



Sports Coach UK Research Project (March 2012)

**Reflective Practice:
Value of, Issues, and Developments
within Sports Coaching**

Dr. Brendan Cropley, Dr. Andy Miles, and John Peel

**Cardiff School of Sport
Cardiff Metropolitan University**

**Cardiff Metropolitan University
Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd**
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1.0 Introduction

It is widely recognised that sports coaches operate in complex social and often ambiguous environments that place varied and multiple demands on them (Bowes & Jones, 2006; Fletcher & Scott, 2010). Indeed, the roles of sports coaches, at all levels of the vocational continuum, have expanded beyond the mere preparation of athletes for competition into managerial, administrative, and organisational duties that are all underpinned by a coach's ability to develop and manage interpersonal relationships. In attempts to better prepare coaches to be able to function effectively in this changing environment, coach education programmes have begun to embrace the value of both formal and informal approaches to learning and development (Gilbert, 2009; Werthner & Trudel, 2006). This has been done with the view to helping coaches develop both the theoretical and practical knowledge required to help coaches be sensitive to, and better cope with, the peculiarities, intricacies, and ambiguities of coaching and the unique conditions under which coaches act (Jones & Wallace, 2005). As such, different approaches to learning (e.g., mentoring, communities of practice) have started to become more valued within the traditional frameworks of formal qualifications (Cushion et al., 2010).

More specifically, the potential of *reflective practice* has been considered widely due to the support that it offers for both personal and professional development in related fields (e.g., education, sports science). Indeed, Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie, and Neville (2001) suggested that through reflective practice coaches could access, make sense of, and learn from the relevant knowledge-in-action that would allow them to learn how to actually *do* sports coaching. However, Cushion and colleagues (2010) have also highlighted that although these approaches are becoming more widely recognised there is still limited understanding how to best implement them and the actual impact they have on coach learning and development. This is particularly true for reflective practice where it has been questioned as to whether the domain of sports coaching has jumped on the bandwagon of reflection without properly understanding the issues and problems related to implementing such an approach (Cropley & Hanton, 2011).

In light of this preceding discussion it is the aim of this research project to provide a more in-depth examination of the issues currently associated with reflective practice and the way in which it can be integrated into coach education programmes

and used by coaches to positively impact on their practice. Such research has the potential to provide an in-depth understanding of: (a) the value of different, more formalised, approaches to reflection; (b) the specific issues faced by coaches when attempting to reflect; (c) avenues to improving coaches' ability to engage in reflective practice effectively; and (d) the ways in which coach education programmes maybe developed to better prepare coaches to be able to engage in processes of experiential learning. In attempts to achieve such aims this report contains: insights into current research knowledge regarding reflective practice in coaching; an original, empirical research study; a coach's autoethnographical insight into the utility of reflective practice; and specific research-driven recommendations for the more effective implementation into coach education, learning, and practice. By providing both an empirical research study and an autoethnographic narrative it is thought that the implications and recommendations for future practice can be founded on more of an informed knowledge base.

2.0 State of Knowledge: Reflective Practice in Coaching

2.1 CONTEXTUALISING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

The value of informal learning opportunities for coach education and development has gained credence in recent sports coaching literature (e.g., Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald, & Côté, 2008; Gilbert, 2009; Knowles, Borrie, & Telfer, 2005; Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009). This is due, in part, to formalised learning venues not being valued by coaches as much as their day-to-day learning experiences in the field (Werthner & Trudel, 2006). In attempts to understand why this might be the case, Gilbert, Côté, and Mallett (2006) suggested that informal learning through experience is of vital importance because of the relatively small amount of time a coach might spend in a formalised learning environment in comparison to the number of hours she or he spends in the sporting venue, coaching and interacting with athletes and/or other coaches. Additionally, Mallett et al. (2009) commented that, “Formal educational situations cannot encompass all of the experiential learning required to ‘embed’ learning” (p. 332). More recently, Nash and Sproule’s (2011) research substantiated these arguments further by inferring that coaches need to be aware of, and have knowledge and understanding of, learning theory, self-reflection, motivational climate and knowledge construction as well as the technical detail of their sport. Such statements provide support for the findings of Saury and Durand (1998) who reported that effective elite coaching practice, in their sample of sailing coaches, was based on appropriate use of tacit, experiential knowledge and not just formal theoretical knowledge about coaching pedagogy, physiology or other bodies of knowledge. As a result of such research and commentary, a host of authors have begun to highlight the key role of experiential learning in the development of elite coaching knowledge and practice (e.g., Culver & Trudel, 2006; Irwin, Hanton, & Kerwin, 2004; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003).

Despite the emphasis placed upon experiential learning, Cropley and Hanton (2011) stated that it is important to recognise that the presumption of learning being an automatic process associated with merely having an experience may be incorrect. Indeed, Aitchison and Graham (1993 in Criticos) suggested that we do not habitually learn from experience, but instead experience has to be examined, analyzed, and considered in order to shift it to knowledge. Further, research that has attempted to

improve understanding of the concept of 'experience in sport' found that for experience and learning to be obtained, learners must actively engage in processes that result in the excavation of knowledge embedded within the experience itself (Hanton, Cropley, Neil, Mellalieu, & Miles, 2007). One such process that has gained acceptance in recent years within the field of sports coaching is that of reflective practice (Cropley, Neil, Wilson, & Faull, 2011; Cushion et al., 2010).

Although many authors from a variety of fields have attempted to define reflective practice, the number of typologies available and the complex nature of reflection have made it difficult to obtain a simple definition. Those within sports coaching have tended to understand reflection as a process of looking back at practice, making sense of what happened, and learning in order to improve practice in the future (e.g., Carson, 2008; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001, 2005; Miles 2001). Indeed, Douglas and Carless (2008) have suggested that reflective practice allows the coach to learn from his or her coaching experiences and to change and adapt in response to what has been learned. However, despite these insights, it has been acknowledged that the thought processes often labelled as reflection (e.g., contemplation, evaluation, pondering) seldom represent reflective practice (Cropley & Hanton, 2011). Coaches and other professionals are, therefore, at risk of misrepresenting the reflective process and subsequently not gaining the purported experiential learning benefits associated with the concept. This potential lack of clarity regarding reflective practice is likely to be a result of the infancy of the research that considers reflection within sports coaching. The issue may be compounded further by the paucity of empirical literature that examines the domain specific issues (e.g., impact, processes, and definitions of reflection) of reflective practice currently available in the field. Nevertheless, drawing from the support that reflective practice has gained in related fields (e.g., education, nursing, sport psychology), the concept has appeared to permeate many aspects of the sports coaching domain, such as: Higher Education (HE) courses in coaching; National Governing Body (NGB) coaching qualifications; coach education and development literature; and professional bodies' (e.g., Sports Coach UK [SCUK]) policy documents.

2.2 REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN SPORTS COACHING

For over a decade sports coaching research has begun to highlight the potentially significant impact that reflective practice could have on the development of coaching

expertise. However, this body of research can not be considered extensive or voluminous, and it is largely made up of position statements (e.g., Gilbert, 2003) and personal thoughts and accounts (e.g., Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003) rather than empirical studies, although some do exist (e.g., Knowles, Tyler, Gilbourne, & Eubank, 2006). Nevertheless, the research in this area has consistently advocated reflective practice as an approach to professional development that positively impacts coaching practice in a number of ways, such as: helping coaches develop elite coaching knowledge (Irwin et al., 2004); initiating change (Cushion et al., 2003); creating links between theory and practice (Douglas & Carless, 2008); improving understanding of how to cope with the ambiguity of practice (Jones & Wallace, 2005); and improving understanding of the coaching process (Carson, 2008). In sum, Ghaye (2001) simply highlighted that, “The purpose of reflection is to try to improve our coaching (not just understand it better) and improve the context in which our coaching takes place” (p. 9). Although such support currently exists, Cushion et al. (2010) importantly highlighted that despite reflection having research evidence within coaching of its efficacy; direct links to the development of coach effectiveness are not available.

Early insights into the concept of reflective practice for sports coaches were presented in the 2001 (January) special edition of *Faster, Higher, Stronger*. In this publication, articles (e.g., Ghaye, 2001) helped to expound the concept of reflective practice for coaches, as well as consider the practical application of reflective practice within coach education programmes (e.g., Miles, 2001). Although these articles were more anecdotal in nature, they added to the domain specific knowledge required to help coaches make more informed choices about the way in which reflective practice could be adopted and have helped to shape further research. For example, Carson (2008) utilised Ghaye’s (2001) concept of reflective questioning to inform his research into the utility of video in assisting coaches’ reflections. Carson’s findings advocate the value of video as a way of supporting reflective practice and indicate that coaches are better able to make sense of their experiences and improve coaching performance by adopting such an approach.

At the same time as this ‘professional practice’ edition (*Faster, Higher, Stronger*, 2001) two seminal studies were published that offered empirical investigations of reflective practice in sports coaching (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Knowles et al., 2001). Gilbert and Trudel (2001) examined how youth sports coaches used reflective practice

to learn to cope through experience over the course of a competitive season. As it was thought that reflection is evident in only certain types of coaches, 'model'¹ youth coaches were selected. Overall, the study provides empirically based support for the proposition that coaches reflect in- and on-experience to learn how to coach. The study also presented an understanding of the components that may characterise reflection. These were identified as: coaching issues, role frame, issue setting, strategy generation, experimentation, and evaluation. Their results also suggested that the *reflective conversation*, triggered by coaching issues was central to reflection. This would support the ideas of Dewey (1933) who originally outlined that reflection is driven by the occurrence of problems and professional dilemmas. It must be recognised that whilst Gilbert and Trudel's study offers specific insight, the research was limited by a relatively homogenous, small sample that engaged the participants, in part, in retrospective interviews. Data were also collected through observations yet the authors did not make it clear as to how they 'observed' reflection in coaches, which may be quite difficult given the cognitive nature of the process.

Knowles et al.'s (2001) study examined the potential for the development and assessment of sports coaching students' reflective skills through a structured development programme (HE degree course). This programme subjected the student participants to theoretical lectures, a 60 hour work placement, and *action learning group* based reflective workshops. The findings indicated that following the structured support the level that participants were able to reflect at improved. Thus, Knowles et al. argued that, "If one assumes that this shift will facilitate the practical benefits of reflection then the reflective programme was a positive educational process for these coaches" (p. 204). The findings also suggested that practitioners may have a dominant or preferred reflective technique. As a result, this may affect the ability to use the various techniques, which may in turn affect coaches' quality of reflection and shift in reflective level. Finally, the study uncovered several issues associated with reflecting on practice related to the issue of the time available for reflecting and the way in which reflection focuses on the self in problematic coaching situations lead to feelings of anxiety and ultimately reduced self-confidence. Whilst, this study provided an

¹ The criteria for being selected as a 'model' coach were: (a) demonstrated interest in learning about theory and practice of coaching; (b) respected the local sporting community for their commitment to youth sport; (c) considered as good leaders, teachers, and organisers; and (d) kept winning in perspective and encouraged children to respect the rules of the game, their competitors, and officials (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001).

indication that the propensity to engage in reflective practice can be developed in coaches the sample size adopted ($n = 8$) was rather small to infer wider impact of the findings.

In a follow-up to the original 2001 study, Knowles et al. (2006) examined how six of the participants from the initial study had deployed reflective processes in their coaching practice outside the confines of a structured reflective-based curriculum. The findings suggested post-graduation reflection still occurred as an important element of coaching practice, demonstrating the enduring nature of reflection. However, the authors reported the existence of a 'gap' between the academic experience and the 'real world' reflective practice of the participating sports coaching graduates. In summary, the in-built reflective rigour present in the undergraduate programme was at variance with the post-graduation reality of sports coach employment. Knowles et al. suggested that this may have been a result of short term coaching contracts post-graduation that did not permit deeper levels of reflection as well as a lack of professional accountability in that reflections-on-practice were not being reviewed by key stakeholders. These findings could also be understood through Gilbert and Trudel's (2005) earlier work which examined the settings that influence the use of reflection. Specifically, they identified four core conditions: (a) access to peers, (b) stage of learning (e.g., novice to expert), (c) issue characteristics (e.g., nature of the coaching issues experienced), and (d) environment (e.g., context of coaching practice). According to Gilbert and Trudel (2005), the nature, process, and impact of reflection are likely to change depending upon the combination of the conditions present at the time of reflecting. For example, if the issue experienced was relatively routine, coaches may tend to rely on coaching support materials in order to deal with the problem rather than in-depth reflection. Also, if the coach is in the presence of a more knowledgeable other it is likely that reflection will be shaped via a conversation, which may help coaches to reflect more critically. In consideration of these factors, the participants in Knowles et al.'s (2006) investigation may have experienced a variety of different conditions as a result of their progression into the 'real-world' of coaching where the stabilisers of academic and practical support through a structured programme were removed.

More recently, Cropley et al. (2011) provided additional support for the value of reflective practice through an intervention approach with two soccer coaches (head and assistant coach) working with the same team. In attempts to help the participants better

understand and deal with a range of coaching related issues the coaches were asked to individually reflect on their coaching experiences and engage in reflective conversations together. The aims of this were not to deal directly with the problems that had been identified but to encourage the coaches to: (a) improve their self-awareness; and (b) encourage consideration of the impact of their values and philosophy on the development of the players. To increase the likelihood that reflective practice would assist the coaches in achieving the proposed aims, a reflective practice training programme was administered. Following the programme coaches reflected on their practice over a five week period before being interviewed about their post-intervention experiences. The coaches reported that the reflective process had improved their understanding of themselves, their players, and the coaching environment. This resulted in: an altered approach to coaching that included the players in decision making regarding training activities; changes to the way in which they communicated with players; and changes in the way in which they reflected post-game – the reflective process reported in the intervention became a fundamental aspect of their coaching practice.

Cropley et al.'s (2011) work provides one of the first intervention studies that has utilised reflective practice and thus begun to elicit its potential impact on coaching practice. However, the findings should be reviewed with caution as the effects of the intervention were only measured in the short-term. Like the participants in Knowles et al.'s (2001) study, the participants may have altered their engagement in reflective practice once the study had been completed. Additionally, the intervention was with two coaches working in the same environment creating a unique situation conducive to both solitary and shared reflection. As a result of the discussion of the available reflective practice literature in sports coaching it is clear that additional research is required if a better understanding of the ways in which the concept can be effectively integrated into the *profession* of coaching are to be gained.

2.3 RATIONALE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In spite of a growing body of research concerning the value of reflective practice in the education and development of sports coaches a number of concerns still exist. First, it could be argued that reflective practice is somewhat misunderstood and misrepresented. For example, coaches are often asked to 'reflect' on their practicum

experiences during coach education qualifications yet this 'reflection' rarely moves beyond simple evaluation of coaching sessions. Indeed, Knowles et al. (2005) reported that although research has shown experiential learning through reflective practice to be the primary determinant of developing coach expertise, governing body award coaching programmes do not maximize opportunities for developing coaches' ability to explore the nuances of their own practice, access and develop tacit knowledge, and be creative in their application of sport specific technical knowledge. As a consequence, coaches' understanding and application of reflective practices becomes problematic.

Second, the lack of empirical research within coaching that specifically details the impact of reflective practice on the development of practice is a concern, especially as reflective practice appears to have been adopted seemingly without question. Newman (1999) warned against accepting the value of such a reflective approach to practice without questioning the evidence upon which claims are based. The relationship between reflective practice and the developing of effective coaching could therefore be questioned.

Finally, empirical research that is available that has examined the utility of reflective practice in sports coaching has begun to identify a number of issues associated with its application. For example, Knowles et al. (2001, 2006) suggested that engaging in structured approaches to reflection was deemed as time consuming. They also indicated that the traditionally 'negative' focus of reflective practice is problematic as it is likely to increase the anxiety of practitioners. Further, limited understanding of reflective practice results in coaches focusing too heavily on competitive outcome as an index of effectiveness resulting in narrow reflections.

It would appear that researchers in other fields who have attempted to integrate reflection more systematically into professional practice and improve practitioners' ability to reflect have focused on the potential benefits reflective practice might have (e.g., Rhine & Bryant, 2007). However, Newman (1999) advocates that for any intervention to be effective due consideration of the potential issues that will negatively affect the efficacy of an intervention should be at the forefront of consideration. It would appear, therefore, that a more thorough, empirical investigation of the potential issues sports coaches currently face when asked to engage in reflective practice could provide the detail required to help develop more effective learning and development programmes within the field.

3.0 Research Question and Aims

As a result of the preceding discussion this study was designed to examine the current issues associated with reflective practice in order to better understand how reflective practice could be more effectively integrated into sports coaching education and development programmes. The specific aims of the investigation were to:

1. Examine, in-depth, coaches' experience of reflective practice in action
2. Uncover the specific issues associated with asking coaches to formally reflect
3. Examine the factors that limit engagement in reflective practice
4. Identify ways in which such issues could be overcome to improve future reflective practice.

In line with the recommendations of a host of researchers (e.g., Cresswell, 2009; Patton, 2002), which indicate that the methods should be driven by the aims of a study, a qualitative approach was adopted in this project. Specifically, a process of engaging coaches in reflective practice followed by in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants about their experiences of reflecting throughout the duration of the study was adopted.

4.0 Methods

4.1 PARTICIPANTS

Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling techniques (Patton, 2002). Such procedures have been adopted in previous research where participants deemed as being ‘information rich’ are required in order to provide detailed discussion of the specific phenomena of importance to the investigation (e.g., Hanton et al., 2007). Consequently, in order to be considered for this study, participants had to meet the following criteria: (a) qualified to UKCC Level two (or NGB equivalent); (b) be registered as a coach on the NGB’s database of their sport; (c) be coaching two or more times per week; and (d) be aged over 18 years. Meeting these criteria ensured that the participants would be able to achieve the requirements of this study.

A number of coaches from a range of sports were contacted via telephone or email and asked a series of questions to determine whether they met the pre-defined sampling criteria. Out of those coaches who met all criteria, 12 agreed to participate. The sample was therefore made up of male ($n = 8$) and female ($n = 4$) coaches from a range of sports, including: cricket ($n = 4$); association football ($n = 1$); rugby union ($n = 2$); athletics ($n = 3$); and gymnastics ($n = 2$). Participants ranged in age from 20 to 40 years ($M = 24.8$; $SD = 6.5$), and in experience from three to eight years ($M = 4.8$; $SD = 1.9$). Finally, all participants held UKCC Level two qualifications and coached an average of 2.6 times per week ($SD = 0.79$).

4.2 APPROACHES TO DATA COLLECTION

4.2.1 Reflective journals

In attempts to give participants the experience of reflecting-on-practice (see Schön, 1983) and ensure that participants were engaging in a process of systematic reflective practice, a structured reflective journal was adopted (cf. Moon, 2006). This approach also afforded participants a similar reflective experience and therefore allowed a more valid examination of the concept to occur. The reflective journal was framed using a combination of reflective models that have gained credence in the extant literature (e.g., Anderson et al., 2004; Knowles et al., 2001). Specifically, a combination of Gibbs’ (1988) reflective cycle and Johns’ (1995) structured model of reflection was utilised to guide the participants through reflections on their experiences, whilst

allowing individual interpretation and application of the model (a copy of the model can be found in Appendix A). Additionally, the journal structure was designed to guide the examination of actions, thoughts, and feelings and encourage participants to engage in deeper levels of reflective thinking, thus resulting in a deeper understanding of their practice (cf. Cropley, Miles, Hanton, & Anderson, 2007).

4.22 Interview guide

An interview guide was developed in order to fully investigate the participants' experiences over the period of this study and focused on the issues associated with reflection-on-practice, the benefits gleaned from the structured approach, and the ways the process could be developed to improve future practice (for a copy of the guide see Appendix B). The guide was semi-structured, maintaining a set of standardised questions but affording the interviewer the opportunity to probe any issues where necessary (Patton, 2002). This procedural flexibility enhanced the fluency of the interview and the richness of the information collected whilst retaining the systematic nature of the data collection between the participants (Patton, 2002).

The interview schedule consisted of five sections. Section one contained introductory comments including issues of confidentiality and the reasons for taping the session, as well as a declaration of the individuals' rights and a request for honest answers. Section two asked the participants introductory questions regarding the coaching they had completed over the course of the study and their prior understanding of reflective practice. These questions were designed to help the participant settle into the interview process and contextualise their experiences. Section three examined the issues and problems participants had experienced by being asked to engage in structured reflective practice. For example, *'What had the biggest influence on your engagement in reflective practice, and why?'* and *'Which factor inhibited the quality of your reflections the most, and why?'* Section four focused on examining the participants' opinions regarding how reflective practice could be better integrated into sports coaching. For example, *'How could we improve coaches' engagement in reflective practice?'* and *'How might coach education make better use of reflective practice?'* Finally, section five concluded the interview with a set of questions that encouraged participants to comment on the performance of the interviewer and on the interview

process in general with the purpose of indicating any interviewer bias, as well as their overall satisfaction with their experience in the study.

4.3 PROCEDURE

After gaining School² ethical approval selected participants were contacted, informed of the nature of the study and asked to complete an informed consent form (see Appendix C). All participants were then asked to meet with the research team in a neutral location in order to brief them about their engagement in the study. During this meeting, participants were introduced to the structured reflective journal but they were not educated specifically as to how to effectively engage in the process. This was done under the premise that if the participants had been educated then a true representation of their reflective experiences would have been difficult to obtain. Participants were also informed that they would be required to reflect on one critical coaching incident³ per week for the 12 week duration of the study. Participants were asked to complete their reflections at a time convenient to them and then email or post their reflections to the research team on a weekly basis.

Once the participants had sent in their final reflection they were all interviewed within 48 hours in order to reduce the impact of memory decay and improve overall recall of their experiences. In order to maximise the retrieval of in-depth data and aid recall, each participant was sent an interview preparation booklet two days prior to the interview and asked to consider their answers (Hanton, Cropley, & Lee, 2009). All of the interviews were conducted by the lead researcher face-to-face in a neutral setting to aid the flow of conversation and to avoid any environmental bias. The interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes each, were audiotape recorded, and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Due to the rather exploratory nature of this investigation a combination of both conventional (inductive) and direct (deductive) content analysis procedures were adopted to interpret the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Consequently, following the approach adopted in recent research (e.g., Cropley, Hanton, Miles, & Niven, 2010), the

² Cardiff School of Sport, Cardiff Metropolitan University granted ethical approval through its Research Ethics Committee.

³ A critical coaching incident was determined as a value judgement made on the basis of the significance the participant attached to the meaning of the incident (cf. Tripp, 1993).

data analysis procedures contained five main steps. First, all of the research team read the interview transcripts in order to immerse themselves in the data. Second, the data were analysed deductively using themes identified from the extant literature under which data could be coded and categorised. Data that could not be categorised using the existing themes were highlighted for further analysis in the next step. Third, the transcripts were analysed inductively where all of the highlighted data that could not be categorised using the deductive themes were coded and categorised into new 'meaningful clusters' (Patton, 2002). Fourth, the transcripts were re-analysed using deductive procedures, which now included the new inductive themes. This was completed in attempts to check whether any key information had been overlooked in the previous steps. As steps one to four had been completed independently by the research team the final step involved consensus validation procedures (Cropley et al., 2010) where the research team met to discuss and agree upon the final themes and their content.

4.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlighted that qualitative research should be judged based on its trustworthiness⁴, which is assessed on four criteria: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. In attempts to account for these criteria, a number of measures were taken throughout the data collection and analysis procedures in this study. First, peer-debriefing and triangulation were used to enhance credibility. In order to maintain dependability (consistency) a semi-structured interview guide was utilised and all interviews conducted by the same researcher, thus reducing inter-interview bias. The transferability of the findings was enhanced through the provision of thick description of the participants and through the use of raw quotes to support the main themes in the results section. Finally, confirmability was established through a process of member checking where the final transcripts and results were sent to the participants for comment regarding whether they provided a true representation of the participants experiences. All participants confirmed that they were happy with the documents.

⁴ Trustworthiness could be considered as the qualitative equivalent of reliability and validity as considered in more traditional positivistic approaches to research.

5.0 Results and Discussion

Although the main focus of this investigation was to examine in more detail the issues and problems associated with reflection-on-practice a range of associated findings were uncovered. The findings are therefore presented in four main sections: (1) knowledge of reflective practice and engagement; (2) issues associated with reflective practice; (3) changes to future practice; and (4) benefits associated with reflective practice. Following the recommendations of Sparkes (2002) that the reader should be able to empathise with, and immerse themselves in the participants' experiences while illustrating important points, the findings are presented in the form of tables and narrative that are supported with direct quotes from the transcripts. Finally, following a similar approach to that of Rainer, Cropley, Jarvis, and Griffiths (2012), the results are presented with an accompanying discussion. In this way it is thought that connections can more readily be established between the findings of this study and the extant literature and thus best explicate some of the challenges and issues experienced by the participants.

5.1 KNOWLEDGE OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND ENGAGEMENT

Whilst not a direct aim of this investigation it was thought that by considering participants' knowledge of reflective practice prior to the study and of their overall experiences of engaging in reflective practice during the study the main findings could be better understood and put into context. When asked about prior knowledge of reflective practice, all participants suggested that they had been introduced to the concept previously. Eight participants suggested that they have been introduced to reflective practice whilst on a HE degree course; six participants suggested that 'reflection' had been identified through a coach education programme, and one participant suggested that it was an entirely new concept to them. Of those participants who had been introduced to reflective practice, many ($n = 9$) indicated that they were not confident in their understanding of the concept or of the process involved in reflection-on-action. For example, one participant suggested, "*It (reflection) was part of my degree but we only really spoke about it in a couple of lectures and never really got to do it, so before the study I wasn't 100% sure what it was all about.*" Another participant reported, "*I*

have heard about reflective practice but never really understood how to implement it or why I should commit to it." Indeed, several participants ($n = 8$) outlined that they knew reflective practice was important but had never really been given the knowledge and understanding to engage in reflective processes. Consequently, these participants suggested that they had never really bought into reflection as an approach to adult learning and development. This is best summarised in the comments of a participating cricket coach:

From the information I've had at university and on coach education I realised it (reflective practice) was important, it just seems to keep appearing. However, I feel as though I haven't been given the tools to reflect and therefore I've never really bothered to try and engage beyond what was needed on the courses.

These findings support the ideas of Cropley and Hanton (2011) in that formal professional qualifications in sport may have unquestioningly integrated reflective practice without due consideration of the ways in which those on the qualifications need to be educated and trained to engage in effective reflection. Indeed, in a review of coach education programmes Knowles et al. (2005) uncovered that none of the programmes they examined contained structures or processes for directly teaching or overtly nurturing reflective skills. As such, the way in which reflective practice is introduced, taught, encouraged, and supported must be a consideration of any profession where learning to practice is significantly influenced by a person's ability to engage in processes of experiential learning (Cushion et al., 2003; Douglas & Carless, 2008; Nelson & Cushion, 2006).

All participants indicated that they had never really engaged in reflective practice in the form it was focused on in this study. The participants suggested that their methods of 'evaluation' were always less formal, less structured and often not recorded. Additionally, it appeared that the processes that the participants did engage in were more reminiscent of evaluation rather than reflective practice. One participant indicated, *"I normally go over things in my head, or have a chat to another coach if they're available. Sometimes this is just to evaluate, other times I try and figure out what I could do better next time."* Another participant explicated this further by commenting, *"I think what we were asked to do on the coaching course was to reflect on our coaching sessions, but this was just 'what was good' and 'what was bad' about the session."* Such experiences support the work of Chesterfield, Potrac, and Jones (2010) who outlined how the 'log books' coaches are

required to submit at the end of a coach education course are decontextualised and, whilst they allude to a reflective process, often do not engage coaches in processes indicative of reflective practice. Thus, coaches may not gain the benefits purported in the reflective practice literature and become critical of the process (Cropley & Hanton, 2011).

In terms of the participants' experiences of reflecting in a more structured manner during this study, participants' views were equivocal as to the value of the approach. Some ($n = 5$) reported that they enjoyed trying something new and would like to find out more about the process in attempts to make it more effective. One participant acknowledged, *"I did have problems with reflective practice but at the same time I started to see things differently by doing it so I'd like to get better at reflecting."* Other participants ($n = 5$) outlined that they struggled to reflect in such a formal manner as a result of a variety of issues and therefore gained little from the process (these issues are discussed in detail in the following sections and are therefore not subjected to further analysis here). In fact six participants suggested that they didn't find out anything new from reflecting, with one participant suggesting, *"I didn't really learn anything new, it just helped to confirm things that I was doing were working."*

5.2 ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

A range of issues and / or problems associated with the participants reflecting on their coaching practice emanated from this study. These issues, their associated sub-themes (key explanatory themes of the main issue), and the impact of the theme on the participants' reflections are summarised in Table 1. It is important to note that all participants experienced a combination of these issues, and all participants indicated that they did find reflective practice problematic to some extent. Each of the key issues are discussed separately.

5.21 Finding time to reflect

The issue of the *time* it takes to reflect in a structured, written manner was a prevalent theme with the participants ($n = 9$) in this study. For example, one participant indicated, *"There are lots of other things I need to do and it (reflection) wasn't always the top of my priorities."* Another participant reported, *"There's a lot of deadlines going on at work and that hampers, I wouldn't say necessarily the quality but the amount of time you can sit down and*

actually do it (reflect).” This finding is consistent with research across a range of fields. For example, Driscoll and Teh (2001) found that nurses tended to reflect more superficially because it takes up less time and effort. Similarly, Goldhill’s (2010) research with probation officers found that time constraints, due to the amount of professional work the officers were doing, inhibited their engagement in reflective practice.

KEY ISSUES	SUB-THEME	IMPACT ON REFLECTION
Finding time to reflect	• Importance placed on reflection compared to other tasks	• Reduced commitment to engaging in process
Motivation to reflect	• Understanding the value of reflection • Time taken to engage in the process • No ‘immediate’ effect	• Reduced commitment to engaging in process • Negative feelings regarding the process • Reluctance to engage
Gaining the benefits associated with reflection	• No ‘immediate’ effect • Transferring writing into learning	• Reduced commitment to engaging in process • Negative feelings regarding the process
Approach to reflective practice	• Structured pro-forma	• Confusion and repetition in writing
Knowledge and understanding	• Reflective practice • How to engage in reflective practice • Structured pro-forma	• Confusion and repetition in writing • Superficial reflections • Ineffective learning
Reflecting on emotions	• Feelings of vulnerability • Discomfort	• Reluctance to engage

Table 1. Issues association with reflective practice in the context of sports coaching.

It is thought that time became a specific issue with the participants in this study due to their professional status. All participants were part-time coaches who either had other jobs or were in full-time education, and in some instances ($n = 2$) both. Indeed, one participant confirmed, *"As you can imagine with the workload that I have to sit down and truly reflect is time consuming. When I reflected I felt as though I should be doing something else. So it (reflection) was difficult at times."* As a consequence of this issue, some participants ($n = 5$) reported a reduced commitment to engaging in the process of reflection. For example, participants reported, *"To be honest, I was so busy that I wrote the reflection as quickly as I could without really giving it much thought,"* and, *"Reflecting was taking me quite a while so in the end I'd skip over the last few questions because I'd lost the drive to do it."* These findings resonate with the thoughts of Knowles and colleagues (2006) who suggested that once coaches engage with paid coaching, accountability tasks, such as written reflection and annual reflective reports might be seen as time consuming and unnecessary and as a consequence are cast aside. Additionally, these participants acknowledged that a lack of understanding of reflection added to the time it took to engage in the process. For instance, *"I didn't really know what I was doing so it seemed to take ages for me to think about what to write in each section."* This would suggest that time issues may be reduced if practitioners were afforded a clear understanding of the reflective process and if they had the skills (e.g., problem-solving, critical thinking) required for effective reflection (Cropley et al., 2007).

Without doubt, as the demands placed upon sports coaches increase managing their time effectively becomes ever more problematic. However, reflection should not be seen as an 'add on' to practice. It should not be seen as something 'extra' to do. It should be seen as an integral part of the practice cycle where coaches plan, deliver, and reflect before planning again. Such a process is indicative of action research (Knowles et al., 2001) and must be established as common practice within coaching where each aspect is given equal importance. In support of this, Cropley and Hanton (2011) suggested that if practitioners are committed to and willing to learn and develop both their practice and themselves they will make time to fully engage in reflection. Indeed, Titchen and Binnie (1998) outlined how time allocated to medical personnel encourages formal reflection where teams of surgeons attend scheduled weekly meetings in order to reflect on operations.

5.22 Motivation: Gaining benefits

Linked to the theme of 'finding time to reflect', the majority ($n = 8$) confirmed that motivation was an issue for them with regards to completing the structured reflective pro-forma each week and thus engaging in the process of reflection. For example, one participant indicated, *"I had a lot of other things going on and I thought the importance of it (reflecting) wasn't high at the time, so I kind of left it until the last minute, so I think motivation held me back."* Antonsen, Thunberg, and Tiller (2009) agreed that one of the issues with reflection is the lack of motivation from practitioners; if motivation is low then real learning will not occur from real-life encounters. Similarly, in the current study one participant outlined, *"I realised how long it took to reflect and with everything else I had on that really stopped me going in detail, so I suppose my motivation wasn't the best which probably stopped me from benefitting from it (reflection)."* Such findings are further supported by Driscoll and Teh, (2001) who suggested that when things get busy, reflective practice is the first thing to be dropped or tossed aside.

Those reporting a low motivation to reflect in this study may have done so because they were not able to elicit the benefits associated with reflective practice straight away. For example, one participant noted, *"Well I wasn't really getting much from my reflections, they just told me what I knew anyway so I started to put less thought into them if I'm honest."* Otienoh (2010) suggested that the problem with reflection is that the product of the process is rarely tangible and therefore people may not physically see the benefits of their reflective practices. However, in agreement with Cushion et al. (2010), the skills required to reflect are developed over time and therefore practitioners must remain patient and committed to the process of reflection. Considering the recommendations made previously, motivation is likely to be improved if a mentor is available to provide guidance and encouragement (Cropley & Hanton, 2011). This would corroborate the ideas of one participant who said:

If someone was ringing me up and reminding me not to forget the reflective journals that would make me sit down and do them more consistently. If I don't think I have that pressure I probably would continue to pay lip service to them (reflections) and not done the reflections.

It is thought that mentors are able to facilitate effective reflection, where learning occurs in a way that has the potential to improve practice. Mentors are therefore likely to help practitioners achieve the benefits of reflective practice. In line with self-efficacy theory

(Bandura, 1977), achieving these benefits is likely to enhance the self-confidence of the practitioner and in turn increase the practitioner's propensity to reflect.

5.23 Knowledge and understanding: Approach to reflection

As a result of these themes being intrinsically linked they will be reported and discussed together here. A number of participants ($n = 5$) specifically reported that if their knowledge and understanding of the process had been better their reflections would have improved. One participant stated:

It (reflecting) would have gone a lot better if I'd been clearer about the process because I would have known what to pick out of my brain. When I answered your questions, when I wrote down my answers, my answers were quite vague because I didn't really know what to take out and what to put down on paper.

In line with this, four participants outlined that they found that they were repeating themselves when filling out the reflective pro-forma. This is best summarised by the following comment, "*I didn't really know what to write and where to write it. I seemed to keep writing the same things in different boxes which was annoying.*"

Moon and Boullon (1997) have highlighted that reflection is a complex process in which high metacognitive skill levels are required, and reaching such skill levels takes time and practice. Specifically, Moon and Boullon (1997) found that assessing teachers' levels of reflection after only a period of six weeks was not long enough for them to fully understand the process of reflective practice. Although this study engaged participants in reflective practice over a period of 12 weeks this may still have not been enough time for participants to establish their reflective skills, and knowledge and understanding of the process. In fact, one participant noted, "*I feel as though I was getting better at it (reflecting) as I did more, but I could have done with more guidance.*" This suggests that even without any formal training by engaging in structured reflective practice over time coaches begin to develop the knowledge and skills required to make reflection more effective. In support of this another participant suggested, "*I just need to keep doing it. I think the more I do it the easier it will become and the more efficient.*"

Participants ($n = 3$) in this study also outlined difficulty in understanding what to reflect on. For example,

I found a lot of things difficult with the age of the kids the U11's, because I found it hard to add to some of the questions because they (athletes) tend to do things

randomly and there wasn't so much a reason behind it (coach behaviours) in my coaching so I found that quite hard to understand what I should be reflecting on.

This issue is also likely to compound the issue of time, as the participants reported the lengthy process taken to decide upon a direction for the reflection. It has also been considered in other fields where Martindale and Collins (2007) stated that it is still not clear as to what practitioners should actually reflect on from their experiences. In this situation, the participants could have been more informed by focusing on critical incidents within their coaching (Cropley et al., 2010). Coaches should reflect on situations that have personal significance to them as greater learning will occur and ultimately have a more pronounced impact on practice (Cropley & Hanton, 2011). Clearly, the coaches in this study would have benefited from specific education, guidance and support and therefore such process should be considered by those responsible for the training and development of sports coaches.

Interestingly, one of the participants acknowledged, *"If I had someone who would say whether the reflections were on the right thing or could give more guidance through the process, then that probably would have made reflecting a bit easier because sometimes you're just a bit unsure."* Other participants ($n = 6$) suggested that having the support of someone who *"knew what they were doing when it came to reflective practice"* would have helped them to engage in the process more effectively. This supports the notion that a mentor or tutor could help participants through the reflective process. The value of solitary reflective practice for students, or neophyte practitioners, has been questioned on the basis that students do not have access to the body of knowledge and experience in the day-to-day of the professionals that is seen as the *real* content of professional reflection (Moon, 2006). As implicated in Knowles et al.'s (2006) study, formal mentoring support could offer coaches the guidance and advice they require in order to improve their knowledge and understanding of reflection, and subsequently reduce the amount of time they spend doubting whether their reflections are good enough or not. In addition, mentoring has the potential to develop further learning as Cox (2005) mentioned that practitioners will start to see the benefits of reflective practice and engage in it more frequently.

5.24 Reflecting on emotions

Seven participants reported having problems or feeling uncomfortable with writing about their emotions when reflecting. One participant responded, *"I couldn't get across on paper what I felt, because...basically the hardest bit was trying to understand feelings."* Another suggested, *"Maybe I didn't want to lie to myself, maybe I knew what to write but maybe I didn't write it because I didn't want to sound like an idiot by talking about all those emotions I felt."* Other participants commented that considering affective issues connected to coaching practice was relatively novel, *"I've never really considered the idea that my emotions impact on the session so I found it difficult to think about these (emotions) things...it was alien to me."* Several authors have commented that reflective practice is likely to lead to feelings of discomfort and vulnerability as reflection directs us to challenge habitual knowledge and practice (Anderson et al., 2004). Certainly, Raelin (2001) warned that reflection can also make practitioners feel insecure, anxious and doubt our practice. However, Raelin (2001) also advocates that emotions and feelings can act as catalysts during reflection. Consequently, in order to engage in the reflective process fully practitioners must be open with themselves and questioning; challenging their emotions and thoughts, which will enable them to learn from their experiences, adapt and improve their practice (Anderson et al., 2004).

Three participants also specifically commented on the issue of the recalling of emotions. Specifically, one participant stated, *"Writing about how you feel and how you felt at that exact moment is really hard to recall, even if you did it half an hour after its really hard to exactly pin point the feeling."* Another participant agreed, *"Depending on how the session goes I struggle to remember how I was feeling before and during the session because I'm either really happy or really xxxxxx off."* Recall of emotions and information has been discussed in the extant literature. Indeed, Knowles et al. (2006) promoted the use of dual-staged reflection, where an initial reflection is recorded as soon after the event as possible and then a more thorough reflection is conducted, fuelled by those initial thoughts, at a later date. Knowles et al. (2006) also suggested that mental imagery could be a vital skill in helping coaches to *relive* their experiences and recreate the emotions involved, thus facilitating recall. Linked to this mental skill, the use of technology has also been supported in recent literature (e.g., Carson, 2008; Rhine & Bryant, 2007). Videos of coaching sessions, for example, can help coaches to recapture the intensity and frequency of emotions as well as better understand the impact of these on behaviour.

Coaches must therefore consider the ways in which they may use certain techniques or resources to help recall the detail that is necessary for in-depth reflection.

5.3 CHANGES TO FUTURE PRACTICE

Based on the participants' experiences of reflecting on their practice during the study, they were able to identify a range of ways that reflective practice could be integrated more stringently into individual practice and NGB coaching awards. These potential changes, their associated sub-themes (key explanatory themes of the main issue), and the impact of the theme for coach education qualifications are summarised in Table 2 and discussed below.

KEY CHANGES	SUB-THEME	IMPACT FOR COACH EDUCATION
Encourage more regular reflection	• Use different approaches to reflective practice • Embed the act of reflecting into coaching practice	• Developing 'buy-in' to reflective practice • Incorporate reflection into process models
Structured approach to reflection	• A process that reduces the time taken to engage • Improve the context specific nature of the pro-forma • Improve understanding of desired outcomes	• Development of a coaching specific reflective model • Educating coaches to be able to engage effectively with model
Sharing reflections	• Importance of group reflections • Importance of reflecting with a mentor	• Training of mentors to be able to reflect • Provision of opportunities for group reflections
Education and support	• Improving understanding of reflection and its processes • Developing reflective skills • Ongoing support	• Incorporating a reflective practice module • Embed reflection in all theory and practical modules

Table 2. Potential changes to improve the use of reflective practice by sports coaches.

5.31 Frequency of reflection: Utilising a structured approach

A number of participants ($n = 4$) suggested that they would have liked to have been encouraged to reflect more frequently. These participants suggested, *"I would have liked to do it (reflect) more frequently,"* and, *"I had issues with time but reflection is something I think we (coaches) should do on every session, that's what I would recommend."* For these participants it would appear that reflective practice, despite several issues, had overarching benefits that helped them to understand how to think and behave more effectively as a coach. Previous literature has tended to advocate a critical incident approach to reflective practice (e.g., Holt & Streat, 2001) when considering the frequency of reflection. This individualised approach affords practitioners the opportunity to reflect on personally significant incidents, which, in turn, makes reflective practice more meaningful to the individual (Tripp, 1993). Instead of asking coaches to reflect on everything they do in a formal, structured manner and thus forcing reflection in some instances, coaches should be educated and advised as to critical incident reflection (cf. Cropley & Hanton, 2011). This will provide coaches with the information needed to make an informed decision about how and when they might engage in reflective practice.

The majority of the participants ($n = 8$) stated that they would make changes to the structure of the log that they used to reflect. One participant said, *"I would put it (reflective pro-forma) all on one page, it'd be easier to follow and do."* Another participant added, *"I would possibly cut down some of questions to make it more manageable."* Participants advised that such changes would reduce the amount of time spent on a reflection and make it easier to see and understand. The participants appeared to want to make the process quicker and more accessible given their busy schedules. Being able to do this may have a positive impact on coaches' levels of motivation to reflect, which in turn will enhance their engagement in the process leading to more positive learning outcomes. In line with the findings of Knowles et al. (2006) coaches should be encouraged to develop their own approaches to reflection that suit both their own learning needs and the context of their practice. Empowering individuals to make such decisions is also likely to enhance the motivation to reflect more consistently (Cropley et al., 2007).

Interestingly, although not all of the participants specifically recommended the structured approach, none of the participants indicated that it had been detrimental to their reflective practices beyond a lack of understanding regarding how to engage. One

participant noted, *"The pro-forma and the questions gave me a focus. I wasn't always sure about what to write for each bit but it definitely got me thinking."* These findings are somewhat in line with the comments of Knowles et al. (2001) who suggested that a structured approach to reflection affords more of a systematic process rather than the simple mulling over of an experience. Being encouraged to reflect in such a way may, therefore, be beneficial.

5.32 Shared reflections

Five participants in this study suggested that reflective practice could be improved through the use of a peer or a mentor to assist with the process. For example, one participant recommended, *"Coaches, particularly inexperienced ones, could use older peers who are more experienced in order to help facilitate reflections."* It was thought that a shared reflective process would help coaches consider their actions and behaviours more carefully and help them to better understand their experiences. One participant added, *"I found it difficult to reflect on my own because I didn't know what else I could have done or what my session was like. If I had someone prompting me and giving me feedback I would have learnt more."* This comment resonates with the suggestions of Anderson et al. (2004) who proposed that peers could help in offering alternative solutions and challenging the individual when reflecting. This was further brought to light in the current findings as one participant stated, *"Other coaches can challenge the person to get a better reflection out of them."*

A number of researchers have advocated a shared approach suggesting that the heart of reflective practice lies in the reflective conversation (e.g., Cropley et al., 2007; Ghaye & Lillyman, 2000; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001) under the premise that mentors or critical friends⁵ facilitate the reflective process, add depth to reflections, and help to improve understandings of situations. The current findings correlate to these ideas with one participant reporting, *"You could act as a mentor to inexperienced coaches...this would really help them to reflect...two heads are better than one aren't they!"* Additionally, participants in this study made the distinction that shared processes of reflection would be more beneficial for an inexperienced coach as *"they are still learning about the environment that they operate in, so support is necessary to ensure that their reflections are*

⁵ A critical friend refers to a relationship based on cooperative adult learning, with 'critical' meaning 'important' or 'key' (Bambino, 2002).

meaningful." The view shared amongst the participants of this study was that coaches could "feed" off the knowledge of others, which may help them make sense of their own coaching and promote further learning. These ideas link to the comments of Moon (2006) who suggested that trainees may not have the professional knowledge required to reflect on their own, making shared processes vital.

In relation to the sharing of reflections with a 'more knowledgeable other' one participant also suggested that, *"Reflecting in groups could be good because ideas could be swapped and this may help a reflection I think."* The notion of group reflection supports the work of Gustafsson and Fagerberg (2004) who identified that group reflection can help to trade ideas and create a supportive environment for learning and change. Providing support or creating an environment for shared/group reflective practice to take place may, therefore, substantially benefit the outcome of reflection-on-action and improve a coach's effectiveness.

5.33 Education and support

Knowles et al. (2005) commented that given that research has shown experiential learning to be the primary determinant of developing coach expertise, it has been argued that NGB education programmes do not currently maximize opportunities for developing coaching practice. Failing to provide an underpinning structure to support experiential learning is unlikely to allow coaches to explore the nuances of their own practice, access and develop tacit knowledge and be creative in their application of sport specific technical knowledge. In line with this, the participants in this study commented on the need for more formal education regarding reflective practice and its application. Specifically, six participants outlined that their reflections were limited due to the little knowledge that they had regarding the process. One participant outlined, *"I didn't really know what I was doing I really needed more instruction and guidance. I thought I had a basic understanding of reflective practice but it didn't help me here."* Another stated, *"Being taught how to reflect and use the model would have really helped me to do it (reflection) better."* The notion of reflective practice being 'trained' sits well with the work of Russell (2005) who concluded that reflective practice can and should be taught. Russell (2005) went on to suggest that, "The results of explicit instruction seem far more productive than merely advocating reflective practice and assuming that individuals will understand how reflective practice differs profoundly from our

everyday sense of reflection” (p. 199). Providing support for this notion, both Knowles et al.’s (2001) and Cropley et al.’s (2011) studies sought to develop their participants’ ability to reflect through a multimodal educational approach. Through the use of lectures, tutorials, and workshops (education), and feedback and mentoring (ongoing support) both studies reported the positive impact such a programme could have on the effective use of reflective practice.

As well as being better educated, participants suggested that ongoing support would have helped them to engage in the process more consistently, which also links to the processes adopted by Knowles et al. (2001) and Cropley et al. (2011). For example, it was mentioned that, *“Having someone to support the reflection and give you a kick up the arse every now and again would have helped me,”* and, *“Knowing that someone was there to help, to answer questions about the reflection and the session would have helped to motivate me more I think.”* Another participant stated, *“When I was really unsure about something I went and spoke to one of the other coaches and their input was invaluable in helping the reflection.”* Knowles et al. (2006) identified that being accountable for engaging in reflective practice resulted in coaches reflecting more thoroughly and at deeper levels than when the accountability was removed. In line with the findings of this study, therefore, coaches can be encouraged to reflect if support systems were in place. NGB’s could possibly do this by making reflection-on-practice a formal criterion in re-accrediting a qualification. Similar steps have been taken to ensure ongoing reflection in BASES Sport and Exercise Scientist Accreditation programme, where in order to become re-accredited practitioners must demonstrate the use of reflection-on-practice throughout their five year tenure of accreditation.

5.4 BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

As the main aim of this investigation was to focus on the issues and problems associated with reflective practice, the participants were not specifically asked to comment on the benefits they had experienced as a result of engaging in structured reflection during the study. However, throughout the interviews, participants referred to a number of factors linked to the positive impact that structured reflection had on their coaching (benefits and their link to reflective practice are summarised in Table 3).

KEY BENEFIT	SUB-THEME	LINK TO REFLECTIVE PRACTICE
Improving self-awareness	• Understand strengths • Understand limitations • Improved confidence	• Focused thinking internally • Affirms the positive impact of the coach
Understanding practice	• Learning about the environment • Learning about athletes	• Questions lead to new thinking • Focus on all aspects of coaching
Improving practice	• Context specific changes • Informing decision making	• Questions challenge the 'norm' • Focus on alternative approaches

Table 3. Benefits association with reflective practice in the context of sports coaching.

Almost all participants ($n=11$) reported that they had gained a better understanding of themselves as coaches over the course of the study. They suggested that the internal focus of the reflective questions helped them to consider their own practice, behaviours, and decisions. This is best demonstrated through the comments of one participant who stated:

I've never asked myself those questions before. I found them tough but I started to understand what impact I had, what my strengths and weaknesses are as a coach. I found myself repeating certain things in the reflection but in a way this helped reinforce what I was thinking.

Reflective practice has been widely attributed as an approach that helps practitioners to develop self-awareness (e.g., Anderson et al., 2004; Cropley et al., 2007). In the field of sport psychology, neophyte practitioners have reported how reflecting on practical experience enhances practitioners' self-awareness regarding how they operate within the context of practice (Tonn & Harmison, 2004). By becoming aware of the self it is thought that practitioners are in a better position to make informed decisions about how practice is shaped and developed resulting in more effective ways of 'being' (Cropley et al., 2007).

Participants in this study also outlined that they were able to gain a better understanding of the environments in which they were coaching. The participants also suggested that by attempting to reflect they were able to better understand and consider the needs of their athletes. For example, *"I struggled with the feelings bit so I concentrated on other things like my players. I learnt more about what they wanted and needed. I actually thought I knew this stuff but hadn't really thought about it in detail before."* Another participant said, *"Normally when I evaluate I concentrate on one thing, but reflecting I considered the bigger picture. I think this helped me to understand it (coaching environment) more."* Being able to generate context specific knowledge through reflection confirms the vital role it plays in helping coaches to develop the tacit knowledge they need to function within the coaching process. In fact, this has been emphasised as a key learning outcome of reflective practice (e.g., Cropley et al., 2007; Jones & Wallace, 2005).

Finally, several participants ($n = 5$) reported that reflecting in this structured way helped them to improve their practice. These participants believed that reflection was important in helping to create *change* within their practice. One participant stated, *"You have to reflect to improve; if you don't reflect you will never change."* Supporting this, another said, *"The only way that you change is by learning about what you do well and where you need to move forward and progress."* These findings support the current literature, which highlights that individuals inspect their experiences in order to develop a new understanding, therefore creating a change (Knowles et al., 2006). In addition, Fowler (2006) stated that practitioners within the nursing environment face complex situations with the solutions to such situations embedded within the experiences of the practitioner. The participants' ($n = 5$) collective view in this study was that by creating a change in the way that they operate allowed them to move forward as coaches.

6.0 Study Summary and Conclusion

This study aimed to provide an in-depth examination of the current issues associated with reflective practice in order to better understand how reflective practice could be more effectively integrated into sports coaching education and development programmes. By giving coaches the opportunity to reflect in a structured manner over a 12 week period it is thought that this study has been able to uncover a host of theoretical and practical implications regarding the utility of reflective practice as an approach to experiential learning in sports coaching. Specifically, individuals contemplating reflection and organisations attempting to create a reflective culture need to consider: (a) the physical (time) and affective (emotional) issues associated with structured reflective practice; (b) individuals' knowledge and understanding of reflective practice; (c) the way in which practitioners are asked to engage in reflective practice; (d) how to maintain and enhance 'buy-in' and motivation to consistently engage in reflection; and (e) how to facilitate effective reflection underpinned by experiential learning. Similar findings have been reported in the field of pedagogy where Otienoh (2009) indicated that teachers encounter a number of challenges that inhibit them from reflecting. These challenges range from lack of time, the structure of the programmes and the way reflective practice is introduced to them, to teacher motivation and lack of structures to support the practice.

Although this study focused on the issues associated with reflective practice, the participants also reported benefits that emerged as a result of being asked to reflect in a more systematic manner. Consequently, it would appear that despite the issues experienced by coaches, reflective practice has the potential to improve the ways in which coaches operate within the coaching process. Some empirical support is offered for the sports coaching literature that professes the potential benefits of reflective practice (e.g., Carson, 2008; Cushion et al., 2010; Douglas, 2008; Jones & Wallace, 2005).

If coaches are to consistently gain such benefits from reflecting on their practices and be able to overcome the potential problems of reflection NGB's are advised to consider the specific recommendations made in this study (these are considered in more depth in Section 8.0). Specifically, NGB's must provide their coaches with the education and support required for the development of the knowledge and skills that underpin effective reflection. Such educative processes can easily be built into existing

qualification programmes, which would give coaches the time and space required within a learning programme to develop reflective skills, otherwise these are likely to be superficial and uncritical (Cushion et al., 2010). NGB's should also seek to create opportunities for coaches to reflect with others (e.g., mentors, critical friends) in order to embed the *reflective conversation* in everyday coaching practice. Finally, NGB's should consider the development of context specific approaches to reflection that help their coaches systematically reflect rather than simply mull over the experience (cf. Knowles et al., 2001).

This investigation is not without its limitations. First, it could be argued that asking participants to adopt a structured approach to reflective practice constrained the artistry of the process (Moon, 2006). Many of the issues reported in this study may have therefore emanated as a direct result of this approach. However, given the lack of knowledge and experience of reflective practice the participants had prior to the study a more structured process was deemed appropriate. This approach was used to ensure that participants engaged in a process indicative of reflection and were therefore better placed to comment on the issues associated with reflection-on-practice. Some may therefore see this also as a strength due to the ecological validity associated with the approach. Second, the participants worked in coaching on a part-time basis and were therefore subjected to a range of time demands due to the busy schedules created by their multiple roles. This situation creates a range of specific issues that may not apply to all coaches. However, as similar demands have been identified by professionals across different fields (e.g., Cropley et al., 2010; Otienoh, 2009) the issues uncovered in this study could be considered as representative and relatively enduring. Nevertheless, future research could consider the problems experienced by elite coaches when engaging in reflective practice in order to develop context specific information. Additionally, future research that considers the specific impact of reflection on coaching practice would only strengthen the support that the concept has within the field of coaching. Given the importance being placed on reflective practice at all levels of the professional continuum it is thought that such research endeavours require attention.

7.0 Anecdotal Support from the Field

Before the recommendations are outlined it was thought important to support the findings emanating from the empirical research study presented in this report, with an autoethnographical insight into the applied reflective practices of a sports coach. Autoethnography, through reflective insights, is becoming a more accepted method of research within the field of sports coaching (e.g., Purdy, Potrac, & Jones, 2008). This is because it is thought that autoethnographical accounts draw upon highly personalised accounts of lived experience extending our sociological understanding of particular phenomena (Sparkes, 2002). Adopting this approach then, the following narrative provides an insight into the impact of reflective practice on a rugby union coach (John Peel). Specific emphasis is placed on how the coach made reflection effective for him by overcoming certain applied issues. It is thought that this brief autoethnographical insight provides ecologically valid information that will help create more specific and potentially impactful recommendations.

7.1 COACH BIOGRAPHY

John has been coaching at Wallingford RUFC (age groups and Colts) in Oxfordshire for 10 years and is a Level two qualified coach. He is the club's coach coordinator and a Rugby Football Union (RFU) accredited Coach Developer. He also currently serves as Chair of the coaching sub-committee on the Oxfordshire RFU Constituent Body. He has a Masters degree in Coaching from Loughborough University and is currently a Ph.D. student at Cardiff Metropolitan University. John's Ph.D. research is focused on the development of youth sport coach education through the integration of reflection into practice-based interventions. As part of John's research and his philosophy regarding the need for continual development, he has worked hard to develop the skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving) and attributes (e.g., openness, self-awareness) required for effective reflection. As a result, John has developed a critical understanding of the practicalities of reflective practice and gained extensive experience of reflecting in different contexts and using different approaches.

7.2 LEARNING TO COACH THROUGH REFLECTION: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT

Like many people who become coaches, when I started I was a little unsure how to go about it. At first, I focused my learning activities on NGB-accredited awards and courses and these were invaluable in providing me with technical knowledge; credibility with my players, their parents and other coaches; and some coaching 'craft' skills. However, as I gained more experience I began to seek new ways of learning that were more specifically related to my own experience and the needs, as I perceived them, of my players and the environment we were working in.

Back then (2001), my perception of how a sports coach should behave was largely formed by my own experience as young player and by the representations of coaching behaviours in the media. I also used aspects of coaching in my role as a manager of people at work and as a parent. However, I think it's pretty fair to say that the people I managed at work would not have tolerated some of the things I found myself doing whilst coaching young sports players. I was, to put it mildly, a bit 'shouty' on the sidelines. On occasion, these behaviours became a source of embarrassment to me and in reflecting upon them, I began to try to understand why I behaved as I did and what I could do to behave more appropriately in the future.

As I gained more coaching experience, I became interested in a more structured approach to learning through that experience and I was introduced to the concept of reflective practice (RP). I had heard of the concept through some involvement with medical and nursing education in my work role but other than a very brief brush with it on my UKCC Level one course, I hadn't really engaged with it as a way of learning how to be a better coach. As I found out more, I began to start using different reflective approaches to try to make learning from my experience more effective.

Writing was the first technique I used, partly because we were given a written reflective practice assignment as part of a course I was doing, but also because I personally have always found it easier to collate and organise my thoughts more clearly in written form. As I wrote more about how I felt and behaved I began to relate those thoughts and behaviours to other pieces of writing instigated by other events. I sometimes re-read previous bits of writing and found that there were learning points in them that I hadn't always picked up on first time around. I also began to realise that the reasons for, and outcomes of, my writing were different from those I had been taught at

school. There, we are told to organize our thoughts before we write – to plan, draft, and redraft in order to make our communication clear. This writing though, would sometimes be very different and I began to write without always having a clear preconception of where I was going or what I would write about. I often surprised myself by learning new things about what I did and why, that I had little inkling of when I initially sat down in front of the computer screen.

I would try and write something after every training session and certainly after a big game. Initially I would focus on things I or the team had done wrong or messed up. Soon though, I started to try to find positive things to explore through writing. Things we did well. Then to think about why those things had gone well and what we could learn from the positive experiences. I learnt a lot from writing for myself in this way but in time, I began to feel the need for a deeper understanding of learning through reflection.

My interest in the process took me to a one-day seminar on RP run by the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES). The seminar was run by a number of experienced reflective practitioners who introduced us to the underlying theory that underpins RP as well as some of the practical implications. They also discussed a broader range of reflective techniques and as a consequence I began to experiment with other ways of reflecting. *Audio recordings* have been a useful method of capturing my thoughts and feelings during and in the immediate aftermath of a coaching session. Playing them back later provided me with valuable insights into how I felt ‘in the moment’ as well as allowing recall of detail that might otherwise be lost over time (increasingly less time these days). Audio has more immediacy than note-taking within a session because I can use more words in the same period of time. *Video* has all the same advantages and pitfalls as audio with some additions of its own. Video can be a brutal medium at times, it exposed me to aspects of my appearance and behaviour I was not aware of or reminded of things I didn’t like (‘When did I get so fat?’). First time users of video can be shocked by things like their posture, accent, and tone of voice and I found these distractions often got in the way of focusing on other, arguably more important traits and behaviours. Video is a very powerful way of giving myself (and others that I work with) another perspective on practice – it can hold up a mirror to what I do that might otherwise be difficult to find in other ways. *Still photographs* have been particularly useful in taking me back to a critical event, sometimes to moments

that happened two or three years in the past. Being taken back in this way has sometimes surprised and shocked me and caused me to think quite deeply about the differences between then and now and the journey in between.

More recently, I find I use a combination of these and other techniques. We all have different learning preferences and experimenting with different approaches can be rewarding in itself. For me, writing remains the most important and useful method but I now use audio to capture thoughts in training sessions, supplemented by note taking; I use video sparingly but usually carry a small handheld recorder with me when working with other coaches; photographs are still a powerful generator of reflective thinking and have the added ability of being relatively easy to embed in a reflective document. All of these mediums may benefit even further from use in new social media. Blogging and e-portfolios are other environments that people use either deliberately or unwittingly in reflective learning. I have yet to go down this route extensively myself but research in other fields such as HE and healthcare is underway.

The pros and cons of the use of different reflective methods, media and techniques, however, should not obscure an aspect of learning through reflection that I do feel is 'true'. That is: *it's more effective if done in collaboration with another person*. As I mentioned previously, my first forays into reflective writing were done in isolation and worked well enough for me to feel reasonably satisfied with the outcomes. But I soon began to feel there was something missing. I was lucky enough to find a number of people to act as a (jargon alert!) 'dialogical other' or, if you prefer, 'someone to bounce thoughts and ideas off'. Initially, and before I became fully aware of the theory of reflective learning, these 'others' were coaches at the club with whom I discussed problems and ideas in the bar after games and training sessions. In time, a couple of these relationships developed into more regular, organised 'mentoring' with me acting as both a 'mentee' and mentor. At the same time, I was also developing relationships with dialogical others outside the club – in my case academic supervisors and increasingly now, with colleagues at work who have become interested in the approach through my constant proselytizing. Engaging in a dialogue with other people about what you do is not an easy matter. It sometimes involves exposing yourself emotionally and that can be difficult and hard work. A significant amount of trust needs to be developed and that can take time. These relationships cannot be forced; both parties need to feel comfortable and safe. I work on both sides of the mentor/mentee relationship and one

of the things I find most remarkable is that I learn as much (sometimes more) from discussions in which I am supposed to be 'the more capable other' in the conversation.

So, why does learning through reflection work for me?

- It's something I can engage in whatever I'm doing. I can, quite literally 'learn something every day' by looking for things that surprise me, positive and negative about what I do.
- I am not dependent on others to learn in this way although it's better if I can engage in a dialogue at some point in the process.
- It gives me power and ownership of the learning I do. It challenges me to think about accepted wisdom and it often helps me bring to the surface deeply held feelings and prejudices that impact my practice, often without me really knowing about them.
- I can go about it in lots of different ways – I have a preference for writing but I can supplement that with lots of different other techniques and methods. That keeps it fresh and helps it not to become a bit of a 'chore'.
- It 'builds'. I can go back to previous reflections done weeks, months, or years earlier and find new learning in them.
- It works. I'm a better coach and coach developer than I was (I'm certainly less 'shouty'). I feel more comfortable in my role and more competent (occasionally other people agree). A large part of that is through learning from reflection. I have also encouraged a number of other people at the club and at work to experiment with it. They say it works for them too.

8.0 Recommendations

Importantly, as Schön (1983) suggested, 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 (Cushion et al., 2003). In order to facilitate this a number of recommendations are presented based on the extant literature (reviewed in Section 2), the findings of the empirical study (reported in Sections 3-6) and the suggestions originating from the autoethnographical insight into the practical application of reflective practice (reported in Section 7). These recommendations are for both individuals and organisations and focus on how reflective practice could be more effectively integrated into practice. The recommendations are organised in line with the key components that comprise Figure 1. and provide an outline of how the issues discussed in this study could be overcome.

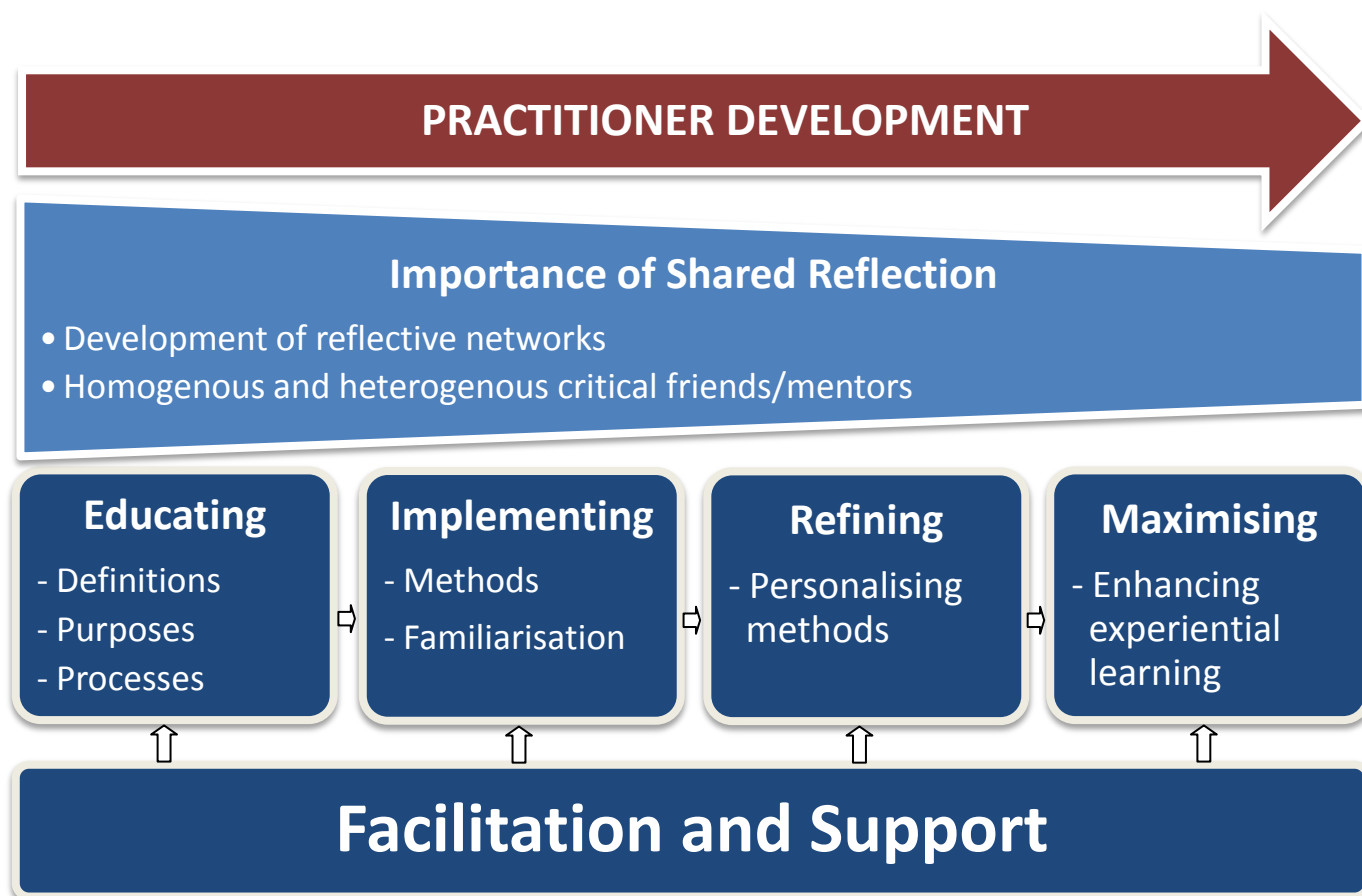


Figure 1. Enhancing reflective practice – The key stages and factors

8.1 RECOMMENDATION 1: EDUCATING AND IMPLEMENTING

Coaches must be given the opportunity to develop their understanding of reflective practice. This includes: definitions of reflection, the purposes of reflection, and the process of reflective practice. Helping coaches to develop this knowledge is likely to reduce the chances that coaches engage in other processes (e.g., simple evaluation) that will not allow them to learn from their experiences as effectively as reflective practice (Platzer, Snelling, & Blake, 1997). It should also allow them to feel more comfortable with engaging in the process and thus reduce levels of anxiety and discomfort akin to those experienced by participants in this study as a result of a lack of understanding.

Participants in this study reported some prior knowledge of reflection, especially those within HE where reflective practice is becoming a more prominent aspect of many modules. However, NGB's must be careful to avoid making assumptions regarding a coaches' ability to reflect based on an assessment of their prior access to learning. Hanson (2011) recommended that the potential problem of contradiction between preconceived tutor assumptions and existing student understandings be acknowledged. Reflective practice has been recognised as a complex process involving the whole person (e.g., emotions, cognitions, behaviours); therefore, not everyone will be able to reflect at the same level in the same way. Therefore, specific education programmes must be developed to meet the learning needs of the majority, if not all, of coaches. Several approaches to educating practitioners have gained credence in recent literature (e.g., Cropley et al., 2011; Knowles et al., 2001).

- **Educational workshops**

Following similar procedures adopted by BASES on their Accreditation programme (see SE Guidelines - <http://www.bases.org.uk/Supervised-Experience>), education could be delivered as core workshops as part of coach education programmes and as part of the continuing professional development programme on offer. Currently, reflective practice permeates through professional body workshops (e.g., SCUK's *Analysing your Coaching*, *Positive Behaviour Management*, and *Inclusive Coaching*). Nevertheless, reflective practice itself rarely appears as a core workshop and it could therefore be argued that coaches are not given the opportunity to develop the underpinning knowledge about the concept required to effectively engage in the process.

It should be recognised, however, that any such endeavour should make best use of the expertise available as it has been recognised that in order to teach reflection educators need to be both expert reflective practitioners and engage in the process themselves (Scanlan & Chernomas, 1997). Poor workshop delivery is only likely to compound current beliefs about reflective practice being ‘something extra to do’ and thus have a potentially negative effect on motivation. Additionally, the content and structure of the workshop has to represent the topic of the workshop. For example, if reflective practice is about learning from experience then practical elements of reflection-on-practice should be included in order to give delegates a better understanding of what the process ‘looks’ and ‘feels’ like.

- **Mentoring**

If the levels of reflective activity and depth are to improve then interventions must move beyond traditional positivistic routes to education (Cushion et al., 2003). In line with this, support from this project, as well as from a number of authors (e.g., Anderson et al., 2004; Cropley et al., 2011), is provided for *mentoring*. Learning from other professions (e.g., Sport & Exercise Science), trainees engage in a process of supervised experience and therefore have direct access to a mentor throughout their training period. This provides neophytes with the support required during the relatively novel engagement in professional and reflective practice. Despite support for this approach, organisations must consider what qualifies a person to become a mentor. For instance, is a mentor distinguished by more years coaching, or by higher levels of qualification, or by age? Quality assuring any mentoring scheme has to be paramount.

Sharing reflection appears to be most important at both the early stages of development (e.g., inexperienced coach) and during initial forays into reflecting on practice. This is because of the limited understanding trainees (in practice and/or reflection) have of their environments and the issues associated with practice. As coaches become more experienced and knowledgeable sharing reflection may become less important, although it is suggested that practitioners of all levels engage in shared reflection where possible due to the potential it has in helping individuals make sense of, and learn from, their experiences. Mentoring should therefore be seen as an ongoing process that is linked to the development of a coaches’ support networks.

- **Developing support networks**

Engaging both trainee and qualified coaches in workshop activities also gives them instant access to other coaches creating the opportunity for network development. If a culture of trust and collaboration is established within these formal learning environments a 'community of learners' could be created, which would enhance the opportunities for shared and group reflection (Hanson, 2011). For example, Nash and Sproule's (2011) participants established their own support network, consisting of coaches with similar backgrounds, coaching contexts, experiences and problems to be resolved. This occurred over a period of years, mainly through both chance (meeting at formal events) and opportunity (content of formal events). This supports the findings of Gilbert and Trudel (2001), where coaches interacted to construct solutions to coaching problems, which strengthens the support for this approach.

Networks could be developed both formally and informally. Formally, they could represent regional coaching groups that meet quarterly to discuss and reflect upon practice based issues and models of good practice. Informally, coaches could be supported and guided to develop their own networks as outlined by the findings of Nash and Sproule (2011) presented above.

8.2 RECOMMENDATION 2: REFINING AND MAXIMISING

Once coaches have gained an understanding of reflective practice and how it might be applied it is important for them to be supported in developing their own approaches to reflection. At the same time, it is important for coaches to continue to engage in reflective practices. Sometimes there is a tendency, once formal training has finished, to stop reflecting in a formal way (cf. Knowles et al., 2006) and this has to be protected against. Professional bodies have to be aware that even though structures are put into place it doesn't guarantee that coaches will continue to engage in reflective practice (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). A professional stance regarding values, beliefs, principles, and expectancies about continual experiential learning should therefore be developed to support coaches in this way (Hanson, 2011). This is in disagreement with the comments of Carson (2008) who suggested that the use of reflection by inexperienced and novice coaches is more crucial than for more experienced, expert

coaches. Reflective practice has to be established as a primary aspect of coaching practice at all levels and in this way it should become a coaching disposition, rather than a 'tool' to be picked up and put down whenever the coach feels necessary. In order to achieve this several factors should be considered.

There is consistent support throughout different disciplines for the value of structured, written reflection (e.g., Anderson et al., 2004; Cropley et al., 2007; Knowles et al., 2001; Moon, 2006). It is suggested that written reflections allow practitioners to make better sense of their experiences by being able to 'view' their experiences in front of them. Additionally, the exercise of writing is suggested to promote the qualities (e.g., open mindedness) and skills (e.g., self-awareness, critical analysis, problem-solving) required for reflection as well as the motivation for engaging in a formal reflective process (Richardson & Maltby, 1995). However, as recognised by the participants in this project, completing structured reflection has its problems (e.g., time consuming, confusing). Professional bodies must, therefore, ensure the following conditions are in place to reduce the negative effects of such issues: (1) appropriate education and training regarding the use of the structured approach; (2) feedback on reflections regarding the nature of the reflective process rather than the content of the reflection; (3) ongoing support and mentoring to not only help coaches make sense of their experiences, identify appropriate courses of action, and improve their practice, but also to improve the way in which reflective practice occurs; (4) access to a range of different reflective models – it is proposed that NGB's work to develop context specific approaches to reflective practice using the resources and technology available to them; and (5) an open environment characterised by accountability where coaches are motivated to reflect in a self-determined way rather than being forced to reflect as a requirement of an educational programme.

NGB's and professional bodies are also advised to encourage a dual-staged reflective process where coaches engage in reflective conversations (shared reflection) before reflecting in a more solitary, written manner. This process has received support as it is suggested that the additional information gleaned from the shared process helps to shape and improve (in terms of depth and learning outcome) the quality of reflection (Woodcock, Richards, & Mugford, 2008). Formalising approaches to reflection is likely to not only enhance engagement in the process but also improve reflective learning.

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10.0 Appendix

APPENDIX A – Structured Reflective Journal

Description: What Happened? What essential factors contributed to this experience?
Feelings: What were you thinking and feeling before, during and after? What impact did these have on the session (e.g., decision making, coaching behaviour)?
Evaluation: What was good about the situation? What was bad about the situation?
Analysis: Why did the situation happen as it did? Why did the good and bad things happen? Why did you coach / behave as you did? What influenced your decision making?
Conclusion: 1. What have you learnt from this experience? 1. What implications does this experience have for the field of sports coaching? 2. What other options did you have in attempts to improve the session? 2. What would the consequences of those options be?
Action Plan: What will you do next time to maintain the strengths and improve the limitations of this experience? Why What further learning is required in order to do these things?
Reflecting on Reflections: How did you find reflecting on your experience? Why? What issues did you experience with reflecting and using the pro-forma? What benefits have been gained from reflecting in this way?

APPENDIX B – Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Purpose: to collect data for an independent research project. You can have a copy of the final study upon request. Not a typical social validation interview as I'm primarily interested in examining your experiences of engaging in reflective practice.

Dictaphone: required to make sure all information is collected accurately and so that a transcript can be produced. You'll be sent a copy of the transcript to review to ensure it is accurate.

Section 1: Introduction

Confidentiality: anonymity throughout the transcript; quotes from transcript to be used but all identifiable factors will be removed or changed. Right to withdraw and not answer any particular questions. Last section will allow you the opportunity to comment on the interview and the interview process. Request for honest answers

Orienting instructions: preparation booklet should have prepared you for the types of questions you'll be asked, if you're not sure of anything please let me know.

Do you have any questions at this point in time? Are you happy to start?

Section 2: Context

1. Can you tell me about the environment in which you were coaching during the study? **PROBE:** Why, What, When?
2. What do you think were good aspects of your coaching over this period? **PROBE:** Why and how do you know?
3. What do you think are areas of improvement that could be made to your coaching? **PROBE:** Why and how do you know?
4. How did you find using reflection?
5. What did you know about reflective practice prior to the study? **PROBE:** Where did this knowledge come from?

Section 3: Issues and Problems

1. How did your reflections change over the course of the study? **PROBE:** Why?
2. What were some of the issues you faced during the study? **PROBE:** Why do you think this was an issue? What impact did this have on your RP? How would you overcome this issue?
3. What had the biggest influence on your engagement in reflective practice? **PROBE:** Why, what impact did this have?
4. Which factor inhibited the quality of your reflections the most? **PROBE:** Why, how did it inhibit your RP?

Section 4: Critical Analysis

1. How could we improve coaches' engagement in reflective practice? **PROBE:** If you could give future coaches advice about using RP, what would you say to them?
2. What would you do differently if you were offered the opportunity to engage in a reflective practice process again? **PROBE:** Why?
3. How might coach education make better use of reflective practice?
4. Do you feel that you will continue to engage in reflective practice? **PROBE:** Why?

Section 5: Conclusion

1. How would you rate your experience as a participant?
2. How did you think the interview went?
3. Did you feel that you could tell your story fully?
4. Did I lead you or influence your responses in any way?
5. Do you think we failed to discuss any important factors?

APPENDIX C – Participant Informed Consent Form

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT
YSGOL CHWARAEON CAERDYDD



UWIC PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

UWIC Ethics Reference Number:

Participant name:

Title of Project: **Reflective practice: Values, issues and developments in sports coaching**

Name of Researcher: **Dr. Brendan Cropley**

Section 1 – Participant to complete this section. Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐
3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Section 2 – Participant to complete this section. Please initial each box.

1. I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being audio recorded ☐
2. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications ☐

Name of Participant:

Date:

Signature of Participant:

Name of person taking consent:

Date:

Signature of person taking consent:

Cyncoed Campus Cyncoed Road Cardiff CF23 6XD U.K.
Tel: 029 2041 6591 Fax: 029 2041 6768
web: www.uwic.ac.uk
email: ccs@uwic.ac.uk

Cardiff's **metropolitan** university

Campws Cyncoed Heol Cyncoed Caerdydd CF23 6XD D.U.
Ffôn: 029 2041 6591 Ffacs: 029 2041 6768
gwe: www.uwic.ac.uk
ebost: ccs@uwic.ac.uk

prifysgol **metropolitan** Caerdydd