

Cardiff School of Sport
DISSERTATION ASSESSMENT PROFORMA:
 Empirical¹

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Comments	Section		
	<p>Title and Abstract</p> <p>Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem.</p> <p>Abstract to include: A concise summary of the empirical study undertaken.</p>		
	<p>Introduction and literature review</p> <p>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).</p>		
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	<p>Discussion and Conclusions ²</p> <p>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.</p>
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CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS)

SPORTS COACHING

**HOW DOES THE USE OF EMPOWERMENT AFFECT THE
COACH ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP WITHIN A TEAM
ENVIRONMENT?**

**(Dissertation submitted under the discipline of
_____SPORTS COACHING_____)**

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Abstract

Despite there being many generalist statements proposed with regards to empowerment and the benefits surrounding a more athlete-centred approach to coaching, there is yet to be an in-depth examination in terms of its implementation (Jones and Standage, 2006). The purpose of this investigation was to provide a detailed account of how coaches implement and utilise the empowerment theory within their coaching. Once analysing the affects of empowerment on the athletes, the main objective was to discover whether the notion of empowerment had a significant impact on the coach-athlete relationship and to what extent. This study used qualitative methods of research in order to collect the appropriate data required. Two observations were conducted as well as a total of four semi-structured interviews in order to gain a more in-depth understanding in to the application of the empowerment theory and how it affects the coach-athlete relationship. An elite university cricket club were selected to take part in the analysis process of the study of which included the head coach, captain and two other athletes. The study findings concluded that empowerment was extremely prominent within the environment and the way in which empowerment was utilised throughout the environment did have a positive impact on the coach-athlete relationship. The results revealed that the positive relationship between coach and athlete had derived from the use of empowerment. It became apparent that the way in which the coach imposed empowerment in tandem with the athlete's personality was crucial to the type of relationship the athletes shared with the coach.

Key Words: *Empowerment, Coach-athlete Relationship, Qualitative, Observation*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In recent years coaching has attracted much attention thus leading to a substantial amount of research being carried out (Gilbert and Trudel, 2001). Despite this being the case many scholars continue to argue that there is still a lack of research with regards to the coaching process and the many components and complexities involved within it. It has been suggested by Jones (2000) and Lyle (2002) that there is still currently no conceptual framework, which sufficiently deals with the complex nature and reality of the coaching process. A number of criticisms and weaknesses have been identified within the research surrounding coaching, including a lack of impact on coaching practice itself and a failure to progress an essential body of knowledge on coaching practice (Lyle, 2002). A number of these shortcomings link to the severe complexity of the coaching process and the interdependent relationship held between coach-athlete and performance (Lyle, 2002). It has been discussed by scholars that sports coaching research needs to extend its physical and intellectual boundaries (Potrac, Jones and Cushion, 2007). Despite extensive research from a number of theoretical and empirical perspectives, it is arguable that sports coaching continues to lack a sound conceptual base (Cushion *and* Jones, 2006, pp.83-84).

Trust is crucial to developing a positive coach-athlete relationship, and if this is not apparent then problems may arise (Jones, Armour and Potrac, 2004). This includes trust on behalf of the coach to provide the athlete with scope to progress independently as well as taking an increased responsibility of their own development (Jones, 2006).

It is thought that the role of the coach is on the cusp of a fundamental re-think, as the belief in the need to empower athletes by transferring decision-making to them gathers momentum (Kidman, 2001). The method which a coach may wish to adopt however does not automatically lead to success for a variety of reasons. One of which being the team itself in which the coaching is taking place and

whether the team themselves are choosing to be productive (Jones, 2006). Following this, numerous questions continue to be asked with regards to shared leadership; for example whether or not a coach can fully share their power? What aspects of their power should they share? How much should they share? And finally under what circumstances will control be shared? (Jones, 2006). Empowerment is an approach to coaching, which will help athletes develop holistically, psychologically and socially, therefore empowering them to take responsibility for their own learning (Kidman, 2001). At the core of an empowering approach is the need to develop mutual trust and respect between both coach and athlete (Jones *et al.*, 2004). As well as trust and respect the highly motivated nature and willingness of an athlete to learn makes an empowering approach particularly appropriate (Jones *et al.*, 2004). This shows that the success of empowerment can be affected by numerous factors, such as the personality of the athlete which can be detrimental to the impact on the coaching style adopted as well as the overall success of empowerment.

Values and beliefs of a coach can impact hugely upon choice of coaching style adopted by a coach. Coaching styles range from a participant centred approach to a coach centred approach; where the majority of decisions are made by the coach on behalf of the participants themselves and directing activities (Miles, 2011). Furthermore a prescriptive or autocratic approach focuses on taking control away from the athlete. A prescriptive method of coaching is frequently adopted among younger or less experienced athletes who have limited knowledge and skill level (Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2004). Athletes involved within a prescriptive approach are often exposed to limited learning that does not particularly link to any form of problem solving. In embarking on such an approach encourages the athletes to become and remain robotic in their actions and thinking (Kidman, 2005).

There has yet to be an in depth study carried out to examine the application of empowerment within a sporting context, but more importantly its implications during application in a practical setting (Jones, 2001 in Kidman, 2001). This study aims to enhance and explore the research and understanding surrounding

empowerment through analysing how it is imposed and used within a team environment. This study provides an insight to the implications which affect the use of empowerment and the extent to which it is used. This study will also examine whether empowerment is used differently among different individuals, providing an insight into the gap in current literature in terms of the numerous challenges surrounding the application and theory of empowerment. The strengths and weaknesses of empowerment will be identified assessing the effects of empowerment on the individual and the impact of its use on the relationship between coach and athlete.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The Coaching Process

Lyle (2002) suggests that the coaching process itself is an agreement made between coach and athlete. This not only suggests that it is a planned and synchronized process with preparation and competition being a priority, but a notion which consists of much complexity. The concept of the coaching process being extremely planned and involving much structure does not coincide with the work of Jones and Wallace (2005). They believe coaching cannot be planned or organised and can often become inherently fluid and multi-faceted, characterised by the constant change in nature with regards to the process (Jones, R. Armour, K. and Potrac, P. 2004). There are many demands placed upon a coach by the team or squad with which they are involved. These might emanate from individual athletes, the performance environment, financial issues, and socio-cultural factors, which alone or in combination may lead to a highly preoccupied coach (Knowles, Z. Borrie, A. and Telfer, H. 2005). Coaching therefore is characterised by a permanent element of ambiguity, or uncertainty, over what everyone involved is trying to do, why they are trying to do it, and whether it is achievable (Jones and Wallace, 2005). Lyle (2002) suggests however that coaching is rationalistic as opposed to ambiguous and that coaches are presumed to have direct command within the coach-athlete relationship. Jones and Wallace's (2005) outlook on coaching is however very much the opposite, viewing it as an 'inexact science' and something that cannot merely be delivered as a result of the highly complex environment in which it resides (Abraham and Collins, 1998). Jones and Wallace (2005) state that coaches can expect to have power over change; however there is always a limited awareness of what is happening in the coaching situation. This means 'coaches can possess only a limited awareness of the indirect impact of their actions, such as the precise long-term legacy of treating an athlete in a particular way' (Jones *et al.*, 2005).

The coach is vital in the coaching process and is thought to be a moulder of theoretical and practical training and a translator of technical information (Kent, 1994). Jones (2004) sees the coach as more of an orchestrator, with the use of coordinated activity within set parameters expressed by coaches to integrate, plan, organise, monitor and recognise the progression of athletes (Wallace et al 2002). Although coaching is about striving to contribute to the success of each athlete (Kidman *et al.*, 2004), there are many other factors to consider throughout the procedure especially when reaching elite level coaching.

2.2 Foundations of sport coaching

One important aspect of coaches' decision-making is the right selection of coaching styles and methodology (Heydarinejad and Adman, 2010). This links into the coaches overall decision making and the strategy they believe will create the most success. Heydarinejad and Adman (2010) stated that maintaining team discipline, assigning roles and positions to athletes, as well as making efforts to gratify the athletes' needs and creating an appropriate motivational climate helped in aiding team cohesion. Chelladurai *et al.*, (1980), found that athletes cared more about gaining knowledge from their coach than maintaining personal communication with him. When coaches choose to adopt an appropriate leadership style, emotional needs and team cohesion should always be considered with regards to the athletes. These factors should always be considered regardless of ability or age, and are at the pinnacle of creating a successful relationship between coach and athlete.

French and Ravens (1959) 'Bases of Power,' is a coaching framework considered to have sufficient value in terms of illuminating the variety of dimensions surrounding the multilayered and complex nature of power in coaching (Jones *et al.*, 2004). It can be used in a variety of ways, ranging from the use of 'Cohesive,' to 'Expert' power in order to gain results and success, and fundamentally determining the type of relationship had between the coach and athlete. Studies

by Wandzilak, Ansorge and Potter (1988), and Salmela (1995), however found that the coach is a valued informant who enables researchers to gain a clear understanding with regards to particular components surrounding the coaching process. It would then appear that there should be a possible guideline that a coach should follow in order to choose the correct strategy to use based on their athlete's ability or possibly learning styles. This however cannot be measured and it would seem there is no right or wrong style of coaching to use at any given time, as coaching is such an ambiguous process.

2.3 Empowerment

Lyle (2002) believes that traditional coaching doesn't really focus on task, environment or athlete and is very much coach centred approach. Lyle believes that there has been a shift from a prescriptive to an empowerment approach in which athletes share in decision making and contribute to their learning, based on their goals and intents of action (Lyle 2002). Similar to Burton and Davis' (1996) model of Ecological Task Analysis, empowerment coaching utilizes extremely similar steps helping to create mutual goals as well as direction, in turn allowing athlete's choice and a degree of control within their sporting environment, be that individual or team. Broadhead (2007) suggested that empowerment coaching involves manipulating variables within the sporting environment in order to aid athlete performance. It would appear coaches have the overall power to dominate and determine the direction and action of the athletes, the team environment and finally performance. Cross and Lyle (1999) believe that the premise of empowerment coaching, however is that athletes have a capacity to learn from their experiences if they haven't been actively involved in determining and evaluating these experiences.

An empowering approach to coaching allows athletes to develop a sense of ownership over their own development thus allowing them to actively engage in their learning. For example when coaches question their athletes, and encourage

them to actively engage in asking their own questions, it enables the athletes to take ownership of their learning and development, as well as the athletic environment in general (Kidman, 2001). Kidman *et al.*, (2000) suggested that the coach gradually divests themselves of power and as a result provides the athletes with the responsibility. According to Kidman and Lombardo (2005) an empowerment approach to coaching can be extremely advantageous creating definite physical benefits, as athletes can begin to develop the boundaries and physical capabilities of themselves and others within their environment. Furthermore, Simon and Jenkins (2005) suggest that empowerment allows athletes to develop self-efficacy, self-determination and self-confidence, allowing them to have ownership over themselves. Kidman and Lombardo (2005) also suggested that there are many cognitive benefits to this approach such as enhancing the ability to make decisions such as what they want to achieve and how they wish to go about doing so. Although an effectual coaching style such as empowerment will enable athletes to be open to decision making opportunities, it also presents the opportunity and encourages the athletes to embark upon creative thinking (Kidman, 2001).

'Coaches often highlight the importance of gaining trust and respect from their athletes' (Potrac, 2004). An empowerment model can be used in order to develop the mutual trust held between coach and athlete, although it is considered the responsibility of the coach to initiate this (Shogan, 1999). Mutual trust is developed through the athletes trusting the knowledge of their coach, as well as ensuring that the coach is well prepared, and provides a safe and supporting environment for the athlete (Shogan, 1999). Once mutual trust is created, athletes then begin to take responsibility for their own and teams learning and performance, thus enhancing the team environment (Kidman, 2005). The trust and respect then created within the relationship means coaches trust athletes to take each goal set seriously, whether that is an overall or team based goal. Therefore it appears that using an empowerment approach is a strategy that will assist the development of the trust and respect that so many coaches seek (Davis and Broadhead, 2007).

Despite the positive aspects surrounding the use of an empowerment approach, concerns have also been raised. Jones *et al.*, (2004) emphasized that although there is a need to grow players for an on field responsibility and decision making; concerns are also raised regarding inviting players to share in the leadership of the coaching programme. Jones agreed that despite the benefits of empowering the athletes, it is still for them to be seen by the athletes as someone with authority. Jones and Standage (2006) continued to critique the unproblematic implementation of empowerment (or shared Leadership) in coaching throughout coaching situations identifying a number of contextual issues that appear to have been overlooked. For example, some athletes may not wish to be involved with the decision making process, therefore expecting the coach to impose their expertise to aid them as a performer. Nias *et al.*, (1989) believed that although the notion of empowerment is open to change, it is not directly manipulable through coach activity. In some respects it would appear that this approach is needed if coaches are to become successful with regards to obtaining the athletes trust, respect and confidence in order to develop positive learning environments (Jones *et al.*, 2004). However it is still important for coaches to recognize that coaching is extremely ambiguous and complex, and the control they therefore exert over athletes is always limited (Jones and Wallace. 2005).

2.4 Sharing Leadership within a team environment

Shared leadership can be defined as the ability to empower individuals at all levels, and giving them the opportunity to take the lead (Jenkins, 2005). Pearce and Conger (2003) refer to shared leadership as a leadership process in which the leadership function itself is actively transferred throughout a team. Pearce and Conger (2003) stated that transferring the leadership function creates an adaptive response to internal and external demands currently being placed on the team in hand.

Although many generalist statements with regards to the advantages of a more athlete centred approach have been made, an in-depth examination of its implementation and the various implications has not yet taken place (Jones, 2001). This had led to much controversy surrounding the notion of shared leadership and what is actually meant by the term itself specifically relating to whether it can be effective within a team environment. It is deemed that there are two factors separating shared leadership from other forms of leadership. Firstly, the dynamic transference of the leadership function, and secondly, the team members themselves are assuming the leadership functions, a factor requiring a certain level of empowerment within teams (Pearce and Cogner, 2003).

Following this, questions as to not only if the coaches can realistically fully share their leadership function with athletes, but if so which aspects should be shared, how equally can this be distributed within a team environment and under what circumstances have arisen (Jones, 2006). Jones (2006) believes that a number of the seemingly unproblematic claims made on behalf of adopting such an approach to coaching should be treated with minimal caution. Applying such change in a dynamic and complex human context can never be straightforward.

2.5 The Coach-Athlete Relationship

The coach-athlete relationship is of great importance, and may underpin the success of a team or athlete, as coaches are required to understand athletes and their play in the climax (Heydarinejad and Adman, 2010). Jowett (2007) defined the coach-athlete relationship as a situation in which the coach and the athlete's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours are interconnected. 'Coaches and athletes feelings, thoughts, and behaviours have been subsequently been put into operation and measured through the constructs of closeness, commitment, and complementarity' (Jowett, 2007: p.66). This then refers to the affective bond between coach and athlete, the mutual respect, and trust between the two, each of which embrace the content and quality of the coach-athlete relationship.

The coach-athlete relationship is a psychological concept that is characterised by its social and interpersonal nature (Jowett 2007). In relation to this, coaches attempt to engage in athlete's behaviours as a means to aid the progress of the athlete steering them towards achieving particular goals in both a competitive or practice environment (Cassidy *et al.*, 2009). For performance to improve, athletes and coaches need to strive for a relationship where athlete learning is the central consideration (Oldham *et al.*, 2011). Favor's (2011) study of linking coaching and athletes personality traits, found that coaches already know athletes' personalities impact team dynamics and effectiveness, and some have suffered the consequences of failing to select compatible personalities for their teams. This may then lead to the choice of coaching strategies that a coach may wish to impose throughout practice in order to gain success and improvement of performance, as this choice may not only affect success but also the relationship between coach and athlete based on Jowett's (2007) notion of trust and respect etc. Jowett's notion of trust and respect links to the quality of the coach-athlete relationship. The trust an athlete has for their coach can be crucial in developing a positive relationship. If an athlete experiences a lack of trust with their coach, it can be detrimental to the amount of respect the coach possesses therefore having a negative effect on their relationship (Potrac, 2004).

Jowett *et al.*, (2010) highlight the importance of mutual trust within the coach-athlete relationship. When an element of mutual trust is seen to be present within the coach athlete relationship, it creates an aspect of affective closeness that binds the unit relationship (Jowett *et al.*, 2010). Relationships can generally be described as a situation in which two people can share feelings, and thoughts and behaviours are equally interdependent (Kelley *et al.*, 1983). According to Jowett the coach's involvement with the athlete is crucial in order to aid continuous skill development, as well as maintaining and determining their levels of enthusiasm all linking and leading to achieving performance success. Sterling and Kerr (2009) broadly suggest that the coach-athlete relationship is one of the most significant and powerful relationships young athletes experience in terms of how the coach can influence the athletes with regards to their behaviour. The quality of the coach athlete relationship is related to a number of outcomes such as increased

self concept, satisfaction and team cohesion, all aspects which are also seen to positively increase when an athlete centred style of coaching is used (Rhind and Jowett, 2010).

2.6 Summary

Controversial issues surrounding the notion of empowerment have led to this investigation. Placing more power and responsibility with the athlete has raised the question as to whether it affects the trust, respect and fundamentally the overall relationship between coach and athlete. This study will analyse both the positive and negative impacts of empowerment when utilised within a team environment, and in turn whether it is fundamental to the type of relationship that coach and athlete share.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Creswell (2003) stated that qualitative approaches to conducting research are valuable for exploring moderately unexamined topics. In this case the review of literature has presented evidence of limited research with regards to an in-depth examination of the application of an empowering approach in coaching (Jones, 2001). Therefore a qualitative method was adopted given the evident lack of literature with regards to athlete-centred approaches within the sport coaching discipline (Robinson, 2009). Adopting a qualitative analysis approach enables the researcher to capture the thoughts, feelings and experiences of small number of participants (Gratton and Jones, 2010). This also means an increase in sufficient data can be accumulated, as a more in depth analysis can then be conducted, therefore allowing for an increase in knowledge and understanding of a specific area or individual (Gratton and Jones, 2010).

The primary reason for researchers discarding the use of more quantitative approaches has evolved from the fact that sport is affected by complex and versatile social forces (Cassidy *et al.*, 2004), therefore qualitative research has developed more importance within sport studies as it aims to capture moments of reality (Sugden, 2005). There are however limitations associated with the use of qualitative data collection methods. The limitations associated with using such a small sample of participants can lead to an inability to generalise the results to a wider population as the data represents only a small number of participants, (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Gratton and Jones (2010) emphasise the importance behind the concept of 'theoretical sampling' in some cases and the need to use participants with a sufficient amount knowledge surrounding the subject area in order to produce legitimate results. Therefore there is a need to interview participants that have a clear understanding of this theory and how it is imposed within their practice.

Qualitative methods were deemed appropriate for this study as detailed information is required to address the purpose of the study. Specifically, the study focussed on the positives as well as the issues surrounding the use of empowerment, but above all the impact's of empowerment on the coach athlete relationship.

3.2 Sample

In order to conduct the study an elite university cricket team were used to collect the appropriate data required. This team was selected on the basis of the professional environment in which they train, as well as the experience of the coaching and extremely high standard of the players involved within the environment. The athletes of the cricket team were initially asked as to whether they believed they had a basic understanding surrounding the concept of empowerment, or had previously studied the subject prior to a training session commencing. The athletes who did feel they possessed a basic understanding of the subject were placed in to a separate group away from the athletes that didn't. These participants were selected based around Gratton and Jones (2010) notion of 'theoretical sampling' in order to increase the validity of the results. Theoretical sampling can be defined as a data collection method based on concepts derived from data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The overall purpose of this sampling technique is to maximise the opportunity of developing a variety of concepts (Markula and Silk, 2011).

Once the research project and what the participants will be required to complete was explained to the group, the coach then proceeded to put forward two of the volunteers from the group who were happy willing to take part in the interviews. It was believed by the coach that empowerment is used a great deal within this side, which further led to selecting this team for the research study. In order to gain further information the Head coach as well as the captain of the team and two other athletes in the 1st XI were also interviewed (**Participants A and B**).

3.3 Biography of Participants

Participant A

- Top 3 batsman that usually opens the batting
- Represented Wales under 11's through to under 16's
- Glamorgan academy aged 16 to 20
- Represented the West of England on tours to the West Indies and South Africa
- A senior player of the first team who feels he can dominate at this current level
- Believes the university have the capability of winning the BUCS tournament this year and would like to progress to first class cricket once finishing university

Participant B

- Opens the batting for his country but bats down the order usually at number 4 or 5 for the university to add a bit of depth to the batting
- Made his full international debut for Bermuda at age 17
- Played in the T20 world cup 2012 qualifiers in Dubai
- Hoping to obtain a county contract once finishing his studies and continue to represent Bermuda
- He believes the university side is fairly strong and is very committed to the team.

Captain

- Currently in his 4th year of representing the side
- Captained the team in his second and third year
- Involved with the MCCU
- During his third year he had a coaching/admin role amongst the side and not fully committed in terms of playing

- Believes the side should be extremely dominant and look to win the university championships
- Has a level 1 and 2 coaching qualification

Head Coach

- Head Coach of Cardiff/Glamorgan MCCU
- Performance Director for Cardiff Met University men and ladies
- West of England coach U15's and U17's
- ECB spin bowling coach
- Regional County Coach

3.4 Pilot Study

A Pilot study was carried out prior to the initial study in order to address any flaws that occurred with how the observation took place, as well as the initial interview guide. The Pilot study was also put in place in order to address any issues with validity and reliability as it is hugely important that the data collected and the research carried out is valid and reliable. If this is not the case then the result would be a misinformed or non-credible study (Patton, 2002). According to Kumor (2003), a pilot study will allow the researcher to test out procedures, equipment and questions before the actual interview, in order to make sure that it all runs smoothly. This became a crucial part of the study as it enabled the researcher to pick up on any questions that may need to be answered when conducting the observation of practice. It soon became apparent that some questions throughout the interview guide needed to be changed and reworded based on the responses given during the pilot study; this then ensured complete clarity and professionalism.

3.5 Observation

Observational research is a descriptive technique in which certain behaviours are observed in the participants natural settings such as the playing environment (Thomas *et al.*, 2010). It is the primary form of research used in performance analysis (O'Donoghue, 2010); however is arguably the most neglected research technique in sport despite having numerous advantages (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Observations offer a more blunt approach, thus allowing a phenomenon to be identified as and when it occurs. They also allow for the identification of behaviours that may not become obvious to the observer and may not have been discovered through solely the use of interviews (Gledhill *et al.*, 2007).

This study made use of Direct Observation. The importance of direct observation in coaching research has been recognized many times (Erickson, 2009), with a number of systematic observational instruments being developed in order to be put to use in the field, for example the Coaching Behaviour Recording Form (CBRF; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976), and the Coaching Behavioural Assessment System (CBAS; Smith *et al.*, 1977).

Direct observation seemed the most appropriate method to be used as the observer is then able to analyse any subtle features of the participant's behaviour in order to discover elements that are not directly visible. When using direct observation the observer doesn't usually attempt to become a participant in context, therefore in order to avoid any bias the observer does aim to be as inconspicuous as possible.

General note taking and memo writing was adapted allowing the researcher to document any visual observations throughout the practice. The use of observations were utilised as interviews do not always tell the researcher everything they may wish to know, therefore broadening the research, and aid the researcher in constructing the interview guide through their observations (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

3.6 Interview

This research method was chosen due to the ability to gain rich qualitative data (Gratton and Jones, 2004). It enabled the researcher to gain an insight in to people's views, opinions, knowledge, interpretations and experiences (Mason, 1996).

A semi structured interview guide was formulated consisting of open format questions providing a degree of flexibility whilst allowing for the participant to express any experiences and any new issues, although still holding a core of consistent questions. This authorized fluency in the process while accounting for the systematic nature of data gathering between participants (Patton, 2002).

The questions were devised in order to gain an understanding of the team environment, and the use and degree of empowerment coaching used throughout practice, assessing how shared leadership impacts on the coach athlete relationship. There were a variety of question types being used, two of which have been proposed by Spradley (1979). The first category aimed to ask descriptive questions helping to identify important situations of the participant, and secondly structural questions helping to generate precise information on a given situation outlining the underlying factors (d'Arripe-Longueville *et al.*, 1998). Other questions such as Justification questions were asked in order to probe both coach and athletes for their perceived reasons regarding certain interactions.

It was important throughout the interviews that the interviewer did not give their opinion or do anything that could cause upset and therefore create interviewer bias (Oppenheim, 2000). However all questions were subject to change at the discretion of the interviewer as he saw fit. It was suggested by Oppenheim (2000) that the main advantage of open-ended questions is the freedom it gives to the respondents. Each interview lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes, and

combined with the observations provided the researcher with rich enough data to begin analysis. An example of the interview guides included in **Appendix A**.

3.7 Procedure

Firstly the researcher contacted the participants, to enquire about the possibility of undertaking the investigation. After consent had been obtained (example of informed consent form included in **Appendix B**), an information sheet was sent to the players and coach outlining the aims and outcomes of the project and what would be expected of them (Information sheet included in **Appendix C**). The researcher then held a meeting with the coach to discuss the investigation, obtain a biography and to set out a suitable time for data collection. Prior to interviews being conducted observations of training sessions took place in the Universities sports hall where the team carry out a one hour training session once a week. Observations were carried out until a point of saturation and as a result three observations took place each an hour long, totalling to three hours of observations. By this point it was felt by the researcher that efficient data had been collected, taking notes on certain behaviours from coach and athlete as well as using a table to measure the frequency that certain behaviours were directed at specific athletes. This then enabled the researcher to formulate the semi structured interview guides and proceed with further research.

Four interviews took place ranging from 15-30 minutes each. A Dictaphone was used in order to record the interviews thus enabling transcription to later take place thus allowing the researcher to draw a set of results from them. The interviews took place in a location of the interviewee's choice therefore meaning they were present in surroundings that they felt comfortable in as well as making the process as easy as possible for them.

3.8 Data analysis

In order for the interviews to be analysed, certain procedures needed to take place to ensure that all irrelevant data was removed allowing for all relevant data to be analysed efficiently and effectively (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Once data reduction had taken place it then allowed for the next process to be undertaken. Gratton and Jones (2010) suggest that in order for the researcher to draw an appropriate and sufficient conclusion from the data collected, it must be presented efficiently whether that is in the form of a table or chart etc. One of the most effective methods of analysing data is through the use of either coding or categorising, thus allowing the relevant data to be collected and analysing it in comparison with other data or previous research (Flick, 2007). This method was used by identifying key themes throughout the observations as well as highlighting any similar responses given from the questions provided during the interviews in comparison to previous research. Identifying common themes allowed for ideas to become apparent throughout the research conducted. By relating the common themes identified to the aims and objectives of the study, it then allows for theories to develop justifying them with a comparison to peer reviewed literature as stated by flick (2007).

3.9 Ethical considerations

According to MacNamee *et al.*, (2007) there are numerous issues that need to be addressed with regards to research and in particular the area in focus. Ethical issues are extremely prominent throughout qualitative research due to the extensive exposure of personal information (Halloway, 1997). With this in mind each participant was provided with a broad outline of the research project providing them with ample information in order for them to make a decision whether or not to provide consent in the form of an inform consent form (**See Appendix D**). Within the consent forms the participants were notified that they

had a right to withdraw from the interview for any reason at any point in order to reduce the effect of any possible harm or deception. As all data collected was handled solely by one person it meant that complete confidentiality was sustained throughout the project as well as maintaining anonymity of the participants as suggested by Gratton and Jones (2010) by categorising the participants A, B, Captain and Coach. Since the results have been collected they have remained in a safe, secure place, where they will not have been viewed by anyone other than the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This study attempted to contribute to current literature by analysing how the use of empowerment affects the coach-athlete relationship within an elite university cricket club team environment. The use of empowerment within the team environment was evaluated through the use of observations and interviews and is now able to be related back to previous literature in order to draw a relevant conclusion.

4.2 Positive Impacts of Empowerment on the Team Environment and Coach-Athlete Relationship

4.2.1 The use of Empowerment to Generate Trust and Respect

It is crucial that athletes are central to their own learning and the relationship between coach and athlete is the pinnacle for improving performance, as athletes and coaches need to strive for a relationship where athlete learning is the central consideration (Oldham *et al.*, 2011). The coach stated at the beginning of the interview how he developed a professional environment, however the players still dictate what happens on the field he simply over sees what the players do and aids in pushing them in the right direction. This demonstrates a balanced link in terms of the relationship the coach has developed linking with Oldham's point of athletes being central to their own learning. This also demonstrates how prominent empowerment is within the environment.

Empowerment can be seen as ambiguous in the sense that the one with power is taken to empower those without. In this sense power is given and never taken which means those in authority possess the ability to generate the condition in which the delegated power can be exercised (Jones, 2006). Linking to this point the coach believes he is selective with who he places responsibility upon with more experienced players seen to be given the most responsibility. This demonstrates his authority and ability to empower the athletes around him and to what extent.

“with regards to shared leadership I’m selective to the players I give responsibility, more experienced players that you can trust who I see as senior players, with empowerment I feel you can use it in different ways you can empower a player to have more responsibility and you can also empower them but not as much as other players so definitely use it.”

He stated that it can be used in a number of ways giving some players more responsibility than others such as the Captain. The captain’s responsibilities differ from others in the sense the coach empowers him to be involved with session planning and how the week is scheduled, also feeding in to players that may be captain when he is not around. As a result of this the captain stated that he has gained respect for the coach due to the way in which he coaches and inflicts empowerment. This stems from how the coach inflicts empowerment where at the core of the coaches empowering approach is the need for trust (Jones *et al.*, 2004). With taking the players playing experience and ideas in to account it demonstrates the trust the coach has developed for the players, and how both parties have entered in to an invisible contract where the athletes trust the coach to programme the training (Jones *et al.*, 2004). In order to be effective, the use of any praise that may be used by the coach must be closely related to the varying needs of the individual (Davies and Armstrong, 1989). The use of praise and encouragement was apparent throughout the observations and evidently had an impact upon the athletes in terms of motivation, increasing engagement during the drills and building confidence to provide feedback during discussions. Schmidt (1991) however stated that the overuse of praise could be a sign of non specific feedback that can dilute its motivational effects.

It is important for coaches to share responsibility within an environment in order to enhance self-improvement and develop a full understanding of their sport (Jones *et al.*, 2004). Responsibility is commonly shared throughout the environment, although the coach states that he does not share entirely equally among the environment.

“I will empower every player but different responsibilities for different players may be affected by experience, the empowerment I give for hands on things like organising mini buses or running sessions will be more senior players, probably because they are more mature. I tend to do it in stages, first years not much empowerment only in practice as in drills that we’re doing and more hands on organising would be more third years.”

The coach mentioned how every player is empowered although on different levels. This is affected by the player’s level of experience and maturity with the senior players handling the higher responsibilities. He states how it is handled in stages demonstrating clarity with regards to how the coach uses and imposes empowerment. During the observations conducted it became evident how empowerment was prominent during practice and the type of discourse used being detrimental to the outcome of the empowerment used. The coaches chosen discourse used throughout the majority of the session aided to describe and explain the drills etc, and therefore affected the way in which information was passed to the athletes (Cassidy *et al.*, 2009). As the session progressed it became increasingly evident that the discourse used emphasised a greater respect for the athletes.

Aside from the views of the participants and the fact the coach allows the athletes some degree of control and choice, the coach feels it is important that he is seen as the person with the most authority within the environment. It is important in terms of respect and the amount of trust the athletes have for the coach, shown in an example of final played at lords and the trust shown by the athletes in terms of respecting the rules set out by the coach. Jones *et al* (2004) found that the coaches questioned agreed that despite the benefits of empowering the athletes,

they still believed that it was necessary for them to be seen by the athletes as someone with authority.

4.2.2 The use of Empowerment to Create a Responsible Athlete

Participant B (one of two players interviewed as well as captain and coach) stated how he sees himself as a senior player and role model to younger players stating that Empowerment is imposed generally through training.

“It is always encouraged for people to speak up on what they need to work on individually or the team as a whole, I can remember in a group discussion the players were able to put forward their views on field setting etc to the captain so it wasn’t just the captain making the decisions, more or less everybody.”

Kidman (2001) states that although an effectual coaching style such as empowerment will enable athletes to be open to decision making opportunities as expressed by this particular participant, it further presents the opportunity and encourages the athletes to embark upon creative thinking (Kidman, 2001). It would appear that the participants point in tandem with the views of Kidman would create a less docile and coach dependant athlete, with the participant stating how this process aids in motivating them personally.

The coach stated that he imposes empowerment a lot through the use of questioning, attempting to use it in order to benefit both the players and himself. Questioning is an instructional strategy that enhances athletes learning by making the athletes learning their own personal responsibility (Kidman *et al.*, 2004). This form of empowerment allows athletes to develop a sense of ownership over their own development thus allowing them to actively engage in their own learning. For example when the coach questions the athletes, and encourages them to actively engage in asking their own questions, it enables the athletes to take ownership of their learning and development, as well as the athletic environment in general

(Kidman, 2001). Kidman's views express the positivity behind the use of empowerment demonstrating a predominantly athlete centred approach meaning the athletes become central to their own learning.

This athlete centred approach to learning also became evident throughout the observation, with the coach providing limited instruction from the sidelines during practices. He did however provide an explanation prior to the drill for example and then allowed the athletes to coach amongst each other and determine the quality of the drill. He continued to move around the room providing instruction, encouragement and praise to individuals throughout the group ensuring he covered the whole hall. After a certain amount of time had passed, the coach would bring the drill or practice to a halt and bring everyone together to discuss the outcomes etc of the drill conducted, with this happening on a number of occasions. Throughout the discussions the coach proceeded to question the athletes in order to extract information regarding performance and what could be changed in order to improve it further. Each response was taken in to account in order to build the next question, thus ensuring the athletes were engaging with problem solving and aiding the coach in terms of the decision making process in order to implement progressions. Cassidy *et al.*, (2009) felt that building on athlete's knowledge would alter the lopsided power dynamic in traditional coach-athlete relationship to a more equitable one; where personal development is borne out of a deeper reflection of their own performances; as demonstrated by the coach throughout the observation. Once the participants provided their responses, the coach would then restart the session again emphasising the fact that the negative points raised during the group discussion need to be put right. The group discussions that were prominent throughout the observation were fundamental in terms of the coaches chosen coaching practice, thus enabling him to ensure that the participants were 'actively engaged in shaping and directing' their performance (Kidman, 2001).

The coach empowers the athletes allowing them to put forward their views and opinions and how they feel things could be different, thus putting full responsibility with them, ensuring they are responsible for their actions or mistakes etc. Kidman

et al., (2000) suggested that the coach gradually divests themselves of power and as a result provides the athletes with the responsibility. Parallel to Kidman's point the coach believes that placing an increased responsibility with the athlete's aids in motivating the athletes in terms of giving them something to aspire to. This links to the views of participant A who feels that during and prior to sessions players are able to decide what they want to do or achieve and how, being empowered to adapt drills throughout sessions. This approach appears to be different to that of a traditional coach centred approach which does not really focus on task, environment or athlete and is very much an athlete centred approach (Lyle, 2002). Participant A felt that in allowing this it creates maturity both personally and among other team members, motivating the athletes as a result of the responsibility given. As a result it inspires the participant to become a role model to others. This athlete-centred approach aids in motivating the athletes giving them a sense of satisfaction, growing to become part of a 'common vision' allowing the team to progress in the same direction (Kidman, 2005). Participant A believes that this increased responsibility and the fact that it is fully accepted also aids in creating a better relationship with the coach.

Concepts such as the notion of empowerment are often used to develop leadership skills. Empowerment allows athletes to develop self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-determination allowing them to have ownership over themselves (Simon *et al.*, 2005). Parallel to this participant A believes that the use of empowerment has aided in creating leaders within the environment to a certain extent.

"A couple of guys in our year that in 1st year were quiet and shy and because of the empowerment and responsibility they have developed so much more so has made more senior players as the boys want to be leaders and become more confident."

The coach-athlete relationship is one of the most significant and powerful relationships young athletes experience in terms of how the coach can influence the athletes with regards to their behaviour (Sterling and Kerr 2009); Participant B agrees with participant A (two players interviewed as well as captain and coach)

and feels that the way in which empowerment is used, aids with regards to building confidence and making the athletes more efficient in terms of self-management. Kidman and Lombardo (2005) believe that an empowerment approach to coaching can be extremely advantageous creating definite physical benefits, as athletes can begin to develop the boundaries and physical capabilities of themselves as well as others within the environment they are a part of. They also suggested that there are many cognitive benefits to this approach such as enhancing the ability to make decisions, which again links to how the participants feel they are developing as individuals and in to leaders. Not only do the athletes acquire a greater control over decisions that affect their sporting life (Kidman, 2001), but also as a performer and team have the opportunity to actively engage in shaping their own direction (Kidman, 2001).

4.2.3 Developing Decision Making and Problem solving Skills

Participant B explained how the coach empowers the athletes with regards to making decisions in terms of what they want to achieve, thus encouraging problem solving throughout practice. During the observation conducted it was evident that the players were encouraged to engage in problem solving, making their own decisions on occasions throughout practice in terms of the drills provided. Despite this it was obvious that the coach still maintained control by setting the practice up in such a way that would require a certain outcome for the player to be successful. This can be further validated as Participant B also stated that the coach puts the players in situations which they have to at times lead the session, which may be a way of the coach putting the athletes view to test.

“He knows which ones he can put in those positions to be the ones who can lead the session, but he realises there are others who he doesn’t want to really put in that position to do that, so he takes the lead to.”

However, it is felt by Participant B that to a certain extent this creates slight hostility with the players, realising that they may not be seen to be as important as

others. This notion of power suggests that there are resources that may be utilised to enhance one athlete at the expense of another thus leading to dominance by one athlete in particular (Davis *et al.*, 2007). There appears to be a tendency to place this type of responsibility with what is seen to be the senior players amongst the group.

It was stated by the coach that the athletes are allowed to share and implement their own knowledge during coaching sessions. In sharing knowledge among the environment it can benefit the coach with regards to strengthening certain areas of their coaching specifically, as well as increasing the athlete's knowledge. Encouraging athletes to ask questions is critical to improving their knowledge, but through the use of questioning a coach can also use an athlete's response to evaluate their own coaching practices, thus expanding their knowledge and learning from experience (Davis *et al.*, 2007). He did however assure that if a player does not fully buy in to the process of sharing knowledge or become fully responsible for their actions it can grow to be negative in some aspects. Participant A stated how this form of empowerment is imposed directly to him in terms of taking skill specific drills during sessions.

“Being a batsman a lot of the batting drills he comes to me to talk about it, so if we are doing specific shots he will run it but he will come to me for ideas which gives me a bit of a boost so it gives me that responsibility it makes me want to prove a point in a way.”

This demonstrates how the athletes share in decision making and contribute to their learning, based on their goals and intents of action (Lyle 2002). Potrac (2004) also states that ‘Coaches often highlight the importance of gaining trust and respect from their athletes,’ and in sharing and implementing new ideas and knowledge from coach to athlete it can aid the process of creating trust.

4.2.4 Placing full Responsibility with the Athletes during Practice

An empowered athlete is one that is allowed some degree of choice (Kidman 2001). This is reflected through what the captain states, and how the coach imposes empowerment through taking a back seat in some sessions, placing an increased responsibility with the athletes.

“He likes to show the lads he is there to coach and help them out when he is there, then again there is times he steps back and asks us what we want to get out of the session.”

This was apparent during the observations where the coach tended to avoid providing instructions from the side, or stop drills to raise a point unless there was a particular issue with regards to the quality of the drill at the time. Feedback was provided amongst micro groups as the drill took place ensuring the coach covered as much of the group as he could throughout practice if feedback was required. If feedback is provided on every attempt, the athlete's lack of ability to retain key information can occur (Williams & Hodge, 2005). Therefore, the only time he gave information from the sideline was when it was a small detail, praise or words of encouragement. Kidman and Hanrahan (2011) suggest that coaching among micro groups during drills allows athletes to learn technique through guided discovery as well as through self awareness. The coach further stated that prior to sessions he meets with players discovering what they want to do. This is carried out so the coach doesn't miss something key that the players feel necessary to work on. The use of empowerment in this sense means the athletes decide what happens within the session. Furthermore they are provided with the freedom to do what they feel is necessary if anything is missed, despite guidance being provided by the coach in order to facilitate the empowerment provided. This links to what the captain stated expressing that this is done through creating goals and deciding what players want to achieve from the session whether that be specific to individuals e.g. batsman, Wicket keeper, or as a team. The way in which empowerment is evident and imposed in this case links to, and is similar to the ideology of Burton and Davis' (1996) model of Ecological task analysis. In this sense empowerment coaching utilizes extremely similar steps helping to create

mutual goals as well as direction, in turn allowing athlete's choice and a degree of control within the environment.

4.3 Negative Impacts of Empowerment on the Team Environment and Coach-Athlete Relationship

4.3.1 A Balanced Relationship

The captain has an increased responsibility rather than the other participants as the individual is given the power to express what he expects from the team during sessions etc, as well as implementing any progressions throughout sessions almost posting a coaching role. The Captain stated that during match day it is play it as he sees it and despite discussion and feedback with the coach prior to the game, it tends to be the captain who has the final decision on the field as agreed during the interview conducted with the coach. This corresponds to the theory of Cross and Lyle (1999) who believe that the premise of empowerment coaching is that athletes have a capacity to learn from their experiences. However interviews conducted by Jones *et al.*, (2004) suggest that although there is a need to grow players for an on field responsibility and decision making; concerns were also raised regarding inviting players to share in the leadership of the coaching programme. Despite the view of Jones *et al.*, (2004) the captain feels that the way in which the coach has aided him personally has had a positive impact on their relationship, allowing them to create a more personal relationship from which the captain is comfortable to approach the coach with subjects outside of cricket. These views are however contradicted by the coach who further stated the relationship can become too close.

“I think it can build a relationship but I also think the relationship can become too close, there are one or two players that come to me for advice outside cricket and personal things or for college work, as a coach I wouldn’t say it’s a down fall but one or two players I have got a bit close to and if I come to a situation where I have to drop that player, I don’t think it will but it could affect the relationship, I don’t think I have over stepped the mark but I am probably a bit too close for comfort.”

This shows that there may need to be a balance in the form of relationship developed by the coach ensuring both coaches and athletes feelings, thoughts, and behaviours are considered and measured through the constructs of closeness, commitment, and complementarity’ (Jowett, 2007). A successful coach athlete relationship is said to be determined by the coach’s level and balance of immediacy with the athlete (Billings, Butterworth and Turman 2011).

4.3.2 A Lack of Structure and Disagreement

Despite each participant agreeing that the environment is extremely open, participant A stated that it can often lead to disagreement. This is due to a contrast and difference amongst opinions within the team. Practice can often become unstructured due to the amount of empowerment provided. Participant A believes that as a result learning does not always take place as a consequence of a lack of guidance sometimes given by the coach. This raises the point that the importance of the coach recognising the ambiguity and complexity of coaching itself, and the control he therefore exerts over the athletes is always minimalistic (Jones and Wallace, 2005). This links to what the participants are expressing, however, it is fundamentally the contact time the coach has with the team that is detrimental to the learning of the athletes.

Each participant agrees that sessions can become unstructured due to the use of empowerment; however the coach states that players need to be given roles and jobs in order to become increasingly responsible. Despite this some players do not proceed to attend to these roles, and as a result sessions can become unstructured. Due to the coach already knowing the athlete's personalities, this can have an impact upon team dynamics and effectiveness; however some coaches have to suffer the consequences because of failing to select compatible personalities for their teams (Favor, 2007). This may then lead to the choice of coaching strategy that a coach may wish to impose throughout practice in order to gain success and improvement of performance, as this choice may not only affect success but also the relationship between coach and athlete based on Jowett's (2007) notion of trust and respect etc. However It can create conflict if the sessions become unstructured as the players may not feel they are getting enough out of the session in order to progress and increase performance. This can lead to conflict among players who simply choose to through the motions.

4.3.3 Creating an Over-reliant Athlete

With athletes fully accepting the responsibilities provided, it can almost lead them in to becoming over reliant or docile as stated by the coach. He agreed that the way in which athletes are empowered can create predictable results, and players can often look to him for responsibility as opposed to using their initiative. The coach believes however, that it could be the opposite and no responsibility could be given at all. In this case the correct responsibility has to be placed with the right person in order to produce better results. The coach views empowerment as something where the players begin to take responsibility for their own actions as empowerment aims to make athletes increasingly responsible by providing them with a degree of ownership over their performance (Jones *et al.*, 2004).

“It can have its downfalls where they are looking for me to give them something to do instead of taking responsibility to do something themselves because that’s the idea of empowerment as I see it, it’s for them to take responsibility even when they’re not empowered so you can get them to work along those lines.”

In this case through mutual trust being created between coach and athlete, athletes begin to take responsibility for their own and teams learning and performance, thus enhancing the team environment. The trust and respect then formed within the relationship allows the coach to trust athletes to take each goal set seriously, whether that is an overall or team based goal (Shogan 1999).

4.4 Overall impact of Empowerment on the Coach-Athlete relationship

According to Jones *et al.*, (2004), it would appear that an empowering approach is needed if the coach is to become successful with regards to obtaining the athletes trust, respect and confidence in order to develop a positive learning environment. Furthermore this progresses to the coach providing technical advice or help with personal issues, as well as the players understanding what the coach is trying to achieve in terms of both long and short term goals. The coach believes that the players need to be praised if they fully buy in to the responsibility given in order to develop and build trust. High levels of praise may not only have been used to enhance the self-efficacy and confidence levels of players, but was also invaluable in reinforcing the player behaviour desired by the coaches (Potrac *et al.*, 2007). The coach states that the use of empowerment impacts the type of relationship shared between coach and athlete.

“I know more about the theory behind empowerment so I can use it to my advantage and feel it has a massive positive impact upon the relationship I have with the players.”

He believes that having an adequate understanding behind the theory of empowerment allows him to effectively apply the notion of empowerment and shared leadership. Through having an understanding behind the notion of empowerment allows the coach to understand the meaning behind why and when empowerment should be applied, and in turn the effects it will have upon the individual, or environment. The understanding behind the various ways in which it can be imposed can be crucial in terms of the impact it has on the environment itself, or the relationship the coach has with individuals. This is because the athletes must trust their coaches to be knowledgeable and make suggestions and decisions to ensure responsibility is in the best interest of the team (Davis *et al.*, 2007).

Overall the relationship held between the coach and Participant A is extremely positive, due to the coaching style implemented within the environment.

“I like his coaching style and feel he is quite approachable and I can go and talk to him with things outside of cricket to, and he is respected largely throughout the squad and I get on well with him.”

The participant believes that the positive relationship he has with the coach derives acutely from the use of empowerment because of the respect already gained for the coach. Empowerment itself has created an open relationship, which he feels is different to previous relationships he has had with other coaches, as a more personal relationship has developed. Participant A states that *‘the use of empowerment develops trust as you know he puts trust in you through how he empowers you.’*

Participant B feels there is slightly too much empowerment used within the environment due to their preference of a more assertive approach to coaching.

“I don’t understand some of his methods on the relationship side of the team, I see a coach as someone who stands at the top gives information and dictates with a little bit of empowerment where as he is kind of the opposite he is more of a player in the team who stands out a bit and gives a little information and empowers a lot.”

This relates to Jones and Standage (2006) critique of the unproblematic implementation of shared Leadership and empowerment in coaching throughout coaching situations, identifying a number of contextual issues that appear to have been overlooked. For example some athletes may not wish to be involved with the decision making process, therefore expecting the coach to impose their expertise to aid them as a performer. Participant B would prefer the coach to use their expertise in order to advise him with regards to the proper form and technique required for him to maximize his full potential (Rao, 2008). Despite this the positive relationship held between coach and athlete is thought by the participant to have derived solely from the use of empowerment. Participant B appreciates the amount of empowerment given to the athletes thus representing the respect he has gained for the coach. The range of responses provided by Participant B demonstrates some degree of uncertainty as to what his preferred style of coaching is. This may be due to a lack of understanding surrounding the notion of empowerment and how the coach imposes it throughout the environment. The diverse view and mixed opinions shown by participant B lead to contradiction throughout his responses. This further raises the question as to whether the player really knows what the coach is trying to achieve through their coaching. The athlete may need to become more theoretically knowledgeable with regards to the options available to them and take greater control over their own development (Jones *et al.*, 2004).

The captain stated that players respect the coach as a consequence of the use of empowerment and the way in which he imposes it within the environment. He believes that the athletes know where they stand and are comfortable with regards

to communicating with the coach. The way, in which the coach states his authority has a positive impact on the captain's feelings towards the coach, stating *'it is important to have a coach that you are able to go to for advice but is also open minded.'* Overall the relationship between captain and coach is extremely positive, developing over the years, as the coach is always there for him whether that be for skill development or advice and feedback. The captain stated that he believes the close relationship; they have continued to develop has derived from the use of empowerment.

"If someone takes an interest in something you want to do or what you want to get out of any session you build a relationship through that, you don't feel like you're just being dictated to I would say that he has a major role in it giving responsibility to people enabling them to do what they want to do and as captain being able to lead from example and given that opportunity through empowerment is important and definitely helped our relationship."

The captain feels that if he wasn't open to such an environment it would influence and may inhibit the side moving forward. Therefore if you are willing to take on responsibilities, the relationship and trust that is held between the two allows for this and continues to grow.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover the impact that empowerment has on the coach-athlete relationship on individuals within a team environment. This study has contributed to knowledge and understanding surrounding the notion of empowerment through analysing the various ways in which empowerment can be imposed. Both the methods behind empowerment were identified as well recognising the positive and negative effects it has on the athletes themselves, and the relationship they share with the coach.

5.2 Key Findings

Overall it appears that the environment itself is extremely positive with a high level of engagement demonstrated by the athletes and a willingness to want to learn and increase performance. It became evident during the observations conducted that the environment in which the coach operates is extremely open, with the athletes having no fear of voicing their opinion or questioning the coach frequently. The impression gained is that despite empowerment being a moderately new coaching tool (Kidman, 2001), it is well utilised and can provide a number benefits to both the coach and their athletes.

It was easy to see how empowerment was imposed throughout the environment. Similarities were identified among the players demonstrating they have a clear enough understanding surrounding the notion of empowerment in order to know how the coach was using it and the effects it then had. Both positive and negative effects of empowerment were indentified through the responses provided by the participants. Both participants A and the captain agreed that empowerment has

an extremely positive impact on the environment allowing athletes to voice their opinions. Participant B however expressed how the coach is not assertive enough with regards to their coaching style with too much empowerment being inflicted. This would suggest that the athlete's preference and personality is fundamental with regards to how they perceive the use of empowerment. Furthermore it is still important for the coach to build character among the athletes so they begin to take responsibility for their performance; which is fundamental to an empowerment approach (Kidman, 2001).

It was expressed by each participant that the positive relationship they had developed with their coach had derived somewhat from the use of empowerment. This demonstrates the importance of a sufficient understanding behind the dynamic power relationship between coach and athlete in order for effective coaching practice to occur (Jones *et al.*, 2004) as displayed throughout the environment. The coach-athlete relationship can however become too personal if the coach allows it to as a result of empowerment. This would suggest that empowerment has to be used within reason and the correct amount of empowerment has to be given to the right athlete as stated by the coach during the interview. This links with the coach needing to develop an understanding of their athlete's personalities in order to help athletes value their strengths and become more aware of the areas in which development may be warranted (Ahmed, 2005). Not only will this have an impact upon the athletes learning, but as this study has demonstrated it is essential to maintaining a positive and appropriate relationship with the athletes.

5.3 Limitations and Further Research

As with all studies, limitations can be digested once the results have been reviewed. This study and current literature have highlighted the general benefits and implications surrounding an empowering approach. Despite this, specific solutions surrounding these implications are yet to be highlighted (Kidman, 2001).

The first limitation identified within this study is the small sample size used, only interviewing four participants. Recommendations for further research surrounding empowerment would be focused on increasing the number of interviewee's. Utilising a greater sample size would allow for greater detail with regards to the results collected. This would then provide a more in depth set of results allowing for further analysis, and greater comparisons to be made.

A second limitation of this study was that only one sports team was used to perform the research. Using a range of sports teams would have allowed for a comparison of results thus providing a greater insight and understanding in to the notion of empowerment and its effects on the coach athlete relationship. Future research would suggest approaching a range of sports such as individual sports coaches and athletes as opposed to team sports only. This would therefore provide the researcher with greater depth in terms of the data collected, providing a contrast between team and individual coaches and their athletes. This would allow for further analysis regarding the type of relationship coach and athlete share and whether there is any significant difference and why. This would add to the body of knowledge surrounding this area of study, creating a distinct decrease in terms of the generalisation of the results collected.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Interview Guides

Participants A and B

Empowerment overview

- Empowerment coaching utilizes extremely similar steps helping to create mutual goals as well as direction, in turn allowing athlete's choice and a degree of control within their sporting environment, whether that be an individual or team environment.
 - An empowering approach to coaching allows athletes to develop a sense of ownership over their own development thus allowing them to actively engage in their learning.
 - For example when coaches question their athletes, and encourage them to actively engage in asking their own questions, it enables the athletes to take ownership of their learning and development, as well as the athletic environment in general.
-
1. Do you feel there is an element of shared leadership within the environment and to what extent?
 2. How do you feel it is used and imposed?
 3. Do you and others see yourself as a senior member of the squad and if so is there more responsibility or an element of leadership placed upon you?
 4. Is there an assumption that you always have certain responsibilities within the team environment?
 5. Do you accept this and how does this affect your relationship with the coach in terms of the responsibilities you take on?

6. Do you believe the responsibility you may have been given etc is more so or less than others?
7. Do you feel motivated as a result? Why is this?
8. Do you feel you have or have gained respect for the coach because of the way he coaches and the way in which he imposes empowerment?
9. How do you feel the coach imposes empowerment with regards to you?
10. Does this create any conflict with team members or the coach and why?
11. Do you feel that you are able to contribute or are entitled to making decisions whether that be throughout the seasons or session etc?
12. Do you feel you are able to share and transfer the knowledge you possess during sessions etc?
13. Were there team goals set at the beginning of the season and do you personally as well as others decide on what these are?
14. To what extent do you get to decide these goals as an individual/team and do you get the overall say or is it the coach which fundamentally decides?
15. Does this affect your respect or relationship with the coach or create any conflict?
16. Do you believe that being empowered allows for new results within the team environment and how is this?
17. Has the way in which the coach manages the environment and the way in which they coach generated leaders within the team?
18. How does this affect the other athletes and their athletes with fellow athletes and the coach?
19. Do you feel that because the environment is extremely open it can often lead to disagreement and why?
20. Do you ever feel sessions become unstructured as a result of empowering athletes and why?
21. Do you feel the coach often takes a backward step in sessions and how does this impact upon the session?
22. Does this impact your relationship with the coach and how?
23. Although empowerment is present within the environment, do you feel it is within reason and why?
24. Does your coach state his authority and gain respect as a consequence, why?

25. How does he state his authority and does this impact upon your relationship and feelings towards them?
26. Overall do you feel you have a positive or negative relationship with your coach?
27. Does this derive at all from the use of shared leadership and empowerment within the environment and how it is used?

Captain

Empowerment overview

- Empowerment coaching utilizes extremely similar steps helping to create mutual goals as well as direction, in turn allowing athlete's choice and a degree of control within their sporting environment, whether that be an individual or team environment.
- An empowering approach to coaching allows athletes to develop a sense of ownership over their own development thus allowing them to actively engage in their learning.
- For example when coaches question their athletes, and encourage them to actively engage in asking their own questions, it enables the athletes to take ownership of their learning and development, as well as the athletic environment in general.

1. Do you feel there is an element of shared leadership within the environment and to what extent?
2. How do you feel it is used and imposed?
3. Do you feel as captain there is an increased responsibility placed upon you and how is this?
4. How does the responsibility placed with you differ from that of other senior members of the squad?

5. Do you accept this and how does this affect your relationship with the coach in terms of the responsibilities you take on?
6. Do you feel motivated as a result? Why is this?
7. Do you feel you have or have gained respect for the coach because of the way he coaches and the way in which he imposes empowerment?
8. How do you feel the coach imposes empowerment with regards to you?
9. Does this create any conflict with team members or the coach and why?
10. As captain to what extent are you able to contribute or are entitled to making decisions with regards to the team itself or other aspects surrounding the team, whether that be throughout sessions or in other way etc?
11. Do you feel you are able to share and transfer the knowledge you possess during sessions etc?
12. Were there team goals set at the beginning of the season and to what extent as captain are you able to decide on what these are, and is it more so than other team members?
13. Does this affect your respect or relationship with the coach or create any conflict?
14. Do you believe that being empowered allows for new results within the team environment and how is this?
15. Has the way in which the coach manages the environment and the way in which he coaches increased your skills as captain and made you better as a result, how?
16. Has this affected the relationship you have with him? How? (in terms of respect etc)
17. Do you feel that because the environment is extremely open it can often lead to disagreement and why?
18. Do you ever feel sessions become unstructured as a result of empowering athletes and why?
19. Do you feel the coach often takes a backward step in sessions and how does this impact upon the session?
20. Do you feel as captain at this point you should or are expected to take the lead? If so why and how?
21. Does this impact your relationship with the coach and how?

22. Although empowerment is present within the environment, do you feel it is within reason and why?
23. Does your coach state his authority and gain respect as a consequence, why?
24. How does he state his authority and does this impact upon your relationship and feelings towards them?
25. Overall do you feel you have a positive or negative relationship with your coach?
26. Does this derive at all from the use of shared leadership and empowerment within the environment and how it is used and the fact that you are captain?

Coach

1. How successful do you feel the team will be this year?
2. Do you feel this is as a result of the way in which you manage the environment and the styles of coaching you use?
3. Do you feel empowerment and the notion of shared leadership is apparent within your coaching and to what extent?
4. How is it imposed within your coaching?
5. Do you feel empowerment is shared equally among individuals or does it tend to be directed more towards what as seen as the senior players within the environment? Why is this?
6. Does this create any conflict among individuals or with you as coach? Why? How?
7. How do you feel you empower or share leadership with the athletes?
8. Do you feel the athletes are entitled or do they contribute to any decision making with regards to you, the environment or themselves for example?
9. How is this a benefit/disadvantage to you as coach?
10. Do you feel athletes become more motivated as a result of you giving them certain responsibilities and why?
11. Do you feel this leads to the athletes in becoming more self-sufficient and self-aware? How?

12. Do you allow the athletes to share and implement their knowledge within sessions etc? How?
13. How does this affect your relationship with them maybe in terms of trust/respect for example?
14. Do you not feel that athletes will begin to accept responsibility and almost become docile or is there still role clarity?
15. Do you fear that empowering athletes will create predictable results? Why?
16. Do you feel that in using empowerment you have developed a team of leaders or maybe just certain individuals?
17. How has this influenced the environment and their relationship with you?
18. Do you feel that the sessions ever become unstructured or there is no real agreement at times as a result of empowerment and why?
19. What do you believe the athletes expect from you as coach and do they share this with you?
20. Is this a result of the trust and respect you have built with them?
21. How do you feel you have built this trust and respect from the athletes?
22. Has the use of empowerment and shared leadership influenced this trust and to what extent?
23. Do you believe the athletes predominantly rely on you and in what ways?
24. Do you ever take a back seat and let the athletes lead sessions or certain parts of the session? Why is this and what impact does it have not only on the session but your relationship with the athletes?
25. Do you feel you have authority over the team and to what extent?
26. How do you state this authority?
27. Does this impact on your relationship with the athletes or how does it affect your relationship?
28. Do you feel that it is important you are seen as the person with the most authority and why?
29. Overall do you feel that the use of empowerment and how you implement this into your coaching has affected or does affect the relationship you have with the athletes and why

APPENDIX B

**CARDIFF METROPOLITAN
INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

CSS Reference No:

Title of Project: How does the use of empowerment affect the
coach-athlete relationship within a team environment?

Name of Researcher: Thomas Emery

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated November/December 2012 for this evaluation 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 it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.

3. I also understand that if this happens, our relationships with the Cardiff Metropolitan University or our legal rights will not be affected

4. I understand that information from the study may be used for Reporting purposes, but I will not be identified.

1. I agree to take part in this study on November/December 2012

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature of person taking consent

* When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files.

APPENDIX C

Cardiff School of Sport Ethics Committee Research Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: How does the use of Empowerment affect the coach-athlete relationship within a team environment?

This document provides a run through of:

- 1) The background and aim of the research,
- 2) My role as the researcher,
- 3) Your role as a participant,
- 4) Benefits of taking part,
- 5) How data will be collected, and
- 6) How the data / research will be used.

The purpose of this document is to assist you in making an *informed* decision about whether you wish to be included in the project, and to promote transparency in the research process.

1) Background and aims of the research

To find how the use of empowerment affects and impacts the coach athlete relationship within a team environment. This research will aim to find your thoughts and feelings towards empowerment coaching, and how you and the researcher believe it affects your relationship with the head coach.

2) My role as the researcher:

The project involves me (Thomas Emery), the researcher, conducting a semi-structured interview with you as well as observing practice prior interviews taking place.

3) Your role as a participant:

Your role is to be as honest as possible during the interviews providing the researcher with a clear insight into your views and opinions of empowerment coaching and how it affects your relationship with the coach. The interview will include questions about your attitudes about your previous sporting experiences and how this may be different to your current experiences. Also how you perceive the style of coaching and how you feel it affects your relationship and the success and attitude of the team. You do not have to respond to every question should you wish not to.

4) Benefits of taking part:

The information we obtain from this study will allow better insight into the effects of empowerment coaching on the coach-athlete relationship. From this we will aim to understand more about what the individuals involved feel about empowerment

coaching and how it affects not only you as individuals but also them team as a whole. We will be happy to share this information to any of the participants of this study, although your identity will remain anonymous throughout the research.

5) How data will be collected:

As alluded to above, data will be collected from the semi structured interviews conducted as well as the observation of performance. The interviews will take place after the observation of performance has been conducted.

How the data / research will be used:

In agreeing to become a voluntary participant, you will be allowing me to use your responses to the questions throughout the interview and compare them with the observations I experience when viewing your training sessions.

Your rights

Your right as a voluntary participant is that you are free to enter or withdraw from the study at any time. This simply means that you are in full control of the part you play in informing the research, and what anonymous information is used in its final reporting.

Protection to privacy

Concerted efforts will be made to hide your identity in any written transcripts, notes, and associated documentation that inform the research and its findings. Furthermore, any personal information about you will remain confidential according to the guidelines of the Data Protection Act (1998).

Contact

If you require any further details, or have any outstanding queries, feel free to contact me on the details printed below.

Mr. Thomas Emery

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