

Initiating a national coaching curriculum: a paradigmatic shift?

Tania Cassidy^{a*} and Lynn Kidman^b

^a*School of Physical Education, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand;* ^b*Institute of Sport and Exercise Science, University of Worcester, Worcester, UK*

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Background: A number of countries have heavily invested in the provision of large scale coach education programmes, often framed by elaborate qualification frameworks. Despite this investment, scant research has been conducted on coach education programmes. Given the limited amount of literature on coach education, and the relatively recent emergence of literature that foregrounds the educational aspect of the coaching process, it is probably not surprising that the concept of curriculum has received scant attention despite the increasing interest in pedagogy amongst members of the sport coaching community.

Setting: In the middle of 2000, a Ministerial Taskforce on Sport, Fitness and Leisure was established to examine the structure of New Zealand sport. In 2001, one of the 'actions' stemming from the Ministerial Taskforce was the restructuring of the sport, leisure and fitness sectors, resulting in the establishment of Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC). One mandate given to SPARC was to review and upgrade coaching practice and resourcing. Subsequently, SPARC published two policy documents: *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* and the *Coach Development Framework (CDF)*.

Purpose: The purpose of the article is two-fold; first to report on an analysis of the language used in *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* and the *Coach Development Framework* and second, to explain why particular language was used.

Methods and analysis: The first method was a text analysis, which was used to analyse *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* and the *Coach Development Framework*. The second method was interviewing, which was conducted with the members of the working party involved in designing the *CDF* to gain insight into why particular language was used.

Findings: We provide examples that demonstrate how *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* and the *Coach Development Framework* reflect, or not, a paradigmatic shift in the conceptualisation of educating coaches in the New Zealand context. The examples specifically focus on a shift from coach education to coach development, from generic courses for all coaches to coaching communities, and from formalised accreditation to the provision of learning opportunities and experiences.

Conclusion: Drawing on empirical examples from the above documents, and the interview texts from the members of the working party, we contend there has been a paradigm shift in the coach education sector in New Zealand because there has been a move (at least at policy level) from an accredited and certified, standardised programme, to an ongoing professional development process informed by an applied athlete-centred philosophy.

Keywords: coach education; coach development; coaching communities; Coach Development Framework

*Corresponding author. Email: tania.cassidy@otago.ac.nz

Introduction

Internationally, the practice and conceptualisation of coach education is in a state of reorganisation and change. A number of countries have heavily invested in the provision of large scale coach education programmes, often framed by elaborate qualification frameworks (e.g., Australia's *National Coaching Accreditation Scheme*), programmes (e.g., Canada's *National Coaching Certificate Programme*), certificates (e.g., *United Kingdom Coaching Certificate*) and national coaching strategies (e.g., *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* and *Coaching Strategy for Ireland*) (Cassidy 2008). Yet, it is not only national organisations that are investing in coach education. Multinational organisations are working together to improve the provision of coach education. For example, in 2007 at the Rio Maior convention, the European Coaching Council and the International Council for Coach Education agreed upon reference points for the development of coaching competence and qualifications up to 2011 (Crespo 2008). Despite this investment, scant research has been conducted on coach education programmes, whether they are small-scale coach training programmes, university-based coach education programmes or large scale coach education programmes (Trudel, Gilbert, and Werthner in press). This article, by focusing on the case of the *New Zealand Coach Development Framework (CDF)* (SPARC 2006) and *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* (SPARC 2004), contributes to our understanding of how coach education, or in this case coach development, initiatives emerge.

Setting the scene

The following vignette documents the relationship the first author has had with the events discussed in this article:

In 2005 I attended my first International Council of Coach Education conference in Limerick, Ireland. Despite living and working in New Zealand, it was in Limerick that I was introduced to the coach development manager of Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC). SPARC is a government agency dedicated to fostering a sport and recreation environment that inspires all New Zealanders to be:

- physically active – for enjoyment, confidence, productivity and health,
- participating – whether physically participating in sport and recreation or as a caregiver supporting a child's involvement, a coach, an official, a volunteer, etc.,
- performing and winning in sport and recreation, both locally and internationally (<http://www.sparc.org.nz/about-sparc/vision-and-values>).

Upon the publication of the *CDF* in 2006, the SPARC coach development manager and the second author, who at the time was contracted to SPARC, asked me, in conjunction with international and national colleagues, to investigate the development of the *CDF* and how various 'stakeholders' were engaging with it. The submission of our research proposal coincided with a restructuring of SPARC, which resulted in the agency changing its research priorities, and may have been a factor in our proposal not getting funded.

In 2008 I was still curious about the *CDF*. Yet, apart from having access to two publicly available documents – *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* (SPARC 2004) and the *Coach Development Framework* (SPARC 2006) – I knew very little about the 'initiation' and 'use' of the *CDF*, as I had not been involved in its design or implementation at any level. In an attempt to gain an understanding of recent developments I contacted the SPARC coach development manager to see if he was willing to share with me his understanding of how the *CDF* developed and what the current situation was in terms of its implementation. He graciously agreed, and we subsequently spent four hours in a café in Wellington going over minutes of meetings, discussing what happened, when and why. At the conclusion of this meeting he

suggested I contact those who had been involved in the initiation process (i.e., members of the working party) and invite them to talk about the development of the *CDF*.

Serendipitously, two weeks after the above conversation, I was invited to visit the University of Worcester by the second author, who had been a member of the working party involved in designing the *CDF*, and subsequently employed by SPARC to write *CDF* resources and assist the National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) engage with the *CDF*. I accepted the invitation to visit Worcester, and once again I was provided with an opportunity to design research studies, albeit with a different set of colleagues, with the broad goal of gaining a greater understanding of the 'initiation' and 'use' of the *CDF*. Over a period of several months, six interlinked studies were designed, purposely spread along a macro-micro continuum, with the first study focusing on a policy analysis (macro) and the sixth focusing on an individual coach analysis (micro). Also during the time at Worcester, several 'projects' emerged from data gathered in different studies. This article is a case in point. It emerged from feedback the second author gave on a conference presentation the first author was invited to give and from the conversations and interviews the latter had begun to have with some members of the *CDF* working party, as part of the second study.

The ongoing nature of the six studies is a consequence of limited resources, such as: personnel, time, funding, access to key actors and geographical constraints. The studies have been, and continue to be, conducted as the resources and opportunities allow. Consequently, information gained in one study informs another (for example, information gained in study two informed study one and information gained in study one informed study three), a situation resembling an 'ecological' system. We draw inspiration for this claim from Bronfenbrenner (1979), who adopts an ecological approach to human development, and uses the metaphor of a set of nested Russian dolls (or matryoshka dolls) to explain how the interlinking or 'nested' social systems that surround a person can change the course of their development as well as that of their associates (Drewery and Bird 2004).

How the Coach Development Framework came to be

In the middle of 2000, a Ministerial Taskforce on Sport, Fitness and Leisure was established to "re-examine" the structure of sport in New Zealand' (Sam 2005, 212). The report of the Taskforce, which became known as the *Graham Report* (Ministerial Taskforce 2001), indicated that the sport, fitness and leisure sectors were in 'crisis' (Sam 2003; Sam and Jackson 2004). According to Sam (2003, 190, emphasis in original) when the mandate of a Taskforce is to innovate, 'it follows that their fundamental questions, ends, and purposes are developed through *ideas*' and the meanings of these ideas are 'translated into future plans, actions and artefacts'. One of the 'actions' stemming from the Ministerial Taskforce was the restructuring of the sport, leisure and fitness sectors, resulting in the establishment of Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC). Upon its establishment, SPARC used the Taskforce's 'findings' that 'Coaching is in urgent need of support and development' (Ministerial Taskforce 2001, 10) as its mandate for change. To begin this process, a 'coaching team' was established, comprising two high profile coaches employed by SPARC. The next step was the formation of a consultancy group, which comprised the 'coaching team' and 'key players in coaching' (SPARC 2004, 5). An outcome of this consultation was the production of the *New Zealand Coaching Strategy* (SPARC 2004) in which 10 issues associated with coaching were identified as needing attention, six of which identified a need for 'coach development'.

In an effort to ensure that some action would occur in relation to the 10 identified issues, the following three objectives were outlined in the *New Zealand Coaching Strategy*. To: (1) 'increase and improve the quality and quantity of time available for coaches to focus on coaching activities and coach education opportunities'; (2) 'increase the recognition and

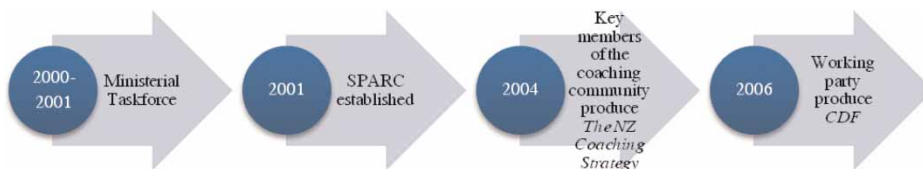


Figure 1. The relationship between the Ministerial Taskforce, SPARC, *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* and the *Coach Development Framework*.

status of coaches to ensure they are valued and that coaching is seen as a rewarding experience'; and (3) 'continually improve the quality of the coach education process, ensuring that coaches have ongoing pathways for further development' (SPARC 2004, 7).

Following on from the description of the objectives was an overview of the implementation principles and explicitly stated guidelines for supporting and developing the New Zealand coaching environment. The principles were: ownership, simplicity, holistic, outcome focused, continuous improvement and partnership. It was from these implementation principles that the following five tactics for future action were established:

1. build sport-specific coaching strategy and development programme capability
2. provide resourcing for coaching roles
3. improve coach education requirements and qualifications
4. establish world-class coaching capability
5. implement sector support and consultancy services. (SPARC 2004, 18)

Tactic three was the driver for the writing of the *Coach Development Framework (CDF)* (SPARC 2006) (see Figure 1 for an overview of the relationship between Taskforce, SPARC, *Strategy* and *CDF*). To achieve Tactic three, a working party was established which comprised members, who not only had credibility in the coaching sector, but who also represented a range of stakeholders, for example: the tertiary sector; regional sports trusts; national sport organisations; high performance coaching; academy sport; and some key members of SPARC. On occasions other representatives from associated groups, such as the Sport, Fitness, Recreation Industry Training Organisation (SFRITO) and the Talent Development working party, attended meetings.

Viewing coaching policy documents as curriculum

Viewing coaching policy documents, like the *CDF*, as curriculum opens up the possibility that the documents will no longer be considered neutral (Penney and Evans 1999), rather they become recognised as being 'socially, culturally and historically' (re)constructed, and about more than 'matters of content' (Penney 2008, 54). Viewing the *CDF* as curriculum provides an opportunity to recognise that in its development there would have been 'a contest over what is chosen, by what processes, by whom, with what intent, and with what result' (55). Moreover, holding such a view also provides an opportunity to ask certain questions about the knowledge, skills and understandings included in, and privileged by, programmes as well as what is excluded from, and marginalised in, the education and development of learners (Penney 2008), which in the current case are coaches. The work of Cassidy, Potrac, and McKenzie (2006) is an example of a coach education initiative being analysed using a curriculum framework. Informing their analysis and discussions

was Fullan's (1991) notion of curriculum change, which he described as occurring in three broad phases; 'initiation', 'use' and 'assessment'. The framework was generative because it highlighted the significance personal and political mandates had in conceptualizing and selecting curriculum. For this reason Fullan's framework was used to inform the design of the six interlinked research studies that focus on the 'initiation' and 'use' of the *CDF*.

Purpose and significance

The purpose of the article is two-fold; first, to report on an analysis of the language used in *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* and the *Coach Development Framework* and second, to explain reasons why particular language was used. By studying the language used in coach education policy documents, and gaining insight into how the language came to be used, we contribute to developing our understanding of what and how meanings associated with coaching have been realised and created. Also, by studying the language we can see if, as Sam (2003) suggested, the language used represents departure points from which to discuss a change in the coach education sector in New Zealand. These departures could be understood as reflecting a paradigm shift, or the beginnings of a shift, especially if a paradigm shift is considered evident when assumptions, previously viewed as 'important, legitimate, and reasonable' (Sparkes 1992, 12) are challenged and questioned.

The significance of this article is that it adds to the limited literature on the development of large-scale coach education programmes as identified by Trudel, Gilbert, and Werthner (in press) and coaching as an educational enterprise (Jones 2007). Moreover, by viewing the *CDF* as a curriculum document it makes a contribution to developing a co-ordinated body of research focusing on coaching curriculum (see Cassidy, Potrac, and McKenzie 2006) and expands the discussions within the emerging coaching pedagogy literature, a need identified by Penney (2008). On a more pragmatic level the discussion in this article is significant because it provides a theoretically grounded, empirical account of the initiation of the *New Zealand Coach Development Framework* (SPARC 2006).

Methods and analysis

This article emerged from information gained in two studies, which had a common research agenda of gaining a greater understanding of the 'initiation' of the *CDF*. Consequently, what follows is a description of the methods and analysis of both studies. A text analysis was the method used in the first study, which analysed the policy documents produced by SPARC, namely *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* (SPARC 2004) and the *Coach Development Framework* (SPARC 2006). Interviewing was the method used in the second study, which aimed to gain insight into the perceptions of the members of the working party involved in designing the *CDF*. Due to the ongoing nature of the six interlinked studies, at the time of writing this article four of the nine members of the working party had been interviewed.¹

Text analysis

Prior to the publication of *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* (SPARC 2004) and the *Coach Development Framework* (SPARC 2006), no coaching-related policy documents existed in New Zealand. As such, it was not possible to conduct a comparison of documents published before and after the Taskforce, to ascertain if a shift had occurred in the language

used at the policy level. Nonetheless, Sam (2003, 190) suggested that documents published from Taskforces could be viewed as useful data sources since 'they represent departure points from which to discuss organizational or program reforms'. It is worth noting that increasingly calls are being made for an analysis of the language used in the coaching context (see Cassidy, Jones, and Potrac 2009; Lyle 2007; Mallett et al. 2009).

There are various ways of conducting text or document analysis, so the choice regarding what approach to use is dictated, implicitly or explicitly, by the researcher's ontology and epistemology (Rapley 2008) and the centrality of the text analysis to the entire study. We contend that the choice is also dictated by the amount of text available to analyse, as was the case in the first study. For example, *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* (SPARC 2004) was an A5 (148 × 210 mm), 32-page booklet. The text, within the *Strategy* directly related to the *CDF* was limited as the following word count illustrates: the consultation that occurred with key players in coaching (173 words); the objectives (24 words); the implementation principles and plan (381 words); discussions about coaching communities (202 words); and Tactic three (which was the mandate for the *CDF*) (179 words). Similarly, the text in the *CDF* (an A4, (210 × 297 mm), 23-page booklet) was limited, arguably by design, as the aim of the *CDF* was: 'to provide sufficient information to enable NSOs to create coach development programmes and accreditation systems, but at the same time be sufficiently flexible to meet the varying needs of different sports' (SPARC 2006, 5). As in the *Strategy*, there was limited discussion of the ideas represented in the *CDF*, for example: coaching communities (270 words); the role of the NSOs in programme development (375 words); training coach trainers, mentors and assessors (123 words); delivery of coach development (357 words); assessment and accreditation (503 words); inclusiveness (99 words); implementation plan (40 words); and roles of key players (693 words). The limited text available for analysis was our rationale for adopting an 'informal approach' to text analysis, and why we complemented it with an analysis of the interview text.

In describing an 'informal approach' to text analysis, Peräkylä (2005, 870) observed that, like many other methods of text analysis, an informal approach does not follow a 'pre-defined protocol'. Instead, when researchers adopt an informal approach they implement the following practices: (1) read and re-read texts; (2) identify key themes; and (3) 'draw a picture of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen' (870). For this article the 'textual material', upon which we drew, consisted of document text and interview text. These forms of empirical data can be positioned as dichotomous, with document text being viewed as natural and interviews as un-natural (Peräkylä 2005). Yet interviews, such as the ones conducted in the second study, can be considered spaces in which people 'describe their practices and ideas to the researcher in circumstances that are much closer to "naturally occurring"' (869). Therefore, the interview texts were analysed alongside the document texts to 'draw a picture of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen' (Peräkylä 2005, 870).

The process of analysing the documents consisted of the first author reading, and re-reading, both texts at least 10 times, over a period of two years, in an attempt to understand the intentions of, and relationships between, the documents, as well as to inform the semi-structured interview schedules for the participants in the second and third studies. The second author had been a member of the working party involved in the design of the *CDF* so she was intimately aware of its intention and the content. Interestingly, in discussions prior to working on this article, we would often debate the interpretation of a piece of text in the *CDF*. The first author would take a literal interpretation, whereas the second

author would interpret the text based on her knowledge of the discussion that surrounded the initiation of the *CDF*. In writing this article, the literal interpretation of the document text is presented, but this is often complemented by the interview text from some members of the working party.

Interviews

The members of the working party were identified in the acknowledgements inside the cover of the *CDF*. Consistent with much qualitative research that attempts to gain insight into participants' interpretations, we used interviews to gain insight into the perceptions the members of the working party held of the process by which the *CDF* was initiated. We invited members of the working party to participate in semi-structured, in-depth interviews, which were subsequently referenced in the results and discussion section as personal communication. The interviews lasted between two and four hours, and occurred at locations and times convenient to each interviewee. The length of interview corresponded to the number of interviews conducted with each participant. For example, when a participant could only be interviewed once, the interviews lasted for three to four hours. When the participant could be interviewed twice then the interviews lasted for two hours each time. The interviews were reflexive in nature, in that the working party members were invited to explore certain themes with the interviewer (Sparkes and Templin 1992). Prior to beginning the interview, consent was gained for the interview to be audio-recorded. The interviews were introduced as an opportunity for the members of the working party to describe, and reflect upon, their experience and for us to gain insights into their experience and interpretations of the process of developing the *CDF*. The questions in the interview schedule were organised as suggested by Patton (1990), but were informed by the view that the *CDF* is not a neutral document (Penney and Evans 1999), that it is about more than 'matters of content' (Penney 2008, 54), and that there would have been, to some degree, 'a contest over what is chosen, by what processes, by whom, with what intent, and with what result' (55).

The interview guide comprised a series of open-ended questions organised in six sections. For example: (1) demographic and previous involvement with coach education/development (e.g., How did you become a member of the *CDF* working party?); (2) their experience of the first working party meeting (e.g., What, if any, were the implicit agendas of the meeting?); (3) their experience of the second working party meeting (e.g., What compromises were made?); (4) their experience of the third working party meeting (e.g., When did the issue of assessment come to the fore?); (5) their experience of the fourth working party meeting (e.g., What was the official agenda of this meeting?); and (6) their experience of the fifth and final working party meeting (e.g., Were there any last minute changes, and if so what was the reaction?).

The method used to analyse the interview data is often referred to as the constant comparative method (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Using this method to code the interview data required us to follow procedures known as open coding, in which the text was dissected, examined, compared for differences and similarities and then scrutinized. Upon completing the coding process, we organized the labelled data around specific concepts, a process Strauss and Corbin (1990) called 'categorising'.

Despite the interviews generating 80 pages of transcripts, excluding memos, agendas and minutes of meetings, the analysis was conducted manually and not via tools such as NUD*IST or NVivo. The reason for choosing not to use these tools, or their equivalent, was because such tools still require a researcher to scrutinise and dissect the text to

determine the codes. Moreover, because we had interviewed and transcribed the data ourselves, and at the time of writing only four participants had been interviewed, we considered it to be effective and efficient to conduct the analysis manually. To date, three themes have emerged from the document and interview texts, namely: (1) coach development; (2) coaching communities; and (3) accreditation and learning opportunities. When analysing and presenting the data we sought to do so in a way that gave the text a degree of verisimilitude, that is, a ‘feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible’ (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 751) and a sense of ‘authenticity’ (Adler and Adler 1994). Sparkes (1998) suggested that in order to achieve authenticity the researcher has to balance perspectives, encourage learning, share knowledge and engage in some form of social action. Evidence that the account given in this article is authentic, is that when the team leader of coaching and the coach development manager within SPARC reviewed our analysis, both agreed that it was a fair and accurate representation of the process.

Results and discussion

Coach education to coach development

The language used in *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* (SPARC 2004) focused on coach education and coach development. For example, of the 10 issues associated with coaching identified as needing attention, six related to ‘coach development’ (2004, 5, emphasis added). Yet Tactic three, which was the mandate for the development of the *CDF*, only focused on *education* as evidenced in the aim of the tactic, which was to ‘improve coach education requirements and qualifications’ (SPARC 2004, 18, emphasis added). Following the release of the *Strategy*, SPARC recommended a ‘Coach Education Working Party’ be ‘convened to initiate the implementation of the “coach education” tactic of the strategy’ (Coaching NZ courses n.d).

Despite Tactic three being the official mandate for the development of the *CDF*, from the first meeting of the working party, the members were in agreement that previous orthodox coach education programmes in New Zealand had not worked. This is illustrated by the comment that, ‘in the first meeting there... was a real consensus around this [the *CDF*] isn’t education, it is about development’ (L. Johnston, personal communication). The members made this judgement based on their experience working in the coaching sector. A common perception, as to why the previous coach education programmes had not worked, was that many coaches negatively associated coach education with formal, classroom and theory orientated practices that focused on the ‘what’ (knowledge) in coaching and not the ‘how’ (skills) and ‘why’ (understanding). One consequence of the members of the working party holding this perception was that they set about designing the *CDF* in ways that would have credibility and desirability within the coaching community. This required the members of the working party to ‘shift’ their thinking regarding ‘how we are going to change coaching, that it is possible to change it, to make it different, [and to consider] what coaching could be’ (L. Johnston, personal communication). This shift in thinking resulted in the members designing the *CDF* to focus on continuous ongoing professional development, which valued formal and informal learning opportunities, rather than formal qualifications as outlined in the Tactic three of the *Strategy* (L. Johnston, personal communication).

There was a desire by the members of the working party to shift the language away from education and qualifications, as used in Tactic three of *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* (SPARC 2004), to coach development and provide opportunities for coaches to access

‘formal and informal coach development learning opportunities. . .that will support wider personal development and growth’ (SPARC 2006, 6). The outcome of this desire is illustrated in the *CDF* where the focus is on encouraging coaches to view their learning and development as ongoing and continuous, as well as being athlete-centred, with the latter challenging the coach to meet ‘the collective and individual needs of athletes’ (SPARC 2006, 6). In addition, the *CDF* explicitly values the importance of coaches being able to ‘apply, in a practical context, requisite knowledge, skills and understandings to meet the collective and individual needs of athletes in the coaching communities in which they coach’ (SPARC 2006, 6). These examples highlight the shift away from formal education and qualification practices as suggested in the *Strategy*, as well as the significance that personal and political mandates have in the process of conceptualizing coaching curriculum.

How political mandates can play a part in the conceptualisation of the *CDF* is illustrated in the minutes of the meetings (P. Ackerley, personal communication), which highlight that the title of the *Framework* continued to be focused on coach *education* until the final draft was produced. While the change in the official title of the *Framework* occurred at the last moment, the interviewed members of the working party claimed that from the first meeting, once they realised they were in agreement regarding a focus on coach development, all subsequent discussions and recommendations were informed by this position. Yet, it was not until external ‘stakeholders’, who were requested to provide feedback on the final draft of the *CDF*, noted the discrepancy between the title of the *Framework* and the structure and content, did the members of the working party successfully argue against calling it the Coach *Education* Framework. Their argument was that the structure and content of the draft *Framework* explicitly focused on ‘athlete-centred coach development’ (SPARC 2006, 5) and therefore it was more appropriate to call it the Coach *Development* Framework.

The shift from coach *education* to coach *development* as evidenced by the above examples can be interpreted as a paradigm shift, or the beginnings of a shift, because in initiating the *CDF* the members of the working party challenged and questioned the assumptions, previously viewed as ‘important, legitimate, and reasonable’ (Sparkes 1992, 12) in the practice of coach education in New Zealand.

Coaching communities

The language used to describe coaching communities in the *CDF* appears to be inconsistent with much of the literature that describes the role communities play in the learning process. Yet, the insight gained from talking with members of the *CDF* working party helps us to understand why this is the case. The phrase ‘coaching communities’ initially appeared in *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* (SPARC 2004). The drivers for its inclusion were the SPARC employed ‘coach support team’ (13) and a consultancy group comprising ‘key players in coaching’ (5). It must be stressed that these groups recognised the value communities play in the coaching process as a consequence of their experience in, and of, coaching, not from reading the literature that highlights the role communities play in the learning process (e.g., Culver and Trudel 2008; Lave and Wenger 1991; O’Sullivan 2008). Given the widespread and implicit acceptance of an orthodox psychological view of development in middle-class Western societies (Burrows in Cassidy, Jones, and Potrac 2009), it should come as no surprise that their identification of coaching communities was based on the age of the groups of athletes. For example; late teenage (ages 17–19), early teenage (ages 13–16), and late childhood (ages 9–12).

In the *Strategy*, the initial identification of these communities was accompanied by the following qualifying statement, possibly in an attempt to temper its rigidity; '[t]he coaching communities will be aligned to the stages of athlete development. The age breakdown used to define the communities along with the descriptions are indicative only' (SPARC 2004, 9). We contend that the effectiveness of the qualifying statement is questionable, given that whenever the list was subsequently used in the *Strategy* it was done so without the qualifier. Evidence that the literature (e.g., Culver and Trudel 2008; Lave and Wenger 1991; O'Sullivan 2008) did not inform the discussions that occurred between members of the *CDF* working party can be seen in the following vignette, which describes an account given by the second author, who was also a member of the working party, of attending a conference and hearing a presenter talk about recent trends in physical education curriculum initiatives:

In 2006, the coach development manager and I attended the International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sport and Dance conference in Wellington, New Zealand. Our attendance at the conference coincided with us feeling that coaching was an undervalued enterprise within SPARC. Yet when we heard Mary O'Sullivan present her keynote [O'Sullivan 2007] we were shocked and stunned to find that what she was talking about, and what was being discussed in the educational literature, was what our working party implicitly included in the *CDF*. Her presentation reinforced our belief that we were on the right track in our attempts to develop world-class coaches.

While the members of the *CDF* working party may have non-consciously understood and used some of the ideas discussed in the literature as a consequence of their coaching experiences the age-related coaching communities framework was still evident in the *CDF*, albeit further and more often qualified than when described in the *Strategy*. When the interviewed members of the *CDF* working party were asked why they had continued to use the age-related coaching communities framework if they thought it needed so much qualification, there were two reoccurring responses.

The explanation given by the members of the working party as to why the age-related coaching communities framework continued to be represented in the *CDF* was that SPARC required the original interpretation, as it appeared in the *Strategy*, to be present. Yet this does not explain the degree of qualification that accompanied it. This was explained as being a consequence of the discussions the working party had with a key member involved in designing a *Talent Development Framework*. The mandate to develop a *Talent Development Framework* (now known as the *Sport and Recreation Pathway*) also came from the *Graham Report* (Ministerial Taskforce 2001). The *Sport and Recreation Pathway* (SPARC 2008) bases its conceptualisation of 'communities' around a broader understanding of development, one that focuses on the needs of the athletes (i.e., stage and phase) rather than their age. For example, the athletes' 'stage of development', were broken into five stages: 'explore'; 'learn'; 'participate'; 'perform'; and 'excel', which were in turn packaged into three phases (foundation, community sport and recreation, and talented athlete). Work on the *CDF* and the *Talent Development Framework* had begun at a similar time, however, due to personal and political agendas, work on the *Pathway* was delayed (J. Reid, personal communication). One consequence of this delay was that the ideas in the *Pathway*, that were relevant to the *Framework*, were not shared with the members of the *CDF* working party until the penultimate meeting (P. Ackerley, personal communication). Despite the ideas being introduced at the eleventh hour, the *CDF* working party members could see the merit in how coaching communities were being discussed in the *Pathway* and wanted to incorporate this interpretation into the *CDF*. Unfortunately, the Board at SPARC

had not approved the *Pathway* so a decision was made to keep the age-related coaching communities previously identified in the *Strategy* in the *CDF*, albeit heavily qualified.

The requirement to keep the age-related coaching framework, coupled with the desire of the *CDF* working party to incorporate the stage and phase view of communities, has the potential to cause confusion. For example, the first diagram in the *CDF* (see SPARC 2006, 4) includes the interpretations of ‘coaching communities’ and ‘stages’ (emphasis added) accompanied by the statement that:

The Coach Development Framework builds on and aligns these two documents [the *Strategy* and the then incomplete *Pathway*], builds on the work of the SPARC Junior Sport reference group and will be compatible with a similar framework document for sport officials’ (SPARC 2006, 4).

Another example that illustrates the eleventh hour attempt to integrate the *Pathway*’s interpretations of communities into the *Framework* is a ‘sample’ of how the ‘stages’ of ‘explore’, ‘learn’, ‘participate’, ‘perform’, and ‘excel’ could be used in the ‘Programme Management’ learning area. This sample was ‘attached at the end of Appendix 2’ (SPARC 2006, 22). Having two interpretations as to what constitutes communities in the *CDF*, has the potential to cause confusion amongst coaches, administrators and coach educators. It is possible that this confusion will be exacerbated as New Zealand coach educators increasingly draw on literature about learning communities, because how communities are discussed in the *Strategy*, and subsequently the *CDF*, does not resonant with current understandings of coaching communities in the literature (e.g., Culver and Trudel 2008).

Despite the real possibility of confusion, a flexible interpretation of what constitutes communities may provide the NSOs with opportunities to design material that suits the needs of their ‘stakeholders’, opportunities not otherwise available had there been a heavily prescribed official interpretation. This flexibility is officially endorsed as evidenced by the aim of the *CDF* described above. The flexibility may inadvertently support O’Sullivan’s (2008, 10) claim that, for genuine professional development opportunities to occur, practitioners need to work in ‘communities of practice’ to ‘develop among themselves their own understanding of what their practice is about’. Therefore, due to there being no officially prescribed interpretation of what constitutes a coaching community, and the NSOs having the autonomy to define the ‘types’ of communities to best suit its sport, could be considered evidence of a paradigm shift having occurred since it challenges the previously held assumption that a national agency, such as SPARC, should officially prescribe and develop coaching materials. Yet the confusion, and the potential inertia that could arise from having two interpretations of a coaching community in the *CDF*, as well as the interpretations not reflecting the discussion in the literature, could be viewed as not challenging the status quo, and therefore indicative of no paradigm shift occurring in the New Zealand coaching context.

Formalised accreditation and qualification to the provision of learning opportunities and experiences

Within *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy*, there was a limited discussion directly related to accreditation and/or qualification. All of it appeared in the descriptor of Tactic three, which had as its aim ‘[t]o improve coach education and qualifications’ (SPARC 2004, 24). While 179 words were ascribed to this Tactic, the term accreditation was not used at all and the term qualification was used twice, once when describing a proposed qualifications framework and once when explaining that the *CDF* would be ‘supported by appropriate qualifications’

(2004, 24). This was elaborated in the description of potential projects that would stem from the *Strategy*. For example, 'Stage Two: Coach Education Framework Qualification Project. Gain endorsement for the Coach Education Framework from appropriate qualification bodies and SPARC as an investor of service providers' (SPARC 2004, 25).

One explanation as to why this particular language was used in the *Strategy* may be the context in which it was written, and the history of coach education in New Zealand. In 1983 an organisation known as the Coaching Association of New Zealand (CANZ) evolved from the Association of National Sports Coaches. Three years later, the

Level 1 CANZ general principle of coaching course was implemented nationally. . . This was followed by a Level 2 general principles coaching course, a 'Getting Started in Coaching' course and, in the early 2000's, a pilot Level 3 course. (Ackerley 2007, 1)

It is important to note that these levels were developed and assessed by CANZ, and later Coaching New Zealand (CNZ), under the auspices of the Hillary Commission, an organisation subsequently replaced by SPARC, that was, at the time, responsible for running, monitoring, training and assessing a New Zealand Coach Accreditation Programme. During the time CANZ/CNZ were implementing and developing the Levels, the New Zealand education system was developing a standards-based National Qualification Framework. The Framework has a 10-level structure, which can ideally accommodate all qualifications (e.g., school, trade, professional, tertiary), although the universities never opted into the Framework. At the same time as the Framework was being established, so too were a number of Industry Training Organisations (ITOs). One such ITO was Sport, Fitness and Recreation (ITO) (SFRITO)² 'whose role was to develop standards and qualification for training in the sport, fitness and recreation sector. Coaching is a minor component of SFRITO's work' (Ackerley 2007, 1). The relationship between NSOs and SFRITO is that the former can use standards designed by the latter, which are already registered on the Framework. Alternatively, the NSOs can develop standards themselves and apply to have them recognised on the National Qualification Framework or they can design modules themselves and not put them on the Framework.

In the *CDF*, the language associated with assessment and accreditation amounted to 503 words. However, this discussion was prefaced earlier in the *CDF* with the statement that NSOs are responsible for designing 'formal and informal coach development learning opportunities' (SPARC 2006, 6). These formal learning opportunities are 'grouped under general and sport specific principles and are broken down into knowledge and skills packages (modules)' (6). Even though modules reflect formal learning opportunities the predetermined learning areas, from which the modules arise, have moved away from the 'what' or technocratic nature traditionally focused on in coaching.³ For example, the key generic coaching learning areas identified in the *CDF* include: Understanding the Athlete; Leadership; The Coaching Process; Self-Development; and Planning and Management; with each learning area being further dissected into modules with specific learning outcomes. While the learning areas, modules and key learning outcomes are predetermined in the *CDF*, the NSOs have the autonomy to design learning opportunities and experiences as well as to adapt and adopt learning outcomes in ways that best fit the needs of their own coaching communities. Also, while informal learning opportunities could be provided by the NSOs, they could also be available via 'trial and error learning in conducting coaching practice, attendance at seminars and conferences, mentoring, informal networking opportunities with coaches from their own and other sports, and access to individual research opportunities' (SPARC 2006, 6).

Despite the NSOs having the autonomy to design learning opportunities for their coaches, a statement exists in the *CDF* that has the potential to temper it somewhat. It specifically states that all coach development initiatives need to focus on ‘the continuous improvement. . . of the coaching skills, knowledge, skills and understandings in coaching practice’ (SPARC 2006, 3). Such a focus has become common in educational curriculum documents (see for example, the *New Zealand Curriculum*, the *UK National Curriculum* and the *Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework*) and according to Penney (2008) is indicative of a paradigm shift towards practices that are more informed by current literature on how people learn. Gilbert (2005) has suggested one of the reasons for the focus on knowledge, skills and understanding in so-called knowledge societies is the belief that a worker (which we contend include coaches) needs to be able to be an independent learner, be able to work in a team, think for themselves as well as about the ‘big picture’, and be adaptable. Not only that, they need to be able to make informed decisions while recognising that they need to view learning as a lifelong process and not something that only happens in educational institutions. The emphasis on knowledge, skills and understanding reflects what Gilbert (2005) called ‘future-focused education’ and requires a paradigm shift when designing professional development opportunities and experiences.

The description in the *CDF*, of how the learning opportunities and experiences are to be assessed and accredited, is a dramatic shift away from orthodox practices previously used in New Zealand coach education (see *Coaching New Zealand* 2003) and what was outlined in the *Strategy* (SPARC 2004). The *CDF* states that the NSOs are responsible for creating coach development systems that reflect the vision of the *Framework* while at the same time being flexible enough to meet the needs of its sport. In terms of assessment, the *CDF* recommends a shift away from using an accredited, certified and standardised programme to assess coaches’ learning to explicitly acknowledging that assessment should be based on coaches’ needs. It gives the following example:

a coach who wants simply to improve their own understanding to coach young athletes could be assessed in a different way from a coach who wants formal recognition of accreditation to advance employment or appointment prospects. . . In some situations, having no formal assessment may be appropriate. . . In situations that require more formal assessment, if delivery of coach development is best carried out using an experiential approach, then it follows that the emphasis of coach assessment should also be based on the effectiveness of the coach in applying their learning in a practical context. (SPARC 2006, 11)

The description on how the learning opportunities and experiences are to be assessed and accredited challenges widely held assumptions about what is viewed as ‘important, legitimate, and reasonable’ (Sparkes 1992, 12) and therefore represents another example of a paradigm shift occurring in the New Zealand coaching context.

Conclusion

As stated above, the purpose of the article was to report on an analysis of the language used in *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* and the *Coach Development Framework* and to explain why particular language was used. By providing some examples of what language was used, and offering explanations as to why the language was used, we have presented some insight into what, and how, meanings associated with coaching have been realised and created. We contend that some of the language used in the *CDF* does represent departure points from which to discuss a change in the coach

education sector in New Zealand. These departures could be understood as reflecting a paradigm shift, or the beginnings of a shift, since the challenge and question practices that have previously been considered 'important, legitimate, and reasonable' (Sparkes 1992, 12).

In the *CDF* there has been a move from an accredited and certified, standardised programme, to an ongoing professional development process informed by an applied athlete-centred philosophy. Moreover, the *CDF* emphasised coach learning and development (formally and informally) rather than focusing on coaches gaining qualifications, with the onus falling on the NSOs, rather than a centralised body, to provide any accreditation systems. The *CDF* was able to develop the way it did because of the context in which it was developed. The context in New Zealand is not the same as that in many countries within the European Union where coach education initiatives have to align with, for example, the 'Bologna Process' and the European Credit Systems for Vocational Education and Training (Crespo 2008).

Where the *CDF* does not appear so readily to reflect a paradigm shift is in its interpretation of coaching communities. The use of two interpretations of coaching communities has the distinct possibility of creating confusion and often when the situation is confusing, the status quo reigns. It would have been interesting to see what could have been possible had the development of the *CDF* been co-ordinated with the *Talent Development Framework* and had the members of the *CDF* been aware of the literature that highlights the role communities play in the learning process.

When *The New Zealand Coaching Strategy* was released, the then Chief Executive of SPARC stated if New Zealand was to develop a World-Class Coaching Environment it could not compete on 'investment' or 'numbers playing sport' therefore 'the quality of our coaching... must be a significant point of difference when compared to the rest of the world' (SPARC 2004, 3). The *CDF* emphasises an ongoing professional development process as well as coach learning and developing (formally and informally) rather than focusing on coaches gaining qualifications. Consequently, it does what Lyle (2007) identified as desirable in coach education practice, namely, to build capacity in (i.e., develop) coaches and athletes rather than focus solely on a performance principle. Given this, the *CDF* could be a useful model for developing coaches in countries with smaller populations and/or smaller budgets.

When Lyle (2007) reviewed the coach education literature, he observed that when recommendations were made as to 'how coach education should be', there appeared support for an emphasis to be on '(a) better links... between the perceived demands of the coaching role and the design and content of coach education; (b)... development of a "personal model" of coaching; (c) [utilizing] the learning programme... [and the] use of the theoretical underpinnings available, and (d)... the cognitive skills leading to desirable coaching practice' (2007, 28). Yet, Lyle (2007, 27) pointed out that many of these recommendations are 'rarely tried and tested in the field'. The *New Zealand Coach Development Framework* is a policy document in the field that can be viewed as a coaching curriculum, with strong links to pedagogy. Viewing the *CDF* this way highlights how multiple meanings relating to the social, political and relational processes of coaching are carried and conveyed. We contend that some aspects of the initiation phase of the *CDF* have challenged and questioned concepts that have previously been viewed as 'important, legitimate and reasonable' (Sparkes 1992, 12) and, therefore we would conclude that, in the main, the intent of the *CDF* reflects a paradigmatic shift in the coaching sector in New Zealand. The next step is to see how this policy document is being 'tried and tested' or 'used' in the field.

Notes

1. Another four members had agreed to be interviewed, while one was unable to be contacted as a consequence of having left New Zealand.
2. The new name for SFRITO is Skills Active and is now the ITO responsible for the Sport, Fitness, Community Recreation, Snowsport, Outdoor Recreation and Nga Mahi a te Rehia sectors.
3. That the focus of the generic learning areas has moved away from the 'what' suggests this also reflects a paradigm shift, but due to space constraints we are not able to expand this discussion.

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