



P-ISSN: 2394-1685  
E-ISSN: 2394-1693  
Impact Factor (ISRA): 5.38  
IJPESH 2018; 5(2): 290-296  
© 2018 IJPESH  
www.kheljournal.com  
Received: 20-01-2018  
Accepted: 21-02-2018

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## Coaching as a profession: The Brazilian scene

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### Abstract

In Brazil, the coaching profession is recognized and regulated by federal law, which stipulates that only individuals with a higher-education diploma in physical education and registration with the professional council are allowed to work in the field. This essay aims to highlight the description of the law and standards of coaching within Brazil, including preparation and legal aspects. The actual legislation in the country is responsible for the political conception of the activity of the coach and for the coaches' professional category. The Brazilian legal condition about coaching as a profession can be particular to the country, but the debate on these issues go beyond geographical limits. This explanation may contribute to the debate on the professionalization of sport coaching. It should be clarified that this article does not claim to advocate for a specific way of dealing with the matter but seeks to encourage further research.

**Keywords:** Society, sport, policy, legislation, education

### 1. Introduction

The theories related to the concept of the profession had a historical evolution, originated from different academic fields and do not necessarily result in a convergence. In fact, professional and non-professional activities are not in distinct poles, but can be identified in different nuances of their characteristics<sup>[1-3]</sup>. Some characteristics attributed to a profession include the actions aimed at providing services to an individual and society from specialized knowledge, mastery of complex skills and the existence of a specific ethical code<sup>[4-6]</sup>. Thus, in the sport environment, it is not just the high-performance coach who can be considered professional but anyone who, before a particular application and in a given context, can mobilize knowledge, skills and abilities to make decisions in line with the expectations of the individuals to whom he or she provides services in the most appropriate manner. In the various contexts of sports practice, the importance of the role and responsibilities of the coach remains constant, regardless of the competitive level<sup>[7, 8]</sup>.

In Brazil, there is a singular situation because the function of coaches, which integrates the concept of the physical education professional, has been regulated by Law 9696/1998, which was signed by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso<sup>[9]</sup>. This law states that only individuals with a degree in physical education obtained in an authorized institution of higher education, and who are registered within the Federal Council of Physical Education, are allowed to work in the field of physical and sports activities. Such is the case with sports coaches, who are the focus of this essay.

As a result of this law, additional legal instruments were created to regulate and supervise the education and work of physical education professionals, as well as coaches. These instruments are the Statute of Federal Councils of Physical Education (2010), the Resolution on the Intervention of Physical Education Professionals<sup>[10]</sup>, the Code of Professional Ethics<sup>[11]</sup>, and the National Curricular Guidelines for Physical Education courses in higher education of the Ministry of Education<sup>[12, 13]</sup>. The National System of Higher Education Evaluation was established as a complement to this set of measures<sup>[14, 15]</sup>.

This essay aims to highlight two aspects: (1) the description of the law and (2) standards of professional coaching within Brazil, including preparation and legal aspects. The choice of this approach is due to the particularity of this context, which has been little explored academically to date. Despite the dynamism of the area in Brazil, the publications on the legal scene and its application are still incipient, particularly in international journals<sup>[16]</sup>. McCullick<sup>[7]</sup> searched

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for publications on coaches' education programmes between 1995 and 2007. They found 46 articles about this matter, but none were from South America. During the same period, Brazil had established specific federal legislation on educational and professional practice, yet even so, there is a lack of research about these measures.

To Martins <sup>[17]</sup>, the area's youth and lack of tradition in debating professionalization, including the legal, operational and ethical premises required in the actual exercise of the profession, reveal that, despite its perceived achievements, there are still many challenges in this field, even in Brazil.

In terms of the structure of the essay, after the introduction, the most important aspects of the legislation on professional practice will be presented, followed by the legal aspects of coach education. It should be clarified that this article makes no claim to advocate for a specific way of dealing with the matter but attempts to present a reality, from a legal point of view, to enrich the academic debate and to stimulate further research.

### 1.1 The legal aspects of the profession

It should be noted that, according to the Code of Ethics of Physical Education in Chapter I, Article 3, the term coach, which is adopted in this study, is recognized as a physical education professional who performs various activities <sup>[18]</sup>.

Law 9696/1998 declares that sports coaches have several duties that include coordinating, planning, scheduling, supervising, stimulating, directing, organizing, evaluating and executing works, programmes, plans and projects, and providing auditing, consulting and advisory services, conducting specialized training, participating in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary groups and preparing technical, scientific and educational reports, all in the area of sport. The responsibility of the system formed by the Federal Council and the Regional Councils of Physical Education is to supervise the professional activity of coaches. Someone who performs these functions without a license is illegally practising the profession and can be punished according to specific sanctions <sup>[9, 11]</sup>.

The Federal Council of Physical Education has authority granted by the federal government to standardize, guide, regulate and supervise the professional activities of those who provide services in sports activities, including individuals and institutions. According to its Statutes, it performs the functions of monitoring professional practice, acts as an advisory body of the Government, defends the interests of society and guarantees the constitutional right of citizens to have access to sports activities guided by a qualified professional and even encourages, supports and promotes the improvement, specialization and updating of coaches <sup>[19, 20]</sup>.

To delimit the field of professional activity, the Statute of the Federal Council of Physical Education defines a sports professional as a person who is specialized in sports activities and establishes that the term sport comprises the ordered system of corporal practices involving competitive activity that is institutionalized according to specific techniques, skills and goals defined by previous established rules, which give it configuration, meaning and identity. Moreover, it can be practised freely or for a playful purpose organized by its practitioners and can be held in different environments, even in nature. Sport activities are also intended to promote health and educational frameworks according to diagnosis and/or expertise <sup>[10, 19]</sup>.

In this sense, the actual Statute (Federal Council of Physical Education 2010) reiterated the Resolution 46/2002 <sup>[10]</sup>, which

addresses professional intervention and skills related to the field of action, reaffirming Law 9696/1998 <sup>[9]</sup>. These documents state that the coach, who has knowledge and expertise in sports in its various forms and goals, must act to meet the different expressions of human movement present in society and consider social, historical, cultural and regional characteristics, according to the distinctive interests and needs of individuals who benefit from the service, acknowledging the wide diversity of circumstances in which the professional can act.

Resolution 254/2013 establishes the Professional Ethics Code <sup>[11]</sup>, which is a legitimating instrument of the professional work parameters regarding the proper relationship between the coach, the beneficiaries of their actions and society <sup>[11, 21]</sup>.

Among the principles of ethical action are: (1) respect for life, dignity, integrity and rights of the individual; (2) social responsibility; (3) the absence of discrimination or prejudice of any kind; (4) respect for professional ethics in diverse interventions; (5) the enhancement of professional identity in the field of sports and similar activities; (6) the performance within the specifics of the field and area of knowledge, towards the education and development of human potential, for those to which it provides services.

Professional duty emphasizes that it is essential to ensure proper professional service for athletes and/or practitioners and competent and up-to-date performance conducted from the coach's accurate knowledge, skills, and experiences. It is also highlighted that the provision of quality services is a precondition for the continuous updating of knowledge on research, technical, scientific and cultural discoveries to contribute to the development of the profession.

The professional is still assigned the duty to formally report to the Federal and Regional Councils of Physical Education any facts involving the loss of a job or removal of duties or employment if these situations are motivated by respect for the law and ethics in the profession. In other words, if the coaches experience a particular situation in which they believe they have been treated unjustly because they are acting in accordance with this legislation, the fact should be reported to the Federal Council of Physical Education <sup>[11]</sup>.

Regarding the rights of coaches, the code emphasizes that the coach can work without being discriminated against on matters such as religion, race, sex, age, political opinion, sexual orientation or any other matter; the coach should report problems in regulations and standards regarding events and institutions that offer services in the field of Physical Education and Sport, when they judge them to be technically incompatible with the dignity of the profession and the Code of Ethics, or harmful to the beneficiaries. Moreover, they can appeal to the Councils of Physical Education when prevented from acting according to the legislation of the profession. The code also states that the services should preferably be provided with the establishment of a written contract and financial compensation consistent with the importance and responsibility of service and in accordance with the labour market. The coach has the right to request public redress when he or she feels affected in his/her professional dignity and refuse to adopt measures he or she deems contrary to ethical consciousness <sup>[11]</sup>.

The establishment of principles, rights and duties requests a performance from coaches that addresses the need for mobilization of professional members to assume their social role and commitment beyond the level of individual achievements, as well as their responsibility to uphold the

prestige and dignity of the profession and to improve its institutions [11]. These propositions indicate the possibility of coaches questioning the policies of institutions such as clubs, associations, confederations and any institution related to sports when they understand it is necessary. As the Ethics Procedure Code stipulates, the Federal and Regional Councils have the institutional responsibility to investigate any complaints that violate the Code of Ethics [21].

In this sense, for a coach to be able to meet all the demands and supra cited professional responsibilities, it is necessary to establish some form of qualification.

## 1.2 Coaches: guidelines for professional education

The National Council of Education established the National Curriculum Guidelines for Physical Education Courses [12, 13] that must be followed and audited periodically according to Law 10,861/2004 [14], which established the National Evaluation System of Higher Education, which assesses students, courses and institutions. It also instituted the legal requirement to obtain a degree in a higher education institution to exercise the profession of coaching.

There are 698 institutions of higher education with Physical Education Courses registered within the Ministry of Education [22]. In the National Higher Education Evaluation System assessment cycles already carried out, there were 19,142 students in 2016, 14,372 students in 2013, 13,260 students in 2010, 17,670 students in 2007 and 8,578 students in 2004 who participated in the National Student Performance Exam, which consists of an exam to measure students' knowledge and expertise in the final part of the undergraduate course in physical education; these students will possess the right to act as coaches at the end of the course [23,24,25,26,27].

The guidelines for the operation of the courses are described in Resolution 7/2004 [12] and Resolution 4/2009 [13], which establish the requirement that the courses must have a minimum of 3,200 hours of activities and a minimum four-year duration. In addition, it is declared that up to 20% of these hours must be dedicated to supervised training and complementary activities. The Resolution 7/2004 [12] described more specifically the desirable principles, conditions and procedures of the courses, particularly regarding the pedagogical project.

It is crucial to emphasize that the pedagogical project includes the curriculum but is not limited to it. It is a guiding document of didactic-pedagogic organization, which should articulate in a harmonious and coherent manner aspects such as the educational context in which the course is developed, the objectives, the graduates' profile, curriculum structure, contents, teaching methodology, the association between theory and practice, supervised training, the professional practice activities, support for students, evaluation of the teaching-learning processes, and complementary activities [12, 28].

According to the National Curriculum Guidelines for courses in Physical Education, these elements should form the core design of the education programme to promote the development of political, social, ethical, moral, technical and professional and scientific skills [12].

More specifically, Resolution 7/2004 [12], Article 6, determines that the pedagogical project must guarantee a generalist, humanist, critical approach, qualifying the academic-professional intervention based on scientific rigor, philosophical reflection, and ethical behaviour. The law conceives three aspects to the general education approach of the course: (1) the relationship of man and society, (2) the

biological dimension of the human body and (3) the production of knowledge.

The learning process should cover the cultural dimensions of human movement, the technical and instrumental dimensions, and didactic and pedagogical dimensions. In addition to these essential elements, the law also details the competencies and skills that the professionals must acquire during their learning process, such as researching, knowing, understanding, analysing, and evaluating the social reality in which they will intervene. The pedagogical project of the course needs to consider critical action, as well as investigative, reconstructive and interdisciplinary knowledge. Moreover, it must promote the inseparable connection between theory and practice: the relationship between general and specific knowledge [12].

It is also reinforced that the professionals should understand early in their careers as coaches the importance of continuing education as a long-term process to promote the permanent updating of knowledge regarding the scope of the sport and to allow for the adequate attending to the population in general and of specific groups [29].

These elements are essential in the composition of pedagogical projects in higher education courses [12].

In Legal Opinion 58/2004, the text that explains the concept of professional competence understood to extrapolate the dimensions of doing, knowing, and knowing how to intervene stands out. The assumption of the guidelines refers to curriculum design, conceived as the process of the formation of historical human competence. Therefore, competence is recognized as a condition permanently modifying the relationship between society and nature, using innovative knowledge from an emancipatory perspective as an instrument. The legislation also establishes mechanisms to guarantee the link between theory and practice using curricular components such as professional practices, supervised internship and complementary activities [30].

The supervised internship aims to provide undergraduate students with knowledge of working conditions in real life by placing them directly into institutions that have sports activities. The undergraduate student should experience the skills and abilities required for academic and professional practice under the supervision of a trained and qualified coach. The complementary activities are a mechanism to validate credits in the curriculum, considering different kinds of experiences and independent practices. As a curricular component, the objective is the academic, scientific and cultural enrichment of the student, and the activities are accepted according to the pedagogical project elaborated by the higher education institution [12].

## 2. Considerations about of coach's activities and education

The Brazilian legal condition about coaching as a profession can be particular to the country, but the debate on these issues go beyond geographical limits [8, 31, 5]. According to Taylor and McEwan [32], recent professions need to provide for their own work environment through the definition and recognition of the legitimacy of professionals in the field of action. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a critical dialogue on the theme to promote professional development.

For a coach to be considered a profession, a unique identity and discourse is required. It is only by virtue of progressively engaging with related attributes that coaches can be considered professionals and coaching a profession. [33, 65]

Theoretically, this is what the Brazilian legislation has been attempting to reflect over the past two decades. The regulation

of the profession in Brazil was not a peaceful episode <sup>[34-36]</sup>. Many voices arose against and in favor of regulation and still reverberate in the present. This debate did not seem restricted to Brazil.

The international criticisms related to this topic include the educational programs for coaches, certification systems, managerialist tendencies and pressures, organization bureaucracy, functionalist approach, standardization of education, the structure of training and qualification, and lack of critical and conceptual for professional status <sup>[37, 4, 1, 38, 33]</sup>. In contrast, the International Council of Coaching Excellence <sup>[39, 5]</sup> affirmed

with growing appreciation of coaching and the challenges that accompany the role, the sport community and its partners recognise the need for a common set of criteria to inform the development and qualification of coaches. That effort will begin with a global, authoritative reference point: the International Sport Coaching Framework. Given the advances in communication technologies and convenient means of travel, many of the obstacles that may have once blocked the flow of knowledge, information and research about coaching have been addressed to varying degrees in various sports and nations. Thus, there is an opportunity to create a vibrant global dialogue and professional language among organisations interested in developing coaches in a more systematic and sustained manner.

Although this debate is taking place, it seems the Brazilian legal scene was not in the radar of the international research. In the last twenty years it was established the Federal Law recognizing the coach as a professional, the Statute of the Federal Council and the Ethical Code corroborating with the importance of the qualified coaches for the society, as a manner of advocate and preserving the public interest. Moreover, the studies mentioned did not appear to investigate circumstances where the professional activities of the coaches are restricted to those who have a higher-education degree in Physical Education courses. As this scenario evolved in Brazil is not the focus of this essay, but the fact is that it exists with legal support.

Considering the lack of substantial evidences to indicate positive and negative attributes about the Brazilian structure for coaches' education and performance, it is only possible to make some comments.

It is necessary to consider the worldwide attractiveness and evolution the sports have been echoed in the ongoing increase of sport studies as an interdisciplinary field of academic research <sup>[40, 41]</sup>. Hoffman and Harris <sup>[5]</sup> argued that many disciplines support the understanding the human movement like biomechanics, physiology, philosophy, history, sociology, motor behavior and psychology. They conceived the practice knowledge as something 'derived from integration of performance, scholarly study, and practical experience about appropriate ways to deliver professional services' <sup>[42, p.504]</sup>

In this sense, it is important to recognize that science has produced extensive expertise about sport in the biological, behavioral and social field <sup>[31]</sup>. For this reason, it cannot be ignored the importance of information offered for coaches in all these areas and the opportunities of reflective practice, because overlooking the production of knowledge in diverse fields means taking the risk of provide services to individuals, athletes and society inadequately. In the Brazilian case, it is not just about the high-performance sport, but the application of the whole spectrum of knowledge in different sporting manifestations, from recreational to the competitive level.

Taylor and McEwan <sup>[32]</sup> stated that there has been a change in conception that has led coaches to new positions as important agents in a variety of broader agendas, which include aspects such as health, community cohesion, social capital development and welfare of sports practitioners <sup>[43]</sup>.

From another point of view, the education of coaches related to some degree of professionalism, tend to be conceived as rationalist and functionalist, as if sports education is somehow restricted to the biological, technical and tactical sphere <sup>[33]</sup>. Potrac <sup>[44]</sup> clarify that although disciplines in the biological and health areas have evolved substantially over time and influenced the daily work of coaches, the coaches' performance must be contextualized in an environment of complex human relations, susceptible to the social, cultural, ideological and ethical contexts in which the exercise of the profession occurs. Therefore, the temptation should be avoided to propose a simplified and automated model of teaching and application of knowledge to achieve results, which limits the understanding of the role of coaches.

Concerning to higher education courses, as described in the National Curricular Guidelines <sup>[12]</sup>, coaches should be guided by the critical reflection on the world, society and professional activity. In line with this conception, Martins <sup>[17]</sup> proposed, in a book published by the Federal Council of Physical Education, to comply adequately with the Federal Guidelines for Physical Education courses, it is highly recommended to include in the curriculum disciplines such as: (1) sociology of sports; (2) sociology of leisure; (3) anthropology of physical education and sports; (4) history of physical education and sport; (5) philosophy of physical education and sport; (6) professional ethics; (7) public policies in physical activities, sports and health (p. 75). This part of the national curricular guideline for undergraduate courses in physical education presents some similarity with the proposal of Jones and Kingston <sup>[45]</sup>.

The importance of humanities in coaches' initial education can be seen as an attempt to present novice coaches with a dynamic two-way connection between individuals and society. These disciplines, as part of the higher graduation courses, have the potential to promote a discussion about sport and society, professional ethics and the ethics in sport. Moreover, depending on the educational approach, the humanities' disciplines in the beginning of the career might lead to awareness on the active role of the coaches in the sport organizations and institutions. As defended by Cassidy <sup>[33, p.5]</sup> 'if coaches are to increasingly understand why they are doing what they are doing, inclusive of related limitations and possibilities, it is useful for them to have a grasp of social, cultural and educational concepts'. For example, in the problem-posing educational conception, individuals are not part of a predestined historicity, but are rather continually in the process of becoming, and can change themselves and their environment <sup>[46]</sup>.

The Brazilian legal documents related to the work practices of coaches reaffirm the notion of professional competence to use education as an emancipator factor that can prepare coaches to control his or her career's development process, as described in Legal Opinion 58/2004 <sup>[30]</sup>. Therefore, the coach should take ownership of the construction of their knowledge and act proactively in the environment in which he or she proposes to intervene. Thus, the development of a personal learning system will provide the coach the conditions to satisfy the demands of practitioner function on many levels.

According to Newman <sup>[47]</sup>, 'human beings are the architects of their own social reality' (p. xviii). Building on this

assumption, it is worth presuming that coaches can be the architects of the sport environment somehow. To consolidate the notion of the coaches as a political agent in sport, there is the Professional Ethics Code which reports the desirable social behavior by coaches <sup>[11]</sup> which is similar to the available literature <sup>[8,38,48, 33]</sup>. Nonetheless, more than obligations, there is the description of the coaches' rights and how they should be treated, what seems to be innovative.

From an ethicist point of view, what really matters is how we treat ourselves and others, and how we evaluate good and bad behaviour in the context of sport. The role of ethics in sport coaching, then is to provide legitimate underpinning and a clear framework for coaching behaviour <sup>[49,p.114]</sup>.

In these conditions, the activity of coaches does not exist without political aspects, whether conscious or not, that serve to alter or maintain the status quo <sup>[8]</sup>. Consequently, the coach's behaviour should not be considered alienated from the environment in which they are inserted. In this sense, coaches act in a political dimension, which can be characterized as the process of collective organization, and power to make decisions that affect people's lives in a social world <sup>[50]</sup>. Consequently, the position of coaches at work is not without conflict, and it contrasts forces of the diversified personages who make up the sporting habitat <sup>[51]</sup>. In some cases, the ambience in which the coach acts are related to the nearest working group as athletes, referees, and spectators. In other cases, the coaches need to understand the social macro structures of sport <sup>[52]</sup>. The forces related to the broad environment might involve federations, confederations and governmental policies of sport.

In a way, there are aspects in the Federal Physical Education Council Statute that emphasized the institutional political influence like: (1) ensuring the dignity, independence and value of coaches; (2) collaborate with public and private organizations in solving professional problems; (3) to act as an advisory body of the governmental institutions about sports matters; and (4) to analysis's laws, regulatory standards and opinions related to sports <sup>[19]</sup>. The statute provided an opportunity for coaches to raise their voices and become more active in the sports organizations since the Federal Council of Physical Education unified the professionals of physical education and sport.

We as individuals can affect the very social structure that affects us. We can modify role expectations, change norms, create or destroy organizations, revolutionize institutions, and even alter the path of world history <sup>[47, p.23]</sup>.

Therefore, the narrative about profession can be approach as a powerful agent of work-related change and social control at the macro, meso and micro levels in very different relations, contexts and conditions of work <sup>[1]</sup>.

On the other side, this legislation does not mean that all the advances can be taken for granted. The regulation of the profession, controlled by a specific institution and with strict guidelines for education, should not become just a monopoly strategy to control activities, but legitimately justified by attending effectively the interests of society <sup>[53]</sup>. In some circumstances, the 'professions are passive victims who are relatively powerless against demands for regulation, increased bureaucracy, transparency and accountability' <sup>[1, p.408]</sup>. This conflict of interest needs to be continuously analysed through the critical lens.

The most effective way to study professions is not to treat them as static entities or fixed social structures. Rather, they should be understood as ongoing processes of professionalization. Thus, professions emerge from processes

of negotiation, conflict, and exchange with external stakeholders, such as the state, and with internal competitors <sup>[2, p.30]</sup>.

In this sense, the Brazilian education and professional framework of coaches presented a reality that has multiple potentials for future investigations, since the current legislation establishes a series of parameters, but studies are still lacking to verify how this framework is reflected in the real life. Anteby, Chan and DiBenigno <sup>[3]</sup> presented an insightful framework for the analysis of occupation and/or professional performance. They offered the three lenses to understand professions: a becoming, doing or relating lens.

Through a becoming lens, scholars would notice the transformation of newcomers as they become socialized into an occupation. Using a doing lens, on the other hand, scholars would notice the tasks occupational members perform and claim jurisdiction to, as well as those they collectively avoid. Through a relating lens, scholars may notice the complexities of the relations members build to clients and other external stakeholders. Each lens focuses attention on different questions and levels of analysis in the study of occupations <sup>[3, p.189]</sup>.

Overall, it is important to remember that modern sport involves not only athletes, coaches and referees, but also managers of clubs, federations, confederations, media, sponsors, politicians and a variety of characters who are present in the sport for different reasons <sup>[54]</sup>. Thus, the critical level of reflection of coaches is a necessity in a field in which there are disputes of forces <sup>[33]</sup>. Doyle <sup>[6]</sup> argued that it is essential to the conception of a profession, that it is conducted by its members, and reinforced the idea of occupation control.

### 3. Concluding Thoughts

Despite all the legal apparatuses that have emerged in recent years, it would be naive to state that education and coaches' practices are well established in the country, mainly due to the proportion and the scope of legislation and because the existence of the law does not guarantee the completeness and quality of its execution. From the historical point of view, these changes are still recent; it is an ongoing process.

The actual legislation in the country is responsible for the political conception of the activity of the coach and for the coaches' professional category. The next step is to investigate the reality of this scenario through a critical sociological approach. Anteby <sup>[3]</sup> declared 'there is a theoretical danger of not keeping up to date with contemporary professional and occupational dynamics. Without understanding occupations, the scholarly field is at risk of misinterpreting organizational dynamics' (p. 186). In this sense, Jarvie <sup>[55]</sup> stated that there is no alternative to being either involved in or alienated from policy intervention. A neutral policy is impracticable.

This scenario might offer researchers a fertile field in which to set research agendas and situate their research work in broad, real contexts to investigate the education and the activities of coaches as professionals, not only in Brazil but between countries, as a way of knowing and comparing structures that are intended to support the development of coaches' careers. Future studies about the legal structures designed to support coaches could enhance the production of the knowledge in this theme.

Although this essay approach is limited to legal aspects and being geographically located in Brazil, it is expected that this information will encourage new thinking and promote future research at an international level.

**Disclosure statement:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

This work was supported by the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) under Grant 2015/17100-3

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