

Coach Education and Continuing Professional Development: Experience and Learning to Coach

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Research over the last decade has demonstrated that it is experience and the observation of other coaches that remain the primary sources of knowledge for coaches. Despite this, coach education and continuing professional development fail to draw effectively on this experience. Using the work of Pierre Bourdieu, this paper attempts to understand how the “art of coaching” can be characterized as structured improvisation and how experience is crucial to structuring coaching practice. An examination of current coach education and assessment demonstrates that coaching practice viewed as a composite of knowledge has not specifically addressed the pervasive influence of experience on coaching practice. Drawing on experiences from the educational field, we examine how coach education and continuing professional development can utilize mentoring and critical reflection to situate learning in the practical experience of coaching.

Until recently, although the importance of coaching to athlete development and national sporting success was increasingly being realized (Sports Coach UK, 2002), there was little agreement as to a future strategic direction for the burgeoning profession. A recent commissioned report (“The development of coaching in the United Kingdom,” 1999) brought this situation into stark relief and, subsequently, initiated a process whereby the government-funded Sports Strategy Coaching Task Force recommended the development of National Occupational Standards (NOS) for coaches working within the high performance environment. The

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standards will, in turn, offer a foundation for the proposed New Coaching Certificate and the improved National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQs) and, hence, form a base for the future of coach education within the UK. The government's commitment to this process has been underlined by its allocation of £100 million to the World Class Performance Program in response to recommendations by the related Cunningham Report (2000), which considered coach education to be a crucial element in improving sporting standards.

This investment has kicked off a broad consultative process into establishing the NOS for coaches, with pedagogical and particularly sport scientific knowledge destined to play leading roles (Sports Coach UK, 2002). Although the nature of the consultative process is welcome, if we are to develop imaginative, dynamic, and thoughtful coaches, we must widen the search beyond the "usual suspects" of content knowledge that has traditionally informed coach education programs. If we don't, we run the risk of simply getting a souped up version of the same, a product that has recently been criticized by coaches and scholars alike as lacking relevancy (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, in press; Saury & Durand, 1998). Alternatively, to develop a credible, practical, yet thoroughly holistic coach education program, we need first to better ascertain the complex nature of coaching and coaching knowledge itself before examining issues such as what constitutes continuing professional development for coaches and devising ways to incorporate, develop, and improve it.

Coaching is both an individual and a social process, which, because of its very nature, is inextricably linked to both the constraints and opportunities of human interaction (Jones et al., in press). Indeed, at its heart lies the constructed connection between coach and athlete within the wider structure of sport that is itself vulnerable to differing social pressures and constraints (Armour & Jones, 2000; Cross, 1995; Cushion 2001; Tinning, 1982). Any activity that involves human beings is a complex multivariate, interpersonal, and contested one, contested at the levels of meaning, values, and practice (Cross & Lyle, 1999). Such processes, of which coaching is one, often appear unique and idiosyncratic (Lyle, 1999, 2002), with the actions of coaches seemingly driven by impulse and intuition resulting in the profession being described as an "art" (Woodman, 1993). In fact, this recourse to art form is really a misnomer for "the under-investigated practice of coaches" (Lyle, 1999, p.12). Indeed, in bypassing problematic and integrative elements of a coach's role, which are often perceived to comprise the art of coaching, it could be argued that previous work in the area has oversimplified a very complex process (Cushion, 2001; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, in press; Lyle, 1999, 2002). A particularly problematic yet significant element in this respect is coaches' knowledge. Although those who claim coaching an art would have us believe that good coaches are "born and not made," such a view is increasingly outmoded, with experts' knowledge in many fields (and how it is acquired) currently being the focus of considerable investigation.

While coaching is undeniably complex, coaches and what they do remain at the epicenter of the process. This paper considers the development and nature of coaching knowledge and practice through the medium of coaches' experiences, both formal and informal. It attempts to understand the relationship between the conscious and subconscious development of experiential knowledge and its impact upon coaches' professional development and practice. Through critical

examination of this relationship, the effectiveness of existing coach education is considered and recommendations for new forms of professional development made.

Coaching and Experiential Knowledge

In a review of the development of coaching as a profession, Woodman (1993) confirmed the assertion that the key to improved coaching lies with coach education and development. This view, allied with an expansion in sport participation (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999; Weiss & Gould, 1986), has resulted in the implementation of coach education programs worldwide (Campbell, 1993; DeKnop, Engstrom, & Skirstad, 1996; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). Yet, coaching experience and the observation of other coaches remain primary sources of knowledge for coaches and coaching (Cushion, 2001; Gilbert & Trudel 2001; Gould, Gianinni, Krane, & Hodge, 1990; Salmela, 1996). For example, Gould et al. (1990) found that "one of the most important themes arising [in this context] was the importance of experiential knowledge and informal education" (p. 34). Inherent in the process of learning how to coach, therefore, would appear to be an element of socialization within a subculture (Jones et al., in press), with a personal set of coaching views emerging from observations of, and interaction with, existing coaches of "how things should be done" (Lyle, 1999).

Arguably, coaches serve what is described in physical education as an apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975; Sage, 1989; Schempp, 1989; Schempp & Graber, 1992). This can be divided into two phases: first, being observers and recipients of coaching as performers and second, as neophyte coaches or assistants working with and observing experienced coaches. As performers themselves, future coaches have an unusually good opportunity to learn about coaching from their own coaches. While Martens (1997) argues that this view only gives a partial view of coaching and may not reveal the true extent of the coaches role, Coakley (1978) notes that these experiences "are the channels through which the traditional accepted methods of coaching become integrated into the behavior of aspiring young coaches" (p. 241). Coaches, therefore, often serve an informal apprenticeship of prolonged observation, which enables them to develop a familiarity with the task of coaching (Cushion, 2001). Neophyte coaches and assistants are also, in effect, serving an apprenticeship. However, this is often not formally organized, as assistant coaches do not serve for a specific time nor are they required to demonstrate particular skills to move beyond apprentice status (Sage, 1989). Observing the behavior of more experienced coaches during practice and games and listening during informal periods leaves its mark on novice coaches. It is largely through such experiences that collective understandings begin to develop, and the shared meanings about the occupational culture of coaching starts to take shape. Therefore, much of what a new coach learns is through ongoing interactions in the practical coaching context, as well as a variety of informal sources. This enculturation provides continuity with lessons learned earlier as a performer.

Consequently, through participation and observation from a player through to becoming a coach, methods of coaching are experienced and witnessed. These methods are steeped in a culture, which, in turn, are internalized and embodied. It is also worth noting that the learning taking place may involve things that were not

present in coaching observed. As Dodds remarks, “ignorance is not neutral” (1985, p. 93). Indeed, Kirk (1992) suggests that things that are, intentionally or unintentionally, left out of practice remain significant in passing on messages about that practice. Even though coaches’ past experiences are uneven in quality and incomplete, they form a screen or filter through which all future expectations will pass (Schempp & Graber, 1992). Coaches thus come to see and interpret future coaching events and observations on the basis of this early experiential foundation (Cushion, 2001; Jones et al., in press). Such formative experiences carry far into a coach’s career and provide a continuing influence over perspectives, beliefs, and behaviors. This, as will be seen, has implications for the impact of coach education.

Regardless of the method of entry into coaching, it would appear that the technical aspects of coaching and the coaching culture are often acquired through observing and listening to more experienced coaches. This appears to be a consistent finding in related research. For example, in two separate studies of high level coaches, Gould et al. (1990) and Salmela, Cote, and Baria (1994), both identified that the most important sources responsible for the development of coaches’ knowledge were experience and other coaches. A decade later, Cushion (2001) once again confirmed experience and other coaches as significant forces in shaping the development of coaches and impacting the way they do things within the coaching process. As a result, it would seem that a large part of coaching knowledge and practice is based on experiences and personal interpretations of those experiences. However, this is not to say that all experienced coaches are competent (Bell, 1997; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001), although to become a competent coach, it would appear that significant experience is required (Cushion, 2001; Lyle, 2002). These empirical findings raise a number of issues relevant to coach education and ultimately coaching practice. First, how has coach education impacted and changed the coaching process over time? The thread of history and tradition seen running through coaching practice and the coaching process presents a compelling argument that perhaps coach education has had a limited impact on the coaching process and coaching practice (Cushion, 2001). Moreover, as Rossi and Cassidy (1999) remind us, coach education is a relatively “low impact” endeavor compared with the hours spent as a player, assistant coach, and coach. It could be argued, therefore, that coach education is unable to compete with the coaches’ integrated sporting and coaching experiences.

Understanding Experience: What Does Bourdieu Bring to Coaching?

Although sociology has seen scant service in an analysis of the coaching process, the work of Bourdieu would seem particularly appropriate in giving insight into the apparent impromptu art of coaching and understanding how experience contributes to practice. The following section, therefore, focuses on the work and key concepts of Bourdieu in explaining and understanding coaching, thus illustrating its potential contribution to future coach education programs. For Bourdieu, far from being off-the-cuff improvisation, practice is a blend of the conscious and the unconscious, which manifests itself as second nature. Alternatively, he considered that a feel for the game involved being a competent social actor that resulted from the absorption of appropriate social actions and mores (Jones, 2000).

The coaching process and coaching practice then can be considered a form of “regulated improvisation” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.79), with practice being neither objectively determined nor the unbridled product of free will (Ritzer, 1996).

The temporal quality of practice, in other words the evolution and refinement of practice across time, is an important consideration in a discussion of coaching, coach development, and education. In explaining this, Bourdieu argued that the body is a site of social memory involving the individual culturally learning and evoking dispositions to act (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994). Durable and transposable dispositions to act are characterized by Bourdieu as *habitus* (Brubaker, 1995; Wacquant, 1998), which are defined as a series of internalized schemes through which people perceive, produce, and evaluate their practices (Ritzer, 1996). These unconscious schemata are acquired through lasting exposures to particular conditions via the internalization of external constraints and possibilities (Wacquant, 1995). The unconscious operation of *habitus* means that what coaches do, i.e., their practice, signifies a great deal about their personal history and occupancy of a specific social position. Coaches’ knowledge and action, therefore, can be viewed as both the product and manifestation of a personally experienced involvement with the coaching process. They are linked to the coaches’ own histories and, crucially, are attributable to how they were learned. The expression of the coaches’ dispositions or *habitus* through training sessions and games, and which is refined by interaction with the environment and performers, produces the coaching process and the coaching context (Cushion, 2001). The coaches’ *habitus*, then, is acquired as a result of past experience as players and coaches and through adjustment and readjustment following interaction with the specific coaching context. Given the interconnectedness of coaching, the body and culture, the coaches and their practice take on enormous significance as a moment in the process of cultural production and reproduction (Kirk & Tinning, 1990). Therefore, the acquisition and development of coaches’ *habitus* has serious implications for both coaching practice and coach education. However, before this notion is considered in detail and developed further, it is worthwhile taking a critical view of current coach education.

Current Coach Education: A Critique

Coaching awards or certification are a common and traditional feature of British sport and now contain more information than ever, dealing with a range of issues from technique and tactics to elements of sport science (Abraham & Collins, 1998). Although the knowledge base that coaches currently receive allows them to fit into sporting settings and transmit their subject matter, it could also be considered to render them as unskilled workers (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997a; Howley & Howley, 1995). Hence, it can be argued that coach education courses, having been developed along rationalistic lines, currently do not develop what Jones (2000) describes as necessary, intellectual, and practical competencies, namely, independent and creative thinking skills in relation to meaning making and problem solving. Instead, by separating the theory from practice, high level tasks have been presented as sequential routine, which has resulted in the deskilling of the practitioner in terms of cognitive and human interaction (Jones, 2000; MacDonald & Tinning, 1995; Potrac, Jones, Brewer, Armour, & Hoff, 2000). This approach is

problematic, because as Schon (1987) points out, professions that privilege “technocratic rationality” are finding graduates ill prepared for the many challenges and tasks practice asks of them.

Course content on such programs is generally directed toward the promotion of athletic achievement, with a dominant focus on performance enhancement (Liukkonen, Laasko, & Telama, 1996). Coaching as a social process receives scant attention. In addition, coach development programs subdivide coaching into components, episodes, or modules, resulting in distinct and fragmented categories within the broad coaching field (Jones, 2000). Indeed, MacDonald and Tinning (1995) contend that this fragmentation of knowledge reflects an increasing product view, with coaching, not unlike physical education, being seen as an “autonomous body of facts passed through generations” (McKay, Gore, & Kirk, 1990, p. 62). This, of course, has implications for coaches, with practitioners being regarded as “merely technicians engaged in the transfer of knowledge” (McDonald & Tinning, 1995, p. 98). An inherent problem with this rational approach is that learning becomes decontextualized, resulting in the production of two-dimensional coaches driven by mechanistic considerations who are unable to comprehend and, as a result, adapt to the dynamic human context (Jones 2000; Turner & Martinek, 1995). Alternatively, far from being merely technicians or functionaries who transmit a *de facto* curriculum (Lawson, 1993), in line with the complex and dynamic nature of their work, coaches should be educated as transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1988). Hence, they need a range of practical and cognitive skills to enable them to construct and question knowledge and connect coaching to a broader sociocultural context (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997b; Jones, 2000).

Coach education course content, while increasing the knowledge base of coaches, must be largely held accountable for this apparent inadequacy in coach preparation, as it defines what is necessary knowledge for coaches to practice (Jones et al., in press). Tinning (1997) contends that this implies a choice between different views of what knowledge is essential for practice. This is a form of social editing, or “gate keeping,” where some themes are eliminated and others are promoted (Lawson, 1993). The process, therefore, becomes a political act, intimately linked with power and control, regarding what constitutes legitimate knowledge and who holds that knowledge in the culture and profession. Arguably, through this control, the governing body and certain interests within it (i.e., the gatekeepers) seek to maintain and improve their position.

The outcome of this editing process is a philosophical orientation that is vocational and technocratic (Kirk, 1992; Fernandez-Balboa, 1997b). The emphasis is on procedural knowledge, the skills, technique, and tactics of the game. This approach is problematic on a number of levels. First, it assumes that knowledge and tricks of the trade can be passed on unhindered and unchallenged when, in reality, the development of knowledge is perhaps more complicated (Rossi, 1996). Indeed, knowledge for coaching is inherently contextual and dynamic with, as we have already argued, life-world experiences contributing to its development. Furthermore, coaching knowledge, not unlike pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986) in physical education, is neither complete nor absolute, but ever evolving. Second, coach education cannot treat knowledge in a vacuum, as if it were neutral and value-free. Knowledge is produced within particular sociocultural contexts, serves particular interests, and carries certain values. Indeed,

knowledge is socially constituted, socially mediated, and open ended, with “its meaning to given actors, its furnishings, and the relations of humans within it, [being] produced, reproduced, and changed in the course of activity” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 51). As Schempp (1993) contends, knowledge is living, not inorganic, as it grows from the distilled wisdom of practice. Yet, coaching course content still reinforces the image of the coach as a technician whose role, although requiring a high degree of skill, is to simply and uncritically transmit knowledge. This does not teach coaches to adapt or apply value judgments.

More specifically, coach education courses often break the process down into specific components, with students shown a gold standard or perceived notions of best practice of coaching for each component (Abraham & Collins, 1998). By design, this does not designate context nor prepare coaches for context. In sport, contexts can be as varied as the sportspeople who inhabit them; some examples may include youth, developmental, competitive, professional, team, or individual sport. Each coaching context may have its own specific demands and objectives, so the program delivered in that context will also be variable. Indeed, the nature and variability of program content within sporting contexts means that coach education cannot correspond to all needs. This, then, results in a lack of perceived fit between coach education and practical needs that, in turn, weakens the impact of coach education (Saury & Durand, 1998).

To develop coaching praxis, that is, the progressive integration of theory and practice, the aims and content of coach education must deal with the coach’s experience, ranging from the lack of experience of the neophyte coach, through to the extensive experience of the established coach. An established coach arrives at coach education courses with a long-standing and deep-rooted habitus, a set of beliefs and dispositions that guides actions and is tempered by years of experience in the sport. In the first instance, it would be naive for those involved with coach education to believe that these coaches are waiting to be filled with the professional dogma (Schempp & Graber, 1992) of coaching theory. It could also be argued that coaching courses, with their parceled and specific ways of knowing and communicating (Cushion, 2001; Saury & Durand, 1998), are unable to compete with an established habitus conceived from experience. As a result, with their experience acting as a filter, coaches may contest directly or indirectly some of the principles the coach education program attempt to instill. However, because of the power of the coach educator and the governing body, through their responsibility for certification and position in the sport, coaches have much to lose by directly contesting the program. Therefore, the critical scrutiny necessary to do things better and to create the possibility of changing practice if the need arises, is driven underground as the coaches give an outward appearance of acceptance while harboring and restricting their disagreement with, and rejection of, the official coaching orientation. So, while coach education may give the appearance of being subject to a so-called “wash out” effect (Zeichner & Tabaachnick, 1981), evidence suggests that many coaches probably never accept or appropriate the program behaviors and beliefs but, out of necessity, merely appeared to (Cushion, 2001).

Of course there is no one size fits all pedagogy (Lawson, 1990) in the day-to-day lives of coaches and their practice. Therefore, how can a single coach education program realistically prepare coaches for so many contexts and a myriad of contextual factors? This is a pertinent question with no easy solution. While not

being all encompassing and complete, the issues raised in the next section may provide a point of departure for thinking in this regard.

Toward Developing Coach Education: Mentoring, Knowledge, and Understanding

Those responsible for looking at new forms of coach professional development could find it useful to draw upon the experiences and findings of researchers in the field of education. In particular, those charged with improving and developing the professional practice of teachers currently working in schools who develop in-service training or continuing professional development (CPD). For example, continuing professional development (CPD) research has had difficulty in linking CPD activity and its impact upon teachers' practices and ultimately, student learning. In this regard, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman and Suk Yoon (2001) distinguish between traditional and reform types of CPD. Traditional forms of CPD tend to take place at specific times and are usually undertaken off-site with minimal follow-up. They offer little opportunity or support to enable teachers to integrate new learning with practice and, so, are often ineffective. Reform types of CPD, on the other hand, typically take place within the school day, involve collective participation of teachers from the same school or group of schools, and are integrated into practice in the form of study groups and mentoring. Garet et al. (2001) argue that these activities are easier to sustain over time and crucially are likely to result in better connections between experience, new learning, and existing practice.

Within coaching, as has been argued earlier, evidence suggests that both the experience of the coach and encounters with experienced coaches are fundamental to the shaping of the coach habitus and coaching practice. Clearly, then, influencing such experiences would affect the acquisition and development of coaches' knowledge. Indeed, sections of the coaching literature have argued that coach education should incorporate sources of experience other than the coaching manual (Gould et al., 1990; Schembri, 2001; Lyle, 2002). One method of doing this would be for coach education to embrace mentoring within its framework, a strategy that can easily be housed within the reform camp of CPD. Indeed, there would appear to be some clear links between this proposal and the research on CPD in education. However, Loughran and Gunstone (1997, p.161) remind us that professional development is not something that can be delivered, rather it should be about "working with, not doing to, teachers so that appropriate time, support, understanding and personal development are seen as investments in personal growth." Furthermore, Stein, Smith and Silver (1999) point out that if CPD is to change, there are important implications for those responsible for providing it. Indeed, Stein et al. (1999) argue that in education, what professional developers need is "more akin to a transformation than to tinkering around the edges of their practice" (p.19). It is likely that this applies equally to coach education providers.

Taking into account the dominant role it seems to play in coaching knowledge acquisition, it would seem logical for coach education to harness the obvious power and influence of experience, and other influential coaches, to work toward sound coach development objectives. A key finding from recent coaching research (Cushion, 2001; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001) demonstrates that mentoring is already very much in operation. Because experience and other coaches are still highlighted

as the most important facet in the development of coaches bears testimony to this. Mentoring in its current form, however, appears largely unstructured, informal, and uneven in terms of quality and outcome, uncritical in style, and, from the evidence, serves to reproduce the existing culture, power relations, and importantly, existing coaching practice (Cushion, 2001).

In the educational field, mentoring is well established with a considerable body of literature devoted to it (Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McNerny & O'Brien, 1995; Bloom, Bush, Schinke & Salmela, 1998). In an exhaustive summary of the effects of mentoring in education, Abell et al. (1995) found examples of successful programs with positive outcomes for both the teacher and the mentor. Interestingly, the mentors received an educational benefit through critical reflection and observation and, because the mentor had a helping role rather than an evaluative one, program effectiveness was enhanced. While sounding like a statement of the obvious, in coaching, where a critical tradition is lacking, the difference between help and evaluation is more than a question of semantics. Similarly, in an investigation of training methods of coaches, it was found that a formalized and structured mentoring program was considered by the participants to be the most important factor in their development (Bloom, Salmela, & Schinke, 1995). In light of this evidence, it could be contended that more formalized mentoring programs would be a worthwhile addition to coach development (Bloom et al., 1998). Furthermore, as the research suggests, mentoring is not only beneficial to the developing coach, but also to the master coach who, as mentors, are able to expand and diversify their own learning experiences when working with apprentices (Abell et al., 1995; Bowers & Eberhart, 1988).

Enabling Transformation: Effective Mentoring Through Reflection

Importantly, Cushion (2001) makes useful suggestions as to what might make a mentoring program more successful. It would seem imperative for mentors to have established the appropriate position in the sporting and coaching hierarchy. They would have to have the necessary amount and mix of social, cultural, and symbolic capital. The mentor would also have to hold expert power (French & Raven, 1959), which is based not only on the knowledge of the mentor, but upon the perceptions of the coaches regarding that knowledge (Tauber, 1985).

Coaches, then, are part of the problem and part of the solution. The implications for coach education lie in understanding how knowledge and experience are passed on and become translated into the coaching process. This paper, along with other research, has linked significant others and past experience to the development of high-level coaches. It has also shown that through the habitus, coaches' behaviors and actions are often the expression of tacit beliefs that are so taken for granted that they cannot be recognized or verbalized. We need to provide coaches with a mirror in which they can see their own programs and practices. Coaches need to see the ways in which day-to-day behaviors reinforce or challenge cultural beliefs and practices, for example, in perpetuating stereotypes pertaining to race or gender or associating positive and supportive learning environments with winning. In a coaching world that is "largely competency based, and where measurement takes precedence over process," we need to encourage coaches to stand back

and reflect upon the construction and application of their professional knowledge (Hardy & Mawer, 1999, p. 2), in essence, to get them to understand why they coach as they do (Cassidy & Jones, *in press*). Making coaches more reflective can not only help in this recognition process but also be a catalyst for change.

Recent evidence points strongly to the need for coach education to encourage experienced coaches to question the assumptions underlying both their own coaching practice and coach education if excellence is to be achieved (Jones et al., *in press*; Cushion, 2001). Unless coaches reflect on and reinterpret past experiences of coaching, they remain in danger of leaving their practice untouched by new knowledge and insight. As Kirk and Tinning (1990) suggest,

By opening up our professional practices to scrutiny, by ourselves and our peers, we create the possibility of turning these areas of practice into "sites of contestation" (Kirk, 1988) where we can begin to address, practically and specifically, issues and problems. (p. 9)

Kirk (1986) further argues that "educators who lack the capacity for reflective thought and informed critical judgment may be in danger not only of confirming their low professional status, but also of leaving themselves open to political manipulation" (p.155). Critical reflection involves justifying what is said and done, engaging in what Mehan (1992) calls "active sense making" (p.1). It also involves dealing "consciously and expressly with the situations we find ourselves" (Dewey, 1934, p. 264). Moreover, Fernandez-Balboa (1997b) asserts that critical reflection should not just be about the past and the present, but discerning what could be; as such, it becomes a means for transforming the present and inventing the future.

How then might coaches become more reflective? As Schon (1987) suggests, it may take several years to create durable traditions. It requires those positioned within the cultural and social hierarchy of sports coaching, who have power to influence, to become committed to reflective practice, thus ensuring a connection between the educational mission of coach education, experienced coaches, and coach educators. Indeed, it is a challenging task for coach education. More immediately and specifically in coach education, considering the methods of assessment may be a step forward. Currently as considered earlier, coaches are assessed in a practical test scenario where their coaching either meets the required standard or not. This type of assessment breeds anxiety, undermines individual self-esteem, and creates an insular mentality (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997b). Khon (1994) argues that involving participants in assessment is both validating and empowering. Hence, by evaluating participants using self and peer assessment, coaches reflect on their own and others' coaching and become accustomed to giving and receiving constructive but critical feedback, resulting in "powerful and compelling learning experiences" (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997b, p. 136).

A further way to encourage reflection in coaches is to get them to clarify and hence better understand their personal philosophies, the development and expression of habitus. Choices made in the coaching process can be grounded in the coaches' philosophies (Bain, 1993; Crisfield, Cabral, & Carpenter, 1996; Martens, 1997) and so coaches need to reexamine and reflect on them. The objective of this reflection is to define alternatives so that the choices coaches make are more conscious and intentional rather than based on "tradition or uncritical inertia"

(Fernandez-Balboa, 1997b, p. 128) as evidence seems to indicate is currently the case (Cushion, 2001). This leads to consideration of how knowledge needs to be constructed and transmitted to fit the contextual purpose, particularities, and subjectivities of the particular coaching situation (Cutforth & Hellison, 1992).

Coaching, moreover, not unlike physical education, lacks a critical tradition (Kirk & Tinning, 1990) that makes the adoption of such practice fraught with difficulties and resistance. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1996) argue, the social field is a field of struggle and the sporting field is no exception. Clubs, the governing bodies, and individual coaches are constantly seeking to improve their position within the field, while the pervasive roots and influence of culture and tradition run deep. Furthermore, coaches have traditionally viewed criticism as destructive and intensely personal and hence have responded in a defensive manner (Cushion, 2001). It has often appeared easier to simply follow trends (Kirk & Tinning, 1990), with coaching practice being uncritically reproduced.

To break the restrictive cycle of our current practice, which seems “narrower and more oblivious to social context and process than ever before” (Gill, 1992, p.155), we need to test possible intervention strategies in the “swamp of practice” (Schon, 1987). Hence, to establish a genuine dialogue with practitioners, scholars need to demonstrate that they too “have struggled with (and in) the realities of practice” (Hellison, 1997, p. 200). This would seem particularly to be needed in many well established sports, including, for example, soccer, where practice is interwoven with complex hierarchies, traditions, and cultures, and a voice requires a certain position within the field both to be heard and listened to (Cushion, 2001).

Concluding Thoughts

“For any occupation the quality of future practice is a central concern and, to some extent, shapes the development of the profession” (Lyle, 2002, p. 275). Based on recent empirical work (Saury & Durand, 1998; Jones et al., in press; Cushion, 2001), we take the position that currently, experience plays a central role in impacting upon coaches’ practice. While good coaches possess a wealth of knowledge about coaching, it seems that coach education fails to draw effectively upon it in the preparation of novice coaches or indeed, in debates about practice (Snow, 2001). Yet, without formal training provision, novices have a pseudo-structured initiation into coaching (Cushion, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991). There remains, therefore, a strong case that in its current form, coach education and CPD within the field fails to inform and influence practice. However, the preparation of the practitioner cannot be left to experience alone (Cushion, 2001; Lyle, 2002). The challenge is not to ignore or downplay personal knowledge and experience but to elevate it (Snow, 2001). Clearly, there is a need to situate the trainees’ learning in the practical experience of coaching in an appropriate supportive context. In other words, coach education needs to extend its thinking into practice by going there. Our position, therefore, is that coach education programs should include supervised field experiences throughout, possibly in a variety of contexts, to enable coaches to consider differences, make mistakes, reflect and learn from them, and try again. This approach would provide coaches with multiple opportunities to test

and refine knowledge and skills, make coaching judgments that are meaningful within their particular situation, and understand the pragmatic constraints of coaching contexts.

We believe that coach education needs to explore new knowledge and ways of thinking and to be less concerned with guarding old ideas (Schempp, 1993). What we propose is a model of critical thinking that will allow coaches to develop their own processual "expert toolbox" as professionals (Cassidy & Jones, in press) and not follow blindly generic guidelines or mimic the practice of observed others (Cushion, 2001). Such a program "can serve to integrate prospective professionals into the logic of the present social order" and "serve to promote a situation where future professionals can deal critically with that reality in order to improve it" (Liston & Zeichner, 1991, p.xvii). Finally, Davies (1994) contends that this process, which could include mentoring and critical reflection, must begin with us, our knowledge, and our language and lead us to an awareness of how our professional subjectivity has been constructed.

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