PE fields to act as classifiers and coaches (COSTA and WINCKLER, 2012). Currently, the training that APB offers to coaches is restricted to track and field, swimming and weightlifting (CPBc, 2020). This training is divided into three levels of certification:

Level I: Qualification for training programs aimed at sports initiation.
Level II: Qualification for modality-specific training programs.
Level III: Qualification for the high-performance training of one's own modality and for representing Brazil in international events.

Although training programs are offered to PE professionals, the prospects for professional development and career building as Paralympic sports coaches are restricted and little known. From this perspective, some factors bring to light the need to research about the training, entry, qualification and career of PE professionals as coaches in Paralympic sports. Professional PE training encompasses several interventions, without defining a single model for characterizing the field. Historically, PE training in Brazil has been traditionally linked to teaching degrees, which prepare teachers to work in the school environment. A bachelor's training proposes to work in non-school environments, though not recent, characterize professional profiles for acting in the health, sports and leisure fields. However, there is a gap

had specialization –, were aged between 28 to 54 years old, and were in their positions for 1 to 31 years. The coaches were identified by the letter C (uppercase), a sequential number and letters (the letters TF being used for track and field, and S for swimming). Table 1 shows the participations and the number of medals won by the interviewees with their athletes from the summer PG in Seoul 1988, to the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games.

The approach used was the qualitative research because, among its possibilities, it presents itself in an interpretive and naturalistic way as to the search for more singularities than similarities between data (STAKE, 2011). As a data collection method, semi-structured interviews were applied; they were audio recorded via smartphone, and the transcription of the statements was literal, word by word, i.e., verbatim. Thus, considering the abovementioned procedures, care was taken in the selection of the transcribed interview excerpts, in accordance with Laville and Dione (1999); a thorough study of their content was conducted towards grasping the meaning that composes the words and phrases, with the main ideas being chosen. The research was submitted to, approved and authorized by the ethics committee with a Certificate of Presentation for Ethical Consideration (CAAE) No 40742114.3.0000.5465. Afterwards, the participants were contacted and informed about the objectives of the investigation. After acceptance, they signed the Free and Informed Consent Form. Thus, the interview was composed of the following questions: 1. How was your initial PE training concerning Paralympic sports? 2. How

was your entry into Paralympic sports? 3. In your opinion, which training do you consider ideal for the development of coaches in Paralympic sports? 4. In your opinion, are there any prospects for career building in Paralympic sports? Justify your answer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initial training of coaches concerning Paralympic sports : In the scope of initial PE training for coaches, data showed that the qualification aimed at Paralympic sports of 11 participants was precarious. Of this total, six coaches were not taught any content on Paralympic sports.

"Years ago, from 82 to 84, there was nothing, nobody knew what Paralympic sports were."(Participant C10S).

"No. Nothing. At all."(Participant C9S).

"Nothing. I had nothing. I had no training in college and didn't attend any courses back then."(Participant C1TF).

"No, no. Back then we didn't have it. Back then we didn't have it. You wouldn't hear anything about adapted activity."(Participant C5TF).

"Back in the day there was nothing in the Paralympic sports field."(Participant C3TF).

"I didn't have a Paralympic-related course in college, you know? I had training, I had some other things, but as for Paralympics specifically, I didn't have anything [...]."(Participant C7S).

For four participants, although they reported the presence of Paralympic sports in their training, they considered that the contents were approached in an insufficient or superficial way.

"Well, honestly, I didn't have much contact with Para sports.. Even in college, we were talking about it, you have a really superficial preparation on coaching in college. I guess in my 4th year I had this half-yearly course, and that was it."(Participant C8S).

"I had this adapted physical education course in college, but it was nothing specific."(Participant C6S).

"I had it in college. I remember I learned about adapted activity. In the college where I studied adapted activity you always had to organize an event for adapted people."(Participant C12S).

"It was the only adapted sports subject. So, not very significant. We knew more than the professors did, especially about swimming."(Participant C11S).

The knowledge about APE and Paralympic sports in Brazil was structured in the mid-1990s, when related subjects became mandatory and consolidated gradually in the syllabuses of PE programs, based on experiences involving Olympicsports from other countries, i.e., Brazilian Paralympic sports were in search of their own identity (PARSONS and WINCKLER, 2012). These results are similar to those reported by Cregan et al. (2007) and Taylor and Garratt (2010), who detected that Paralympic sports are still recent in PE, as well as a lack of research on the professionalization of sports coaches in this field of work.

For participant C2TF, his training started when he was invited to work with sports for PWD while still in college.

"My initial training started when we were in college, and I had no idea that I would work with disabled people."(Participant C2TF).

According to the participant, at the time he was a PE student, he accepted a proposal to work as a coach. Nascimento (2006) argues that, during training, situations involving internships or extension projects should promote students to acquire the required capabilities, skills and familiarization with their field of work.

In this sense, the reports of three coaches mentioned the importance of educational institutions and the presence of APE-related subjects that addressed contents about Paralympic sports.

"I believe that the UFU is very different from the other ones, because it has specific courses on Paralympic sports. So I had a lot of guidance to work with people with disabilities since the beginning of my training."(Participant C14S).

"I learned about Paralympic sports with more emphasis on adapted physical activity." (Participant C13S).

"The Adapted Physical Education course was great. We studied about Paralympic sports [...], this course also helped me have this training, [...]"(Participant C4TF).

These results corroborate with the statement of Nascimento (2006) about the importance of initial training being emphasized (for instance, Paralympic sports) for content to be mastered, together with internships and extension projects, in order to bring students closer to their field of work, generating a feeling of confidence, to promote the teaching of skills, to motivate students, and to address career development prospects.

Entry into the Paralympic coaching career: Given the participants' journeys, they were asked how they entered this professional field. For participant C11S, the reason for his entry was personal, as his sister was a Paralympic swimmer.

"My sister is blind and used to swim since she was a child. And I was a professional swimming athlete also. She competed in Atlanta, 1996, in Sidney, 2000, in Athens, 2004, and in China, 2008. I watched the 2004 Paralympics in Greece. I had a blind sister who would go to competitions, but we wouldn't go to competitions, we didn't live that. So, in 2004, I felt like working more with the disabled."(Participant C11S).

In this case, the coach, who also used to be a swimmer, became interested in choosing the PE course and the coaching career. According to Jarvis (2006; 2009), experiences of primary socialization and its traces are strongly evidenced in the professional socialization of coaches, and can occur from childhood, through family interaction, to adulthood. This previous experience enables one to act with more confidence in a variety of situations. Coaches C9S and C14S entered Paralympic sports due to opportunities, back when they were PE students, as shown by their reports on experiences involving internships and extension projects aimed at sports for PWD.

"It was because of an internship offer while I was still in college. One fine day, the first person with intellectual impairment, Down syndrome, appeared."(Participant C9S).

"I was participating in a project organized by the School of Physical Education, which was a project for assisting people with impairment. And I think it made it really easy for me to want to work in this field."(Participant C14S).

According to Nascimento (2006), internships aim to provide one with opportunities for checking the application of knowledge, while extension projects are meant for raising the awareness of the future PE professional, both of which are important training tools for familiarization and contact with their future professional reality. As for the extension projects, in the studies conducted by Silva and Drigo (2012) on the APE and Adapted Sports courses, professors from public universities reported that projects would be used as strategies linked to teaching in these institutions, supporting a theoretical and

practical relationship as to the learning of procedures, skills and competences for a future activity in APE or Paralympic sports. On the other hand, 11 coaches entered the Paralympic sports field by chance, due to favorable circumstances, through invitations.

"In 2006, when I was still an athlete, I was invited to start the project, because the city needed it, due to the regional and open games, so I started working with an athlete."(Participant C13S).

"I was not seeking that, the institution needed it. They needed a teacher to come and take the place of a teacher who worked at a sports initiation center."(Participant C5TF).

"That was in 98, because the dad who used to swim master with me introduced me to this boy. He was four and had a malformation in one of his legs."(Participant C10S).

"I happened to meet a visually impaired girl who is still an athlete to this day, I saw a great potential in her, so I said no, this potential cannot be wasted."(Participant C4TF).

"I did, and the first time that I worked with high performance was in 2010. At the time, I was invited by Antônio, an S10-class athlete, to work with him."(Participant C6S).

"I worked for six years at a club in the city of São Paulo. The Head Coach of the national team had already worked in the committee in 2010. And in 2013 he went to that club and we met there. And in 2014 he was invited by the Paralympic committee to come back and head the Brazilian national team to do some work for Rio in 2016, which is next year. So he invited me."(Participant C8S).

"As for Paralympic sports, in fact, I was invited by the Head Coach of the national team. I always worked with Olympic sports."(Participant C7S).

"It even has a little to do with the Head Coach of the national team. He had been invited to be an assistant or coach at a club. Then he said: 'Don't you wanna coach Antônio (Paralympic swimmer)?' So I talked to Antônio."(Participant C9S).

"One fine day I was invited to work with the disabled and I confess that I was kind of scared, but I always liked challenges."(Participant C2TF).

"It was by chance, I was working with able-body track and field, then blind people showed up and asked for help. They liked it. And sometime later, two years later, they asked if I couldn't work directly with them."(Participant C3TF).

"So I started working with the refereeing team for real. And then they learned that, besides the team, I was also a coach, then things started falling into place, and I'm still here"(Participant C1TF).

In the studies conducted by Douglas et al. (2018) with coaches who used to be Paralympic athletes, they reported that their insertion in the career was also unexpected, as they were surprised by the invitation to take on a coaching position. These results point out that their entry into Paralympic sports was occasional, due to favorable circumstances, and without prior planning, which makes the process of professionalization and career building difficult, as there is no definition with respect to criteria, or a structured entry for these positions to be taken. From a democratic viewpoint, it is suggested, for instance, that Paralympic coaching positions should be occupied by means of selection processes supported by specific laws that regulate the labor market.

Professional training: Perceptions of Paralympic coaches: Considering Paralympic sports as a promising field of activity for coaches that demands trained professionals, due to the specificities of

the population, the participants were asked about their perceptions regarding training. According to six of them, the training offered by the APB is the most suitable for this undertaking.

"I think you have to equip yourself, take technical courses. This line that the CPB is following now, which is already adopted by the Olympic committee [...]"(Participant C2TF).

"I believe that the ideal training is about taking these specific courses, these courses that the academy offers today."(Participant C6S).

"I think that these courses that the academy now provides, I think it properly qualifies people to work with Paralympic sports."(Participant C7S).

"So I think that the academy courses. They are well suited and complete [...]" (Participant C8S).

"We depend on the Paralympic academy. I am part of this process, I teach at the Paralympic training academy, other than that I don't see any other."(Participant C9S).

"I think that the Brazilian Paralympic academy is on the right track."(Participant C12S).

Despite the need for studies to investigate how these training courses under the responsibility of sports committees and confederations impact the journeys of coaches, in addition to certification, in the case of APB, it is worth noting that this is a recent initiative, not only to prepare coaches for participation in the summer PG in the country, in 2016, but an ongoing action for subsequent cycles.

However, for three coaches, training should come from universities as a specialization.

"Even in the universities, in the future, improvement courses can be created for those who didn't attend or were not provided any." (Participant C3TF).

"Training courses always, professional development and, if possible, a specialization, if possible, a master's degree."(Participant C4TF).

"High-performance training. Now you have postgrad, training master's. Specific." (Participant C10S).

However, this relationship between university and high-performance sports, according to Tani et al. (2009), is not as close as it should be, that is, Brazilian universities are hardly involved in high-performance sports in Brazil, due to the distinct objectives of both; it is up to the federations and confederations, with their own dynamics, according to Milistedt et al. (2016), even to offer training to coaches, because there is no converging program, as a result of a heterogeneity in relation to courses, workload and levels. The next results, from the perspective of two coaches, showed that training should be structured to encompass contents about the typologies related to the impairment of Paralympic athletes and about the sports sciences.

"The ideal training is for people to know the disability."(Participant C5TF).

"You have to understand sports training and physiology to be able to apply a more efficient training to those you lead."(Participant C13S).

In the studies conducted by Cregan et al. (2007), coaches of swimmers with impairment, who work with high performance, pointed out the importance of having knowledge of the athletes' disabilities in order to perform their role well, and that this favors training. Although sports sciences knowledge is available to be applied to training, there are differences between the application of

this knowledge when it comes to Paralympic sports. For instance, in athletes with spinal cord injuries who had their training-related physiological responses impacted, care is needed before prescribing training loads (PENA, 2018). That is, one cannot apply the principles of sports training and physiology without first knowing the hindrances that involve athletes with impairment. In this sense, these results point to the need for a careful content selection, considering the typologies of disabilities related to the specific application of sports sciences to Paralympic athletes. On the practical side, the study conducted by Fairhurst et al. (2015) on Paralympic coaches from Canadian national teams points to the need for programs with multidisciplinary guidelines in order to define tools for intervention in situations with athletes that have disabilities. For participant C1TF, a coach needs to have had previous experience as an athlete, a condition that, in his opinion, renders them capable to act; otherwise, the latter should undergo formal training for certification.

"[...] if you've never been involved, never been an athlete, never worked and never had an experience with track and field, you have to take some training courses on track and field."(Participant C1TF).

Coaches learn to be coaches in a variety of ways, including previous experience as athletes. However, this experience cannot exclusively correspond to their competence as coaches (MARQUES, 2000). In this sense, when a coach resorts to their sporting experiences, disregarding knowledge arising from formal contexts, whether from universities or confederations, they refer to a know-how, which, according to Cunha (2000), has as framework from the perspective of the relationship between the craft master (coach) and the apprentice (athlete), with the craft teaching methods of the former being unsystematic, in the shop itself, and the apprentice using their own instruments and, at times, residing with the craft master. That is, in this model, the coach builds their intervention based on their own athletic experience, from a craft perspective, which is opposed to the structured model of profession, based on well-founded knowledge (LAWSON, 1984). For coach C11S, the experience of practicing in daily professional life is understood as that which sustains his professional intervention supported on the construction of practical knowledge.

"You have to have the practice, if you don't have the practice your hands will be kind of tied, and you'll not know what the limitation is and what you can do for that person. It's what I said, you really need practice."(Participant C11S).

Comparing coaches and teachers, notwithstanding distinctions as to intervention and public, we resort to Tardif (2002), who conceptualizes practical or working knowledge as experiential knowledge, not derived from the training and curricula of educational institutions, but from a routine teaching pedagogical practice, in concrete situations that require personal skills. In this way, as it is with teachers who build their experiential knowledge, coaches go through something similar, which also builds their experiential knowledge in their professional routine with their athletes. Therefore, coaches, just as teachers, do not work in isolation. For the work to be effective, it depends on interactions with athletes, assistants, parents and other professionals in a unique way, which contributes to the continuous development of their interpersonal knowledge (COTÉ and GILBERT, 2013).

However, considering practice as an element necessary to qualify coaches, according to participant C14S, it emerged in the form of opposition between theory and practice.

"I think that in this training course we have very little practice, you know? Because, in theory, everyone studies it in college. I think that when you see a disabled person, you're clueless about what you need to do with them. So I think it should be more practical and not so theoretical."(Participant C14S).

It is common for groups of professionals to consider academic and scientific knowledge, coming from universities, very theoretical and with few practical applications to their professional daily routine. This fact may create a division between professionals and academic authorities (FREIDSON, 1996); although the need for practical content is deemed more interesting, in the perception of most coaches, theoretical foundation systematizes knowledge and supports practical action, eliminating problems related to trial and error.

Career prospects in Paralympic sports: The results on the coaches' perceptions of career prospects were unanimous, that is, they all stated that it is possible to build a career in Paralympic sports. However, prospects were diverse. For instance, participants C9S and C12S believe that coaches are currently well paid, and this ensures financial stability for them to dedicate themselves exclusively to Paralympic sports as a promising field for future PE professionals.

"Yes. I think I started in a really good phase in sports. I think it used to be very difficult to be paid what you are paid today."(Participant C12S).

"Today you're able to survive, it's not perfect, but you can, today, there are clubs, institutions that pay professionals to be coaches, [...]. Today there is a very wide range, quite a large number of professionals living off Para sports."(Participant C9S).

Participant C3TF highlighted that it is possible to build a career as a Paralympic coach, as long as universities provide specific training courses.

"Even in the universities, in the future, improvement courses can be created for those who didn't attend or were not provided any."(Participant C3TF).

For C3TF, career development depends on the offer of professional training courses. From this perspective, volunteering would be replaced by the provision of professional services.

"Today, yeah. It was all voluntary, altruistic. So when I said in my previous speech that universities should have it, that would be like a chain. Professionals would be mandatory. So they stop doing altruistic services."(Participant C3TF).

In this sense, universities are fully able to contribute to the professionalization and construction of the career of Paralympic coaches by providing training courses founded on scientific knowledge. According to Marques (2000), high-performance coaches are increasingly less available for volunteer work. For coach C2TF, it is possible to build a career if the coach has the profile of a qualified professional.

"Yes. Because you need good professionals working in this field."(Participant C2TF).

The Paralympic sports field and coaches are increasingly active and diligent in search of professionalization. Qualification is essential for the sports field when it comes to training. From the perspective of the profession, according to Freidson (1994) and Lawson (1984), it is up to the professional to master a body of specific and specialized knowledge founded on scientific, technical and technological knowledge, as a support for practical application, in accordance with work demands.

Participant C5TF emphasized that he feels motivated to act in Paralympic sports. Therefore, when it comes to motivation towards work, this is a broad theme and can be characterized synthetically, according to Bergamini (2003) and Shahzadi et al. (2014), as the individual's own actions, intrinsic to each person, allowing one to act towards a certain goal. In other words, motivation is for the coach an important element for career prospects.

"Today, if you ask me if I want to go back to Olympic sports, I'll say no, for sure. I wish I had started in Parasports right away. Every day I have new cases and every day I have new challenges."(Participant C5TF).

Although entry, in most cases, happened occasionally, as previously revealed, Paralympic sports, for participants C1TF, C13S, C6S and C7S, offers better career possibilities compared to Olympic sports.

"I think that, it's been three, four years now that the chance of you building a career in Paralympic sports is even greater than in Olympic ones."(Participant C1TF).

"So back in the day you had professionals working in Parasports for not having space in sports for persons without impairment. They were there to fill a gap, it wasn't a choice."(Participant C13S).

"I come from sports, and when I chose Parasports, I saw exactly a chance to have a career project, which I didn't have in Olympic sports."(Participant C6S).

"For sure. I worked in Olympic sports and today I am involved in , I see no difference in structure, support, no difference at all."(Participant C7S).

These results show that Brazilian Paralympic sports had an important structural and technological development, since 1996, with the CPB establishing partnerships with universities to increment programs for medical and physical fitness evaluations, aiming at a preparation for Atlanta, continuing in 2000 for the Sydney PG (COSTA and SANTOS, 2002). Moreover, due to an increased competition for coaching positions in Olympic sports, Para sportshave become an attractive professional field for coaches to develop their careers. For coach C8S, it is possible to build a career, but he does not distinguish the Olympic or Paralympic context and considers that it is from their own professional perspective that a coach develops their career, regardless of the context.

"No doubt. No doubt at all. I think it's not in Para sports only. I think you build your career wherever you are. Whether it's Para sports , whether it's Olympic sports, ..."(Participant C8S).

Although it is unequivocal that there are differences between these scenarios, as Cregan et al. (2007) point out in their studies, coaches of swimmers with impairment had to learn, for instance, about biomechanics and to communicate with parents and the support staff as best as possible. In essence, coach C8S considers that coaching swimmers with impairment, with the exception of impairment, is no different from coaching athletes without disabilities.

Finally, participants C14S and C4TF bring in their reports prospects for investments in Paralympic sports, important to motivate coaches towards building a career.

"I believe so, [...] I see people more attentive to this, especially when it comes to investment, that Paralympic sports are receiving a very large investment. So, the career of the professional who works with Paralympic sports can change for the better."(Participant C14S).

"I believe so. Mainly because Brazil is becoming one of the powerhouses in Paralympic sports. But this has to come together with the support of the federal government."(Participant C4TF).

Both state investments and private investments are subject to economic fluctuations. Decrease in investments or cancellation of programs contributes to the fragility of the political structure that governs national sports. As of 2019, there have been movements in the sense of disrupting Brazilian sports, such as the demotion of the Ministry of Sports to Secretariat of Sports. This evidences a weakening and demobilization of possibilities for the construction of

a career in sports aimed at high performance. That is, interrupting funding and programs consequently interrupts careers. The maintenance of public policies for high-performance sports, including Para sports, in addition to investments, should be part of a state policy meant for the valuation of national sports, for engaging the whole community in the sense of valuing sports as a public good, along with different sectors, mainly the media, so that these policies are corroborated. These actions would generate a greater interest from private investments, visibility for the general population, and would promote incentives and attractive elements, such as remuneration and professional valuation for coaches to enter Paralympic sports. As limitations to this study, some aspects are worth noting concerning the analyses to be observed and should be taken into account in further studies, namely, the diversity of the participants' professional training regarding the periods when they took their PE undergraduate courses; the occasional nature of their entry, as well as the sociocultural and economic contexts, as opposed to their intentional choice; and the eclectic nature of opinions about prospects for training and career related to Para sports .

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The study evidenced that the initial PE training of the participating coaches, as to Paralympic sports, was precarious for most of them, and adequate for a minority, with the latter having, during their training, courses, extension projects and internships involving Para sports, though indirectly at times, which are constituent elements for a proper training and can guide undergraduates in their career, in addition to maximizing the utilization of time and investments in professional training, preventing an occasional entry by referral or chance. Only three coaches presented intrinsic motivations of intentional choice to work in Paralympic sports, while the others entered the field due to favorable circumstances, such as invitation and dissatisfaction with conventional sports, showing that their entry was occasional. Given the periods before and after the PG in Brazil, for the majority of those investigated, their prospects for entry was a "window of chance", as the fragility of a political agenda for sports favors the professionalization and career development of coaches. Regarding professional training, the perceptions that pointed out training in formal learning contexts, the APB and universities prevailed, which provide contents about sports sciences knowledge and the characteristics of impairment. Thus, although the coaches' perceptions valued formal training, mainly offered by the APB, which means some progress for coach training, it is still very recent and restricted to the CPB, not affiliated and/or disseminated in universities; besides, there is a lack of research on how this training impacts the development of coaches throughout their careers. As for career prospects, the coaches considered them promising, although Brazilian high-performance sports, whether Olympic or Paralympic, have no career plan with well-defined criteria and structure. In other words, when there is no solid state policy in the sports field, the development of high-performance sports becomes economically dependent on initiatives by public authorities, private authorities or public-private partnerships, causing financial instability and the discontinuity of programs, consequently compromising sports development, in the medium and long term, at different levels and in different scenarios, including the prospects for activity and development of a Para sports coach's career.

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