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Supervisor:	Jake Bailey

Comments	Section
	Title and Abstract Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem. Abstract to include: A concise summary of the empirical study undertaken.
	Introduction and literature review To include: outline of context (theoretical/conceptual/applied) for the question; analysis of findings of previous related research including gaps in the literature and relevant contributions; logical flow to, and clear presentation of the research problem/ question; an indication of any research expectations, (i.e., hypotheses if applicable).
	Methods and Research Design To include: details of the research design and justification for the methods applied; participant details; comprehensive replicable protocol.
	Results and Analysis [2] To include: description and justification of data treatment/ data analysis procedures; appropriate presentation of analysed data within text and in tables or figures; description of critical findings.
	Discussion and Conclusions To include: collation of information and ideas and evaluation of those ideas relative to the extant literature/concept/theory and research question/problem; adoption of a personal position on the study by linking and combining different elements of the data reported; discussion of the real-life impact of your research findings for coaches and/or practitioners (i.e. practical implications); discussion of the limitations and a critical reflection of the approach/process adopted; and indication of potential improvements and future developments building on the study; and a conclusion which summarises the relationship between the research question and the major findings.
	Presentation To include: academic writing style; depth, scope and accuracy of referencing in the text and final reference list; clarity in organisation, formatting and visual presentation

CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
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DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS)

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"WHAT WAS THE POINT IN ASKING US?": AN ETHNOGRAPHIC EVALUATION OF A UKCC NETBALL LEVEL ONE COACHING COURSE

(Dissertation submitted under the discipline of Coaching Science)

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<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Abstract

This study explored candidate coaches' perceptions and expectations of the UK coaching certificate (UKCC) level one netball course. It also evaluated how the course impacted the participants' practice after a 4-6 week period. The study utilised the ethnographic, multi instrumental qualitative approach (Walford, 2009; Wolcott, 2005), using participant observation, informal conversational interviews and semi-structured, follow up, telephone interviews. The participants were 19 female coaches aged between 16 and 42. From the 19 observed, 3 clear groups were evident, based mainly on personal biographies. 5 were then selected, as a representation of each group, for follow up interviews.

The findings indicated that coaches' personal biographies were ignored; it was assumed that the candidate coaches already had technical ('what to') knowledge but lacked pedagogical ('how to') knowledge. On the course evaluated, the opposite seemed to be the case, with most candidates expecting, and desiring, technical content. The course, therefore, did not cater for individuals' needs, focusing instead around a generic curriculum. The findings also indicated that the authenticity of the course was questionable, in terms of the assessment driven attitude, unrealistic peer coaching, lack of guidance on reflection and limited contact time. In order for coach education to improve, it needs to move away from simplistic behaviourist conceptions of learning and toward more situational and contextualised notions about learning.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of coach education effectiveness has been identified as critical to understanding and developing coaching and coach education (Gilbert & Trudel, 2006). Research suggests that coaches learn both in and out of formal educational settings (Cushion *et al.,* 2003; Nelson *et al.,* 2006), with 'real life' practical coaching experience being of the upmost importance to their development (Cushion *et al.,* 2003; Mallet & Dickens, 2009). This suggests possible implications regarding how coach education should be delivered. One example of coach education delivered within a formal educational setting is the UKCC, a development framework that supports the expansion, endorsement and continuous improvement of governing body sport coach-education programmes. The aims of this initiative were to standardize and improve coach education and to set the bench mark for all coaches. Although, the UKCC claim that it is not a 'one size fits all' programme, the idea of standardising coaching conflicts with its nature, which has been identified as a complex, messy and social process (Cushion, 2001, 2007; Cushion *et al.,* 2003; Jones, 2006; Jones & Armour 2000; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Saury & Durand, 1998).

<u>Aims and objectives</u>

The aims of this study were to (1) explore coaches' perceptions and expectations of a UKCC level one netball coaching course and (2) to evaluate how the coaching course impacted the participants' practice after a 4-6 week period. To achieve these aims, the following objectives were considered: (a) how did the candidate coaches' personal biographies influence their experiences and perceptions of the course? (b) How did the structure and content of the course influence the candidates learning experience? (c) How, if at all, was the course made contextually relevant to candidates?

<u>Rationale for the study</u>

It is evident that previous research within coaching science has been largely orientated towards expert or elite coaching practitioners. This is the case in a number of domains, including coach education (Cassidy *et al.*, 2006; Chesterfield *et al.*, 2010; Gilbert & Trudel, 1999), coach-athlete interactions (D'Arripe-Longueville *et al.*, 1998; Potrac *et al.,* 2002) and coaches' knowledge and learning (Abraham *et al.,* 2006; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Irwin *et al.,* 2004; Jones *et al.*,

2003; Saury & Durand, 1998). Wright *et al.* (2007) suggested that studies on volunteer youth sport coaches were underrepresented when compared with those conducted on elite or professional coaches. Therefore, a gap is evident with respect to evaluating the lower levels of coach education. Additionally, Wright *et al.* (2007) explained that due to coaching shortages, it is not uncommon that assistant coaches take a head coach role. These points, together, indicate that the evaluation of entry level coach education courses is increasingly pertinent. Further, there is a lack of research evaluating the UKCC as a large scale coach education programme.

The majority of previous studies that have evaluated coach education use interviews as their key method of data collection. Some have utilised participant observation, however, none have used follow up interviews after a prolonged period of time, in order to assess the effects of the course on candidates' coaching practice. The findings of this study will identify possible issues (if any) within the UKCC netball level one course and provide grounds for the development and improvement of current coach education programmes.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The significance of conducting this literature review is to critically examine previous literature surrounding the topic area. The first of the two main sections focuses on learning, types of learning, and a critical review of how coaches learn best. The second section begins by evaluating the coaching process, following on to examine the current UKCC, as well as the professionalization of coaching and its link with tertiary education. The section is then concluded with a critical review of previous studies that have evaluated coach education.

Learning

Within the literature, there seems to be a " lack of concern about how coaches learn" (Nelson & Cushion, 2006, p.174). Cushion *et al.* (2010) suggested that coaches learn in a variety of different ways, from a number of informal, non-formal, and formal sources. Although separate, there is often substantial overlap between the three (Colley *et al.*, 2002). Despite the amount of research conducted on learning theory (across all domains), approaches to coach learning remain uneducated (Cushion *et al.*, 2010). It is, however, widely accepted that coach learning occurs both inside educational settings, and outside, in 'real life' situations (Cushion *et al.*, 2003; Nelson *et al.*, 2006).

Informal learning

Learning within informal situations has been identified by Coombs and Ahmed (1974) as " the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment" (p.8). A key feature of informal learning is that it occurs without a prescribed curriculum (Cushion *et al.*, 2010). Abraham *et al.* (2006) and Erikson *et al.* (2008) offer a variety of possible informal ways in which coaches learn, for example: practical coaching experiences; interactions with peer coaches and athletes; previous experiences as an athlete (Irwin *et al.*, 2004; Jones *et al.*, 2003, 2004) and informal mentoring (Bloom, *et al.*, 1998; Cushion, 2001). Other informal ways of learning include, the internet, books, coaching manuals, videos of one's own and others coaching sessions (Abraham *et al.*, 2006; Erickson *et al.*, 2008; Irwin *et al.*, 2004). Importantly, Cervero (1992) suggested that the knowledge professionals acquire from practice is more useful than what they gain from formal

learning situations. Therefore, suggesting that experience is an important and useful source of learning in which professionals can gain knowledge.

Experiential Learning

Within coaching literature, experiential learning has not been treated with the same clarity as informal learning, research has tended to use the two terms interchangeably and without clear definition (Cushion *et al.*, 2003; Colley *et al.*, 2002; Jones *et al.*, 2004; Moon, 2004). One proposed definition of experiential learning, positions it as follows: "[experiential learning is] intentional and can be mediated or unmediated, and is different from learning from experience, which is largely unintentional" (Cushion *et al.*, 2010, p.69). The intention to learn from a particular time and experience is what provides the distinction between experiential learning and incidental or everyday learning (Moon, 2004). One theory that has been identified as helpful in engaging coaches with experiential learning is reflection (Cropley *et al.,* 2011; Cushion *et al.*, 2010). Reflection has been identified consistently in coaching, teaching and nursing literature as supportive and essential to experiential learning (Cushion *et al.*, 2010; Maudsley & Strivens, 2000). Without the reflective process coaches may just accumulate experience without actually making it meaningful or it having an impact on their future practice (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Jarvis, 2004; Kidman, 1997). Cushion *et al.* (2010) suggested that although reflection is seen as an important way in which coaches learn from experience, it seems it is not being fully encompassed and implemented within coach education.

Another theory that supports experiential learning is Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, which has been criticised for its simplicity and formulaic structure (Cushion *et al.*, 2010). Newman (1999) described the cycle as 'too ordered, too regular and too predictable'. Moon (2000) suggested that experiential learning needs to be recognised as a slippery and disorderly process, rather than the tidy deceptive images portrayed. However, Kolb's cycle may be useful as a base idea, with added use of reflection (Boud & Walker, 2000). Others have attempted to alter this closed cycle with a spiral system (Cowan, 1998).

Non Formal Learning

Non formal learning has been defined by Coombs and Ahmed (1974) as "any organised, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide select types of learning to particular subgroups in the population" (p. 8). Non-formal learning is the area in which most overlap occurs with informal learning (Colley *et al.*, 2002). The key difference between non-formal and informal learning, defined by the European Commission (EC) (2001, cited in Colley *et al.*, 2002), is that non-formal learning tends to be structured in terms of learning objectives, whereas informal learning is generally unstructured and in most cases is unintentional. However, as suggested before, with informal learning comes experiential learning, which is the intention to learn from experience. Therefore, the literature again creates a similarity and overlap between non-formal and informal types of learning (Colley *et al.*, 2002). This fuels the debate that non-formal learning should be a term used in place of informal learning (Eraut, 2000).

Formal Learning

Formal learning, defined more clearly than the others, as learning that has taken place in a formal situation within an "institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured educational system" (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974, p.8). An example of a formal learning situation is a UKCC coaching qualification, as a large scale coach education programme developed by National Governing Bodies (NGB) (Nelson *et al.*, 2006). However, within such a formal learning environment, informal learning and even experiential learning is taking place and is encouraged outside of the formal setting. Colley *et al.* (2002) suggested that both formal and informal learning, within specific and general situations, are often best examined in ways that relate to each other. Similarly within coaching, Mallet and Dickens (2009) suggested that 'formal' coach education can contribute to the learning and development of coaches, *only* when integrated with coaching practice. Certain aspects of coach education such as gaining 'real life' experience, is essential to the contextual process of coaching (Cushion *et al.,* 2003). This indicates that the gap between theory and practice is an issue that needs to be addressed within coach education. Within the coach education literature, a number of pedagogical practices have been forwarded to close the gap between theory and practice.

Problem-based Learning (PBL) is one of the proposed strategies (Jones & Turner, 2006) enabling students to engage with problems in situations that are as near to "real life" as possible (Jarvis *et al.*, 1998). PBL is used to encourage decision making and problem solving as well as a tool to integrate theory into practice (Bethell & Morgan, 2011), skills that are essential to effective coaching. Another example of practices to enable the integration of theory and practice is mentoring. This practice has been highlighted as an effective strategy within health professions such as nursing (Bryne & Keefe, 2002). Within coaching literature, Colley *et al.* (2003) suggest that mentoring is the most evident example of a practice where formal and informal learning meet. In line with this is the suggestion that mentoring, as a method of facilitation, can improve coach education (Cushion *et al.*, 2003; Jones *et al.*, 2011b; Lyle, 2002; Saury & Durand, 1998).

Coach Education

The Coaching Process

Recent research suggests that coaching is a complex and ambiguous process, rather than rationalistic and sequential (Cushion, 2001, 2007; Cushion *et al.,* 2003; Jones, 2006; Jones & Armour 2000; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Saury & Durand, 1998). Acceptance of this view has important consequences for the way coaches might best be educated. Coach education has previously been structured along rationalistic lines and taught in a formalistic and decontextualized environment, based on frameworks such as Fairs (1987), Franks *et al.* (1986) and Cote *et al.* (1995). The accusations that these models are too general (Saury & Durand, 1998) and have oversimplified the coaching process (Cushion, 2007; Lyle, 2002) has led to a reformulation of coaching as a complex and social process. In this regard, Jones and Armour (2000) identified that coach education, structured along rationalistic lines, does not encourage the development of skills necessary to the modern coach. Jones *et al.* (2004) further suggested that coach education provides a basic curriculum for coaches, which represents only a small step in the actual development of a coach. If coaching is accepted as a social, dynamic and complex process, coach education has to develop in line with this (Borrie, 1997; Jones *et al.*, 2011a). As the coaching process is seen as contextual and social, it

seems fitting that coaches gain more from experiential informal learning, in real life situations, rather than within formal learning environments (Cervero, 1992). Therefore, coach education programmes need to cater for the way in which coaches learn best, which from the coach learning literature, as previously reviewed, concludes that coaches learn best informally. This does not mean that formal education is invaluable; however, does suggest that an integration of informal learning, in terms of coaching practice, needs to be incorporated within coach education programmes (Mallet & Dickens, 2009).

UKCC and professionalization

Within recent years a reform to standardise coach education across all sports in the UK led to the UKCC. The main aims of the UKCC were to ensure transferability and quality assurance (Lyle, 2007) along with professionalising the role of the coach and raising the profile of sports coaching. The UKCC is a tiered system on one to four (in some cases five) levels providing development from assistant to high performance coaches. These are offered through NGB's, to contextualise and apply the standard curriculum to each sport. The UKCC curriculum focuses on the 'how to' pedagogical techniques rather than the previous emphasis on sport-specific technical content (Lyle, 2007).

 A few of the suggested criteria by which sports coaching could be judged as a profession are: career structure and pathways, opportunity for professional development and professional education (Taylor & Garrett, 2008). Do a few days of training prepare coaches to be professionals? When compared to health care professions such as nursing, a three year degree has to be completed along with placement work and mentoring. Another profession is teaching, in which the training is a full time yearlong course, on top of a degree. Coaches are provided with, at level one, two training days, at level two, four training days. Is this enough professional education to class coaching as a profession? When comparable to other professions, it seems not.

Drawing upon the criteria of professional education, Gilbert and Trudel (2006) suggest that professionalism may be possible if tertiary education takes control of coach education. In recent years an increase in the amount of sports coaching related university courses has increased significantly (Taylor & Garret, 2008). Jones *et al.* (2011) offer an example, within the UK, of a university course that has attempted to integrate coaching theory and education into practice. In their study, they developed a pedagogical framework for a group of MSc students. A theoretical concept would be introduced; the students would then implement that concept into their coaching practice. The following week a discussion would take place, where their individual experiences would be shared. The overall results of this study showed a generally positive response from students, and staff witnessed an improvement in student engagement. This study therefore illustrates one means through which the gap between theory and practice can be bridged by incorporating a combination of formal and experiential learning.

Within some countries coach education is offered alongside university or college courses (Gilbert & Trudel, 2006). Although, many sports related courses in the UK do not qualify students to coach, a UKCC level has to be completed in order to gain qualified coaching status. Recently, some UK universities have offered subsidised UKCC qualifications, and are delivered within selected practical coaching modules, with the inclusion of an external assessment. Although a positive step forward, this integration is only offered in a limited number of sports and is not included in the cost of university fees, which have recently increased substantially in price.

Sports' coaching has previously been compared to other professions such as teaching, nursing and law (Taylor & Garret, 2008; Duffy *et al.*, 2011). However, given that the large majority of sports coaches deliver on a voluntary basis, the traditional terms of a 'profession' cannot be directly comparable to sports coaching (Duffy *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, due to the lack of employment opportunities available (Taylor & Garret, 2008) and cost issues, tertiary education taking control of coach education could act as a deterrent. However, an example of where coach education and tertiary education complement each other seems to be in the National Coaching Certification Programme (NCCP), the coach education programme of Canada. The faculty at the physical education department of Laval

University have an influence on the design of the curriculum delivered in the NCCP. This shows a clear link between tertiary and coach education (Demers *et al.,* 2006), and the inclusion of academic research to influence coach education. Mallet and Dickens (2009) suggest that realistic 'tertiary-based' sports coaching programmes that are integrated with coaches' work can positively contribute to coach development.

Evaluation of Coach Education

As one of the most pressing issues within sport science research, the evaluation of coach education courses has become increasingly pertinent (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999). Following the representation of coaching as a complex and ambiguous, context based profession; research has tried to focus on the development of coach education, and focusing on coaches themselves. However, to date there have been few studies that have attempted to evaluate coach education, therefore, there is little evidence to link certification of coach education and coach competency (Cushion *et al.*, 2010).

Gilbert and Trudel's (1999) study was one of the first to apply an evaluation strategy to a large scale coach education programme. They evaluated the strategy by following one coach through the level 2 in the joint NCCP and Canadian Amateur Hockey Association's (CAHA) coaching certification course. The evaluation was based on three main questions: (1) Was the course delivered as designed? (2) Did the coach acquire any new knowledge? (3) Was any change found in the use of course concepts in the field? The key findings of this study showed that the course was not delivered as designed, there was no gain in knowledge, but small changes were found in the coaches' use of course concepts in the field. Most importantly, the study concluded that the evaluation strategy had been successfully tested, providing an in depth evaluation of course content and impact. A variety of different data collection methods were used; participant observation, semi-structured interviews, systematic observation and simulated recall interviews. The semi structured interviews that took place both pre and post-course were a key strength within the study as they showed a comparison and affect the course had on coaching practice. However, only one participant was used, although it is understood this was due to the aim of examining the

evaluation strategy rather than the NCCP. Future research could utilise Gilbert and Trudel's (1999) evaluation strategy to evaluate coach education courses with the inclusion of more participants.

Cassidy *et al.* (2006) evaluated the perceptions of eight rugby union coaches partaking in a theory based coach education initiative known as CoDe, as well as their own reflections, as coach educators, of the programme. The conclusions of the study were based around three themes; thinking of athletes as learners, focusing on the process of coaching and the value of talking to other coaches. Following the interview process it was evident that coaches deemed sharing coaching experiences with peers as a valuable tool. The coaches also noticed value in the theoretical introduction of research and coaching literature. This study portrays the value of introducing an in depth theoretical aspect as beneficial to coach education. It could also act as a step toward professionalization of sports coaching. However, a practical and contextual element, due to the nature of the coaching process (Jones 2000, 2006), must be present to ensure the gap between theory and practice is bridged.

Chesterfield *et al.* (2010) evaluated the perceptions of six coaches, who had successfully completed the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) 'A' licence coach education programme, in the UK in the past five years. Data was collected via extensive semi-structured interviews, lasting up to ninety minutes. Although this method allowed greater freedom (Portrac *et al.,* 2002) and in-depth information, not following these participants through the course utilising participant observation was a great loss. The data was dependent on the trustworthiness of the participant's interviews, which up to five years post-course, information recalled regarding for example subjects of content and delivery, may have been lost or adapted from reality over the extensive period of time. The study's findings identified that coaches' experiences were generally negative, and although they took on some concepts from the course, eventually they retracted back to their original coaching methods. The concluding thoughts of Chesterfield *et al.* (2010) promote that coach educators need to accept coaches existing beliefs and values in order to persuade them to 'buy into' the content and values of the course, which will ultimately enhance coach learning. This is a useful and powerful message for coach educators, not only at elite level but also at entry level coach education.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Epistemological Position

Sparkes (1992) suggested that epistemological assumptions are based on the nature of knowledge. The epistemological assumptions that inform this research are related to the subjective nature of knowledge and the possibility that multiple knowledges' can coexist and be of value (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Further, knowledge is also based on experience, and so is often personal in nature (Sparkes, 1992). Therefore, an interpretive position is taken within this study, based on the belief that knowledge and truth are created and constructed by the mind (Schwadnt, 1994). These decisions are made in light of the view that positivistic assumptions are not appropriate for the study of the social world (Sparkes, 1992). Of course, there are methodological implications dependent on the epistemological position taken; certain techniques emerge from different theoretical positions. Qualitative methods tend to fit best with the subjective and interpretive epistemological position adopted within this study (Sparkes, 1992). Ethnography is one of the traditional qualitative research methods available, that can be located within the interpretive paradigm and is the methodology chosen within this study (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994).

Ethnography

Ethnography is one of many qualitative approaches found within social research today (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). Due to the various disciplines that have adopted ethnography as a qualitative research method, its meaning has been reinterpreted and recontextualized over time. This has led to a number of varied and contested understandings of the ethnographic method (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, 2007). Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) further suggested that one core definition might be acceptable as long as we recognise that it cannot capture all possible meanings in all contexts. In this study then, Creswell's (1998), interpretation of ethnography as a study of cultural or social group or system, where the researcher studies the behaviour, language and interactions of the group seems to be applicable.

Ethnography can be used to study all kinds of people, within many different fields and topics (Atkinson *et al.,* 2003; Wolcott, 2005). A key feature of ethnographic research is its 'multi instrumental approach', the embrace of many qualitative techniques (Walford, 2009; Wolcott, 2005). As such, ethnographers have the luxury of drawing from a range of sources of data (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). Participant observations, conversational and semi-structured interviews, are a few of the available techniques that can be used (Creswell, 1998). Although field work and participant observations are an essential part of ethnography, question asked through both conversational and more structured interviews are imperative (Agar, 1996).

The effectiveness of ethnography as a qualitative research method is dependent on the purpose of a particular study (Wolcott, 2005). In order to gain an insight into the UKCC netball course, it was essential to observe the participants. However, to gain the access to the participants' thoughts and opinions whilst on the course, informal conversational interviews were used. Finally, to meet the aims of the study, the data collected on the course was used to inform the semi structured interview questions about the participants' post-course experiences. Therefore, through examination of the purpose of the study and the epistemological assumptions which informed it, ethnographic methods seemed a good fit.

Participants

The participants for this study were 19 females sitting the entirety of a UKCC level one netball coaching course. The age range was between 16 and 42. These participants were a mixture of various working backgrounds from teachers; primary, secondary and trainees, to students; at school, post 16 and at university level.

<u>Procedure</u>

Participant observation, informal conversation and formal interviews were used in this study to gain 'rich exploration' (Berg & Latin, 2004, p.220) into the participants' views and opinions. Each will be discussed below.

Participant observation

Participant observation is a type of 'humanistic methodology' described by Jorgensen (1989) as an art form that is no less scientific than other methodologies. The primary method used to collect data during the observations and informal interviews was by writing field notes (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). Field notes are crucial to ethnographic research and are a common feature in every respectable ethnographic study (Walford, 2009). An important aspect of writing field notes is to ensure that one expands and reflects on them post observation, to gain a fuller, more structured set of data (Walford, 2009). Similarly, Alasuutari (1995) suggests that there are two phases of observation, firstly, the observations themselves and secondly, un-riddling or making sense of the observations. Therefore, after each day in the field it was important to read, reflect and expand, where need be, on the notes and make sense of the meaning behind the observations.

Generally within this ethnographic study I, as the researcher, was the true instrument of data collection (Berg & Latin, 2004; Brown, 1990). The role of the researcher within ethnographic studies is not only an 'insider' immersed in the field but inevitably as an 'outsider' (Mazzei & O'Brein, 2009). Berg and Latin (2004) suggested the main benefit of observation, as a method of data collection, is the ability to capture the context. Therefore, a more in depth knowledge of the participants can be gained. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) have suggested a possible weakness of participant observation; the researcher does not have as much control over the research situation. Therefore, mistakes can be made which can affect the trustworthiness of the data. However, this lack of control can allow the data to *lead* the research study and provide multiple interpretations within the same group (Sparkes, 1992). Sparkes (1992) further suggested that 'in a world of multiple realities, multiple truths can exist' (p.36) and as coaching is a social process within a 'real world' context, this should be recognised within the study.

Gender can be used as a tool to gain trust within groups when conducting ethnographic research (Mazzei & O'Brein, 2009). As all participants in the study were female and that netball is a predominantly female sport, there seemed to be common ground and acceptance. As a consequence they were able to share more honestly than perhaps with a male.

Due to the duration of the course, a short period of time was spent in the field observing the participants. The UKCC level one netball course took place in the sports hall of a leisure centre in South Wales, and consisted of one weekend (2 days), 9am – 6pm each day. Thus, whilst it was only a 2 day period, the days were long and intense. It was important that the participants on the course were aware of the purpose and nature of the project and happy to be observed. There was also the ethical issue of having under 18's on the course. Therefore, all over 18 participants were asked to provide voluntary informed consent before the research started, and the under 18's, were asked for their assent and parental consent.

Informal conversational interviews

Informal conversational interviews are the most common type of interview used within ethnographic research (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). Within this study both informal conversational interviews and formal semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted (Patton, 2002). No interview guide was used for the informal interviews that were conducted throughout the participant observation; the questions were formulated from the observations and were included in the field notes. Decisions were made throughout the participant observation process, in regards to who I should have informal conversations with. These informal interviews usually took place during the mid-morning, lunch and afternoon breaks. The field work involved in ethnographic studies is an interactive and negotiative process based on trust (Mazzei & O'Brein, 2009). The use of informal interviews allowed me to gain trust of the participants and hopefully increased the honesty and therefore, trustworthiness of the data collected.

Semi structured follow up interviews

In the follow up section of this study (4-6 weeks post-course), telephone interviews were conducted to collect further information from the 5 candidates selected. There were three main groups evident within the course, formed based on similar backgrounds, coaching experience, occupation and age. Therefore the 5 candidates chosen, using purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990), were a representation of each group. The original plan was to have two participants per group to provide more than one opinion; however, only one younger coach was available for the interview stage. The first group consisted of two ladies, both primary teachers, ages 30 plus. The second, two university student's, one, an undergraduate on a sport and exercise science course, and the other a graduate attempting to gain entry to a PGCE course to train as a secondary PE teacher. The final participant was an under 18 coach. These 5 participants were also selected on the basis they were actively engaged in coaching in the 4-6 weeks following the course. The trustworthiness of the data collected in the follow up semi-structured interviews, was heavily reliant on the honesty of the participants. McFee (2009) suggested that reliability within qualitative research is problematic when dealing with 'real world' situations, because they are typically unrepeatable. In response, the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that criteria such as reliability and validity are incompatible with the methods of qualitative research. If we accept reality as multiple, then repeatability is not essential (Sandelowski, 1993).

Like many qualitative researchers, within this study, the formal semi-structured interviews were tape-recorded, using a dictaphone, this ensured that the data collected was accurate (Berg & Latin, 2004; Walford, 2009). An interview guide was devised, using open questions, along with probes to encourage the participants to share their experiences. The interview guide was split into five sections, the first, exploring the coaching background of the candidates. The second, discussing the intentions and expectations of the course and if and how they were met. The third, considered the candidates' perceptions of the structure and content of the course. The fourth section was based on their perceptions of the self and peer reflection included on the course. The final section explored, through examples, how what was learnt on the course was implemented into

practice (if at all). A possible drawback of using a telephone interview was the absence of a face to face encounter (Wolcott, 2005). However, due to the geographical distance it was a more convenient and realistic method.

Content analysis and Representation

Content analysis is a research method that helps to provide new knowledge, new insights and is a representation of facts (Krippendorff, 1990). The purpose of content analysis is to classify large amounts of text into themes that represent similar meanings. The five main stages of content analysis are preparation, familiarity, interpreting, verifying and representing (Denscombe, 2007). Literature surrounding content analysis portrays a chronological, clear cut process, and is often seen as completed after data collection. However, data analysis is on-going throughout the research process due to the amount and social nature of the data collected, (Berg & Latin, 2004) in which the researcher is intimately involved (Pope & Mays, 1996).

It is understood that content analysis is essential, however, it is important to appreciate that it is a messy, on-going process. Within this study, inductive content analysis was used to generate new meaning and understanding; as well as describing the views of the candidates that attended UKCC netball level one course (Hsiesh & Shannon, 2005). The analysis process took place at all stages of the research process, from participant observation, to semi-structured interviews. Within the participant observation data collection stage, it was clear that there were three main groups of people, young coaches, student coaches and older coaches. This was an observation that was focused on throughout the coding process, when identifying the similarities between the transcripts of those in the same groups. The coding process took place once the transcripts were complete and I became familiar with the data, by reading and re-reading (Denscombe, 2007). Initially comment boxes were used within each transcript to identify any similar themes. From this, 10 themes were constructed and entered into a grid where all 5 interviewee's answers were placed into the relevant sections. From the initial coding, it was evident that some themes linked into others and broader themes were then constructed. Therefore, a second grid was produced to represent the three separate groups, rather than five individuals, with their

answers entered into the relevant themed sections. The data identified in open coding was linked with the source and context, to ensure meaning was attached, it was also important to retain quotations from the source (Berg & Latin, 2004; Denscombe, 2007).

From the data analysis, different options were available as to how I would represent the three main groups within the results section of this study. Qualitative researchers report their findings in different ways and use different rhetorical strategies (Sparkes, 2002). Reporting qualitative data is a very fertile field and there should not be one transparent or agreed upon approach on how to report qualitative research (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Various methods were experimented with, including three separate narratives, but it was decided a merged narrative of creative non-fiction and confessional tales, which help to provide insight and context, would be used. It was decided that this narrative would best represent the participants' emotions and voices without exposing their confidentiality (Sparkes, 2002). The method used, also helped in composing meaning from the research data to then present it in such a way that is meaningful for others (Ely *et al.,* 1997). Language was used directly from the participants' interview transcripts, increasing conformability and in turn, trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As an ethnographic research study, a combination of interviews and participant observations were used to construct the narrative, which allowed a more in-depth, 'thick' description, and provided emotion (Denscombe, 2007; Sparkes, 2002). In order to protect the participants in the study, several actors have been combined into three characters and each provided with a pseudonym. Below a small background has been provided for each.

Yvonne is 16 years old, currently at school in year 11; she has been coaching the junior squad within her club for about a year. She got into coaching at such a young age due to encouragement from her mother, who is also her coach. The main reason she wanted to attend the UKCC netball level one course was to help develop players, as she was once developed herself. Yvonne also thought it would be more professional if she had a qualification.

Uma is a 20 year old university sports student; currently coaching children aged 7-15 and has been for the past 9 months. She decided to attend the UKCC netball level one course because she believed that it was days to have qualifications and to be able to say that she is now a level one coach and not just a 'nobody'. She also thought it would enhance her CV as she is looking to apply for a PGCE next year.

Olivia is a 36 year old primary school teacher; she has been coaching netball for about 2 years and coaches both the adults and junior squads within her club. She wanted to attend the UKCC netball level one course to give her something to say she has actually got the qualification. So that when she is coaching in the future, she feels confident in having something to back herself up with, that she's not just someone who plays netball but also has a coaching award.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

An Insight into the UKCC Level One Netball Course

First day: "What was the point in asking us?"

Me- As the participants slowly filed in through the sports hall, I felt nervous at the prospect of being an outsider, a mere observer. Where would I stand or sit? Who would I talk to and when? Would people want to talk to me or would they shut me out, worried how I might interpret their words? Through these doubts I had to make a good impression as I explained the study, and provided information sheets and consent. Everyone seemed happy to participate, which calmed my nerves, and some commented that it reminded them of *their* undergraduate projects. I quickly felt a connection to these women, and the more I chatted to them and showed curiosity in their interests, the more they relaxed and opened up.

Yvonne - As I walked into the huge sports hall I was really nervous, I looked around and saw Kim, someone I knew! "Phew", I began to relax. The tutors were really friendly and welcoming, and a lady was handing out forms we had to fill in for her research project or something like that.

Uma- The first thought that popped into my head as I strolled into the sports hall on that first morning was; 'God, that humming sound is going to do my head in!' The drone of the air conditioning mixed with the bright blue walls gave me a headache. I wasn't nervous at all; I knew one of the tutors taking the course, and there were a few other girls from the same club as me too. We had to fill out consent forms for a woman who was observing the course, but I didn't mind, I remember what a pain in the ass my dissertation was!

Olivia – As I walked through the double doors of the sports hall with Kerry, all I could think was that after working all week the last place I wanted to be on a Saturday morning was stuck in a sports hall! I was quite apprehensive, I didn't know what to expect from the course. I thought it might be similar in some ways to the UKCC cricket level one course I did a couple of years ago, but then, this is a different sport. I was excited about getting some fresh and innovative ideas and drills to impress the girls at training on Monday.

Yvonne- The first day was really fun, a lot of information to take in, but I thought it was okay to understand. There was a lot more stuff on the 'how to' skills, like the bugs and things, but that was good for me. I've played netball for, wow, since as far back as I can remember, since I was really little! My mum was my coach and I've had other coaches as well, I know all the 'what to' stuff and drills from playing myself, I didn't really need to know that. I needed to improve on the 'how to' bugs, I've never had any experience with them before, like, the how to provide demonstrations or health and safety, so they were really useful.

Olivia – At the start of the first day, as a task to see what we wanted to learn, the tutors split us into two groups, those of us that felt confident with 'what to' and those that felt confident with the 'how to'. I thought they were then going to split the course and deliver it in those two different directions, but they didn't, which was a massive lost opportunity. What was the point in asking us what we were more confident about if they were just going to ignore our answers?! Anyway, we began with an overview of how the day was going to pan out, and I was right, the first day we covered very similar content to that of the UKCC cricket level one. I was disappointed, that wasn't what I wanted or needed from the course, I wanted new drills, but I guess I should have expected that. In terms of the actual content, there was a decent mixture of practical, theoretical and discussion based activities. That was fantastic because it definitely catered for all learners in the group and prevented my interest from waning too much, which can often happen, especially after a long week at work! However, the course was more to do with the delivery of coaching rather than technical netball content. Probably because of my teaching background, I'm fairly confident in my delivery. So, I came away from the first day thinking "I know this", but what I need to do now is use the pack they provided us with, and research drills that I can take back and deliver in my club.

Uma – There was hardly any information on potential drills, which I, and a few of the others, were gutted about. The course was very similar to my uni course, I take netball as a practical module which includes all the same things, like building rapport, introducing a session etc. which are basically the same as the bugs. That really pissed me off. It was infuriating, obviously, because I'd paid £200 to get this qualification, but turns out I've already done most of this stuff already! I pay enough for uni as it is! So, yeah, the first day was pretty, like, easy and extremely

repetitive. That sounds pretty harsh, it was good to be refreshed, but then again a refresher, to me, is not worth £200! The practical content on that first day was really fun; it definitely outweighed the amount of theory, which was good because you don't write a lot in coaching.

Me- I noticed a real jump of enthusiasm when going from the theory sections, in which the group was sat down, mostly listening but involved in interactive tasks, to the practical sections. It was clear that everyone wanted to get involved in the practical coaching side of the course. Within the practical coaching, one of the candidates instantly stood out to me, one of the younger girls, Yvonne, who was full of energy. She was the first to volunteer to coach her group, and she did so with confidence, despite her age. I found it interesting that she was enthusiastic in both the coaching session and the peer evaluation of the session; she seemed keen to listen and learn from the feedback. Peer coaching was included within the practical content on the first day. In which the coaches would implement the 'how to' skills learnt throughout the day, with the inclusion of peer evaluation and reflections of the sessions delivered. During the peer coaching I observed that when the tutors were not focused on their group, the coaches would help each other out; give each other a nudge in the right direction. For example, one of the candidates leading a session was coaching the incorrect 2 handed catch technique. So Yvonne, one of the younger candidates, also a performer, corrected her and the session then continued.

Yvonne - During the first day we had to coach each other using the 'how to' bugs. That was quite realistic because I didn't know most of them, so I had to be sensible and professional because otherwise they might think "what are you doing?" and might think I'm stupid. Like, if they were my friends, I wouldn't have taken it as seriously. When I was coaching, everyone would act as best they could and I'd do the same in their sessions, so that was really helpful. At the end of the mini coaching things, we had to say what the person had done well and what they could do better. That was really good because, sometimes, other people can pick up on different things that I might not have noticed. So, I might have thought I did something really well but actually I didn't, so having someone else to give you pointers was dead useful.

Uma – I liked the practical coaching because I love to be active and involve, but at the same time it was really unrealistic. They all knew what to expect, they knew what was coming next. We'd practiced it enough! So everyone just did what you said with no complaints. It got boring and repetitive after a while. There weren't the typical naughty, chatty children that you always get in groups and it was really different from when I coach the kids every week. I did like that the tutors allowed you to gain feedback from other coaches after you had coached though. That was really useful to help me improve because I could find out where I was going wrong.

Olivia – Oh god, on the first day when we were coaching each other! Ha! That wasn't very realistic at all! But in all fairness, I do suppose it has value, in terms of coaching adults, and giving us experience coaching those who are effectively our friends and peers, rather than an idyllic group of people. But if I'm honest (sighs), I felt uncomfortable. Being thrown into a situation where you're *pretending*, it was all a bit showy and weird. I've been on courses with school, in the past, and we had to do role play etc. but I never found them useful because most of the time no one takes it seriously. The actual practical ideas and drills used were fantastic but I would have benefitted more if the tutors were with me, in my club coaching sessions, because it is a *real* situation.

Second day: "Everything we'd learnt was just geared toward the assessment"

Me – The second day was spent, mostly, as a practice assessment in which the coaches got to rehearse the session they were going to deliver for their assessment. They had to fill out a self-assessment sheet on the back of their written plan, reflecting on the session they had just delivered and then have a conversation with the tutor about those reflections. There seemed to be a lot of waiting around, I got the impression that everyone was bored, their body language was negative and they seemed demotivated. Many comments were made that affirmed my feelings, including; "I'm ready to go home now" and "this is soo boring" etc.

Yvonne – On the second day I felt good walking into the hall; I knew all the others from spending the day before with them. We spent most of the day practicing our coaching sessions for the assessment. They [tutors] went through what we had to do to pass, step by step, and told us the key things we needed to remember. I was really worried and scared about the assessment day, I kept thinking "I have to pass", mum would've been really disappointed if I didn't. So going through, like they did, chilled me out a bit. We had to fill out a self-reflection bit on the back of the assessment planning sheet so we practiced that as well. The self-reflection got me thinking to myself "what did I do wrong and what can I improve on?" Usually if my coaching session has gone well, I don't do it, but because I was told to, it made me think more. I enjoyed practicing our sessions because it made me feel happier about the assessment day, but I found all the planning and reflection sheets really difficult because I usually just do it in my head.

Me- It was evident that Yvonne was very anxious about the assessment day, she kept asking the tutors lots of questions about her session plans and what the assessor would ask her on the day. She really seemed to be struggling with the theory side, saying "I've never done this before", meaning she had never written session plans or self-reflected in a written form before. Her frustration was evident in her facial expressions but a sense of achievement was also evident when she had completed them correctly, with help from the tutors.

Uma – The second day was literally just setting us up for the assessment day. That was it! It felt that everything we'd learnt was just geared toward the assessment day and not really how I would coach within a *real life* situation. It was *soo* boring and tedious with loads of waiting around to take part in repetitive sessions. We had to fill out a self-reflection sheet after we had coached our practice session, but apart from that I didn't engage with self-reflection whilst on the course, I just saw it as something I had to fill in on the assessment day. Maybe if there was more step by step guidance to help me self-reflect then I would have done it more. But I didn't understand it so I didn't feel confident enough to do it on my own; I needed other people to help guide me. I think I needed someone to say "I thought you could have done that demonstration better" for example, and then I could have self-reflected from that.

Olivia – So much time, on the second day, was dedicated to rehearsing the delivery of skills and sessions in preparation for the assessment, it felt like we were being taught to a test. Inside the pack we were provided with, there were about 7 or 8 questions on the back of the planning pages, where we were asked to consider how well we put across coaching points, how well we explained things, and it covered the health and safety etc. We completed these after we had delivered our practice session for the assessment, I found these really useful and there were some really good points in there. However, I don't think that we were pushed enough by the tutors to utilise them and the reflection just felt like an add-on. Personally, I found the reflection included on the course highly beneficial, I'm quite good at self-reflection so felt more comfortable with it and found it more beneficial. However, I do think those others, who were maybe not as familiar with it, really struggled, perhaps due to the lack of guidance and reasoning as to why we needed to reflect.

Since the course: "I'm not a push over anymore!"

Yvonne- The length of the course was just right; the two days were really helpful and set us up for our assessment day. Now my coaching sessions are more, like, structured. I think the girls [participants] are finding training more useful now, definitely! Before, I used to just get them straight into the drills, but now I always say the purpose of the session, which is *much* better. My questioning has got loads better as well; I'm always asking loads of questions. I've used self-reflection after my sessions to make sure I know what to improve on for next time. But I've only written it down a couple of times, probably about twice, after that I have just done it in my head. I guess when you write it down you can look back on it and think "oh yeah I forgot I said that" because if it's in your head you can't look back at it. So I do *try* and write it down but sometimes it's easier to just do it in my head. I've done a bit of peer reflection with my mum, at the end of sessions, she always points out things I could improve on. Normally it's just little things that I forget to do, but it's good to have someone to point it out because sometimes I forget.

Uma – Um, the length of the course was *really* intense, overwhelming and tiring. At the end of the weekend I thought; "if I see another netball or netball post I'm going to throw something" because it was just *soo* much information in such a short space of time. I think, if it was spread out over, like, two weekends but shorter days, or something, then it would have been more manageable. Since the course, my confidence in my coaching has definitely increased, maybe because I'm now a qualified level one, it does help knowing that you can do it and have actually passed the course. My feedback is loads more specific than before and I always start with the positives, whereas before I would just jump in with the negatives. I've applied some of the 'how to' skills that I didn't before, like concluding a session and providing effective demonstrations; I've used the bugs a lot.

Olivia – I work all week, so it was lengthy and hard work, and it felt slightly rushed through. Perhaps, if it had been broken down into four half days, or something, I would have benefitted more, because by the Sunday we were all absolutely shattered. During the two training days, I'd say the only, kind of, beneficial stuff I got, were the drills and skills that were delivered within the peer coaching practice sessions and the pack we were given. Since the course, the main change I've noticed is that I'm a lot more assertive and have more confidence. I don't let the others, who were more knowledgeable, take over control of my sessions; I'm not a push over anymore! Training sessions are now way more structured and progressive, in terms of tying skills into small sided and full games; I would say the planning sheets really helped me to improve this. I've done my research on the internet to find drills and I've used the coaching points in the resource pack to improve my technical netball knowledge, which I suppose is more to do with myself, rather than the course, to be honest.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The following discussion of results examines how the influence of personal biography on learning was addressed within the UKCC level one netball coaching course. It also explores at the authenticity of the candidates' experiences in relation to the assessment driven nature, peer coaching, reflection and duration of the course.

Personal Biography

Coach education courses should never assume that coaches are simply empty vessels waiting to be filled with coaching knowledge (Abraham & Collins, 2002; Cushion *et al.,* 2003). Jones *et al.* (2004) suggested that coaches' previous careers and life experiences shape their current views and beliefs, which was also evident with the participants in this study. Social and cultural contexts, personal experiences and philosophies are interconnected to the coaching process and practice (Jones *et al.,* 2004), and can influence learning. The three main backgrounds of the participants on the coaching course, as represented narratively in the previous chapter, included: (1) younger coaches from a predominantly performance background; (2), university students with a sports academic background; and (3) those from a teaching background. The findings indicate that the UKCC level one netball coaching course evaluated, did not take these varying biographies into account.

The lack of consideration of the candidates' personal history and learning needs was manifest in a number of ways. In particular, the generic nature of the delivered curriculum was found to be problematic, as illustrated through one of the participants with a teaching background:

Olivia: *"And they split us initially into 'how to' and 'what to' and I felt as if they would then take it in two different directions and say right all the people that know all the netball skills come and learn 'how to' and then everybody who knows how to rather than what to, come here. But they didn't, and I feel that was a real lost opportunity."*

Olivia was clearly confident in the delivery of 'how to' skills, and wanted to accumulate technical knowledge of skills, and new drills to implement into her club. Olivia's individual learning needs were not catered for, as although the course initially identified who was more confident with 'how to' or 'what to', this information was discarded. This view was shared with the participants from a sport's university background:

Uma: "I do netball for one of my practical's and they are very much similar to things like building rapport, introducing a session, um and its very very similar bugs for what we did in there. Which I thought was quite frustrating because obviously, you know, I paid £200 to have this qualification and I have done most of this already. And it was frustrating, and as I said it was quite repetitive"

The majority of participants on the course, that were interviewed, expressed that they expected and wanted to gain technical 'what to' knowledge from the course. However, UKCC levels one to three have been accused of focusing on craft pedagogy (Nelson & Cushion, 2006), the 'how to', a statement supported by the findings of this study. Lemyre and Trudel (2004) suggested that those with less performing experience were keen to learn drills and skills, a statement also in agreement with the findings of this study. The younger coaches that possessed a performing background seemed to find the course a more positive experience. Yvonne, one of the younger coaches, felt she needed to improve her 'how to' skill set so therefore, the course was more aligned with her learning needs:

Yvonne: "I think I needed to develop the how to, because like in the demonstration part and the safety part, I've never had experience in that area. But um, I'm fine with the 'what to', because I've been playing netball from a really young age"

This seems to suggest, that the main issue with the UKCC level one course was that it was conducted on the assumption that everyone was like Yvonne, and had prior knowledge of the skills and technical elements of the game, but lacked the pedagogical 'how to' coaching skills. The knowledge, beliefs and experiences that the candidates possessed, could have enhanced the learning for everyone on the course. However, their personal biographies were ignored, and instead, a generic

curriculum was delivered, leaving the majority of the candidates frustrated. The findings suggest, along with the work of Jones *et al.* (2004), that coach education should not be just focused on the 'what to' and 'how to' but 'who is coaching'. Not just the generic delivered curriculum, but instead, what that means for, and to, the individual learner. It is important for coach educators to understand that the candidates' personal biographies, including pre-existing knowledge, beliefs and opinions, can influence learning (Chesterfield *et al.,* 2010; Cushion *et al.,* 2003; Kelly, 2006).

<u>Authenticity</u>

The need for contextualisation of learning within coach education is essential (Chesterfield *et al.,* 2010). Vandenbosch (2007) suggested that the contextualisation of learning occurs when the content of the curriculum, methods and materials used, are related directly to the experience of the learner. Chesterfield *et al.* (2010) further suggested that coaches can engage with the coach education process in superficial ways, due to the lack of contextualised relevance and the failure to understand how the coaches' personal biographies affect learning. Contextualisation can lay a foundation and base in which skills and competencies can be developed through non-formal and informal education (Vandenbosch, 2007). However, within this study, the candidates experienced an inauthentic contextualisation of learning.

Over-focus on Assessment

The data suggests that the course was assessment driven, rather than learning focused; something the younger coaches found positive:

Yvonne: "I thought the two days were very helpful because they prepared you for everything for your assessment, and they went through everything step by step to tell you what the key things were for you to do to pass"

However, the sentiment was not shared by the candidates with university and teaching backgrounds:

Olivia: *"so much time was spent rehearsing the actual delivering of skills in preparation for the assessment, and it was like teaching to a test."*

Uma: *"Um, and everything was aimed toward the assessment day … it was just geared toward the assessment day, not really how I would do it in real life situations."*

The authenticity of learning becomes compromised and questioned when the motives of the course are not based on learning, but instead, success seemed largely defined as the ratio of candidates who passed the assessment.

Peer coaching

Another element of the course which candidates raised concerns about authenticity was related to peer-to-peer coaching. The course recognised the importance of practical coaching and the candidates were given the opportunity coach each other in order to develop their coaching practice (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). The general consensus of the candidates interviewed, suggested that the peer coaching they experienced on the course lacked authenticity due to the decontextualized, almost role play, nature of the experience:

Uma: *"[the peer coaching was] not very realistic, because they all knew what to expect, and kind of just did it for you. You didn't have sort of, the naughty children that you always have in classes or if it was a younger age group they find it hard to understand certain things and you have to sort of adapt to that. Whereas we were just coaching people who knew what they were expecting, they knew what was coming, they knew what they had to do, that part of it wasn't very realistic."*

The older candidates expressed a view that suggested there was value in the peer coaching, for coaching adults, but, less so in terms of coaching children:

Olivia: "Yeah, I thought it was authentic in terms of coaching adults because they were a lively group of girls who all had a sporting background and it was like real life for them to chat and banter and all those sorts of things. So I thought it was quite good in terms of giving us experience in dealing with that and coaching people who are effectively your friends or peers, rather than it being a group of idyllic people."

UKCC is a formal learning environment that incorporates experiential learning (peer coaching) but if that experience is inauthentic, the process of learning has been decontextualized. Fleurance and Cotteaux (1999) suggested that although formal coach education programs helped coaches in their development, it seemed that the richer learning experiences occurred during their actual coaching. Further, Mallett *et al.* (2009) suggested that formal educational environments cannot incorporate all of the experiential learning required to embed learning within participants. Therefore, suggesting that although learning through peer coaching may occur, it is not enough to sustain learning. If then, professionals acquire more useful knowledge in practice than in formal learning environments (Cervero, 1992), when the opportunity is not given for candidates to coach in an authentic environment, learning is being restricted.

Reflection

Previous research has suggested that coaches learn by reflecting on their own and others practical coaching experience (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001), when reflection is situated within the process of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Therefore, both reflection and experience have been identified as essential elements of coach education (Cushion, *et al.,* 2003). Utilisation of reflection by the candidates on the course in this instance seemed dependant on previous background. Those older candidates with a teaching background, who were familiar with reflection, seemed to find it useful and engaged with it post-course:

Olivia: "I am quite good at critical reflection because I tend to think always about if I'm going to be doing this again how I can make it better … I found the self-reflection more beneficial"

The younger coaches, however, with less or no experience of reflection, preferred to engage with peer-reflection, if at all:

Yvonne: "Because I think maybe, when you do it [reflection] yourself you don't pick up everything and when somebody else is doing it they pick up on different stuff that you sometimes you don't notice"

Nelson and Cushion (2006) suggested that by encouraging coaches to critically reflect upon experience, the course tutors could help candidates become more aware of the dynamics specific to their coaching context, level of coaching knowledge, and their personal coaching philosophy, and then identify how these directly relate to their coaching practice. Some candidates indicated that if more guidance about reflection was given, they may have engaged with it more deeply:

Olivia: "There are some really good points in there [resource pack] but I don't think that we were pushed enough … Because they are there and they are useful but I felt that they were a bit of an add-on."

The reason for using reflective practice, on the course, was never explained to the participants, therefore, they could have been contemplating an event without applying purpose or change as a result (Cropley, 2009). Guskey (2002) suggested that professional development providers need to supply evidence of how an initiative can improve practice, in order to evoke change. Therefore, the candidates may have engaged with reflection more, if the coach educators provided evidence and reasoning behind it. Reflective practice is a learned skill that can be improved and developed over time to improve knowledge, practice and understanding of the coaching process (Cropley, 2012). Therefore, those who had no previous experience with reflection were not provided with adequate guidance, and could not develop their reflective skills and reap the benefits of reflection. The findings of this study therefore, agree with Cushion *et al.* (2010) who suggested that although reflection is an important way in which coaches learn from experience, coach education programmes are not fully implementing it.

The duration of the level one course was two days; the findings of this study support Cushion _et al.'s_ (2010) contention that coach education courses are guilty of cramming too much information into a short period of time. The candidates were drained by long days and an overload of information:

Olivia: _"[The course] felt perhaps a bit rushed or perhaps it could have been broken down in the fact that we were absolutely shattered by Sunday afternoon … could have been broken down into like four half days or I don't know a day and I don't know a half and another day another time or something."_

During these long, information overloaded days, the amount of learning that was taking place towards the end of the day was questionable:

Olivia: _"I think it is because by the end of the day you are just I think you've had enough and you're a bit drained after the same things you're doing and processes you're going through doing the different coaching with different people having a turn and I mean it is quite draining, quite tiring"_

The findings suggest that learning was compromised due to the length of the days and the amount of information that was given within a short period of time. It can be argued that two days is simply not long enough to seriously affect learning and to allow people to be called coaches. Due to coaching shortages, assistant coaches (UKCC level one), often take a head coach role (Wright _et al.,_ 2007). Therefore, two days may not be able to equip candidates for an assistant coach role, let alone a head coach role. This is an issue that needs to be addressed within coach education.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The key findings in this research study can be explained in relation to two key areas. Firstly, that the coaches' personal biographies were ignored. It was assumed that everyone who attended already had the required technical ('what to') knowledge and lacked pedagogical ('how to') knowledge. The study, however, showed the opposite was the case for the majority of the candidates. Therefore, the course did not cater for individuals' needs; rather it delivered a generic curriculum, divorced from the learning candidates perceived they required. Secondly, the authenticity of the coaching course was questionable on a number of counts. These include its assessment driven nature, inauthentic peer coaching, lack of guidance on reflection and short duration.

Practical Implications

One main practical implication, that could help to improve coach education, is the acknowledgement that coaches who attend these courses do so with previous knowledge, experiences and backgrounds. The personal biographies of candidates, which are currently being overlooked by the UKCC, could be utilised to their advantage. Research suggests that coaches can learn by interacting and sharing knowledge with other coaches (Cassidy & Rossi, 2006; Cushion *et al.,* 2003; Wright *et al.,* 2007), therefore, by embracing and encouraging the sharing of knowledge, that candidate coaches already possess, learning can be enhanced. The main issue with the delivery of a generic curriculum is the lack of consideration for the individual needs of those on the course. One possible solution could be the inclusion of a questionnaire in the application process, enquiring about candidates' personal and coaching biographies, intentions, and expectations. Such an approach could inform tutors prior to the course and therefore, improve individual consideration on the course.

Other practical implications derive from the questioned authenticity of the course, specifically within the peer coaching. Cushion *et al.* (2010) emphasised the importance of contextualised learning within coach education. Further, without contextualisation, the value and amount of learning can be decreased and can lead to a superficial engagement with the process. Many of the candidate coaches found the peer coaching, which lacked contextualisation, was unrealistic and inauthentic, therefore, detracting from its value. Additionally, mentoring has been

identified as a method of facilitation that could improve coach education (Cushion *et al.*, 2003; Jones *et al.*, 2011b; Lyle, 2002; Saury & Durand, 1998). A mentoring scheme would allow tutors to enter into the candidates' 'real life' coaching environment, and therefore, increase authenticity.

Another decontextualised element included in the course was reflection. Tutors did not provide evidence to the candidates as to why reflective practice was being used, which resulted in a lack of change within most candidates' practice (Guskey, 2002). This was due to the tutors specifically; reflection resources were included within the resource pack so it is vital that the tutors enhance the importance of reflection.

The duration of the course was questioned by many of the participants as too 'intense', 'tiring' and 'draining', suggestions were provided by the candidates to elongate the course but shorten the length of days, for example, to half days or evenings but over a longer period of time. These suggestions could help to improve the retention of learning and interest of candidates on the course.

In order for coach education to improve, there is a need to move away from simplistic behaviourist conceptions of learning and toward more situational and contextualised notions about learning.

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