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Comments	Section		
	Title and Abstract (5%) Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem. Abstract to include: A concise summary of the empirical study undertaken.		
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	<p>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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Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd

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**EXPLORING THE APPLICATION OF A TACTICAL
GAMES APPROACH IN SENIOR SOCCER USING A
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE DESIGN**

PEDAGOGY

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**EXPLORING THE APPLICATION OF A TEACHING GAMES FOR
UNDERSTANDING APPROACH IN SENIOR SOCCER USING A
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE DESIGN**

Cardiff Metropolitan University
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronyms and Abbreviations	Full term
NGB	National Governing body
TGA	Tactical Games Approach
TGfU	Teaching Games for Understanding
CE	Coach Education
GCA	Game Centred Approach
UKCC	United Kingdom Coaching Certificate

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(Jeremiah 29:11 [NIV])

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”.

Thank you.

Abstract

Background: Recent studies have highlighted the difficulties in changing already-established practices within coaching as it can be problematic and against the traditional culture of coaching. Interventions such as the Tactical Games Approach (TGA) have been recognised as a way for practitioners to move away from their 'comfort zone' and develop a pedagogical underpinning that focuses on player-centred learning; whilst encouraging a self-reflection process to improve their practice.

Methods: With this in mind, the purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of a Tactical Games Approach in senior soccer using a reflective practice design. The data were collected through personal reflections (over a period of 10 weeks) and a focus group interview, and were analysed using thematic analysis to establish principal themes. Four overall themes emerged: (1) planning; (2) implementing the TGA framework; (3) player perception of TGA and training; and (4) developing a coach identity.

Results and Discussion: The findings showed that the coaches' values, beliefs, dispositions and identity were challenged by the TGA, and that TGA could be utilised – along with reflective practice - to recognise potential areas for improvement and development in coaching.

Conclusions: While this study promoted the coach's use of TGA to alter current practice, the interpretations developed through reflective practice indicated that the process was not effective enough to change the players existing ideology. Although the players recognised the potential with adopting TGA, underlying issues such as its pedagogic underpinning and coaching habitus prevented it from developing further. A case could be made for more TGfU/Game Sense within formal coach education where future research could look for new ways of understanding player development – other than questioning – and see whether gender has an influence on the effectiveness of constructivist approaches.

Keywords: Tactical Games Approach; reflective practice; amateur soccer; coaching

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Coach Education (CE) programmes have traditionally been created to provide learning resources for coaches to acquire well-defined information in which experts believe coaches should know in order to be certified (Cushion *et al.*, 2003). Central to the development of CE programmes are the National Governing Body (NGB) coaching awards; that normally occur in short blocks of time and are often years apart (Knowles *et al.*, 2001).

1.1 Traditional Coach Education

Due to a lack of support and follow-up opportunities from CE programmes to integrate new knowledge into coaching practice, improving the standard of coaching has not been straight forward (Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2004). As a result, only a limited number of CE models have been able to meet the needs and guidelines of the NGB to certify their coaches (Cushion *et al.*, 2003). This may be due to portraying models of 'gold standard' coaching which learners are expected to mimic (Cushion *et al.*, 2010; Nelson, Cushion and Potrac, 2006). Furthermore, coaches are continually being perceived as 'empty vessels', waiting to be filled with technical and tactical information; where 'knowable sequences' of information are required to be transmitted in a clear and explicit way (Potrac *et al.*, 2002).

As a consequence, the majority of coaching knowledge and practice has not come from CE programmes but rather, from personal interpretations/ experiences and history of involvement with the sport (Cushion, Armour and Jones, 2003; Cushion, 2006; Cushion *et al.*, 2010). It is with this in mind that CE programmes would benefit from an explicit theoretical model to facilitate the notion of how coaches learn as oppose to merely what they learn (Nelson and Cushion, 2006). One particular method that could provide support to linking knowledge gained from professional experience, observations, coaching theory and education is reflective practice (Nelson and Cushion, 2006). Viewing reflection as a way of generating new knowledge about a concept (as oppose to learning from an experience), new ways of connecting research, CE and practice could be developed along with the aim of transforming already-established traditional methods of CE (Nelson and Cushion,

2006). Nevertheless, even though there is an array of literature focusing on ways in which CE can be improved (Reid and Harvey, 2014), some of the underlying issues regarding its ideology and epistemology still remain.

1.2 Challenging Traditional Cultures

Therefore, challenging the already-established practices within traditional coaching culture can be somewhat problematic (Cushion, 2013). Alternative agendas for CE have presented ways in which skilled coaches can apply innovative pedagogies such as Game Centred Approaches (GCAs) to coaching because of their 'constructivist' and 'social-constructionist' nature (Cushion, 2013). One method in particular that has shown to challenge embedded cultures within physical education programmes and, alternatively within coaching to facilitate such a response, is Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) (Bunker and Thorpe, 1982). TGfU is a model of teaching that requires the learner to be at the centre of the process and the coach to reposition themselves as a facilitator; contrary to traditional coaching practice (Harvey et al., 2010). The tactical approach was introduced largely as a result of dissatisfaction with the 'skills first' approach in physical education programmes and therefore an interest in integrating skills into contextualised situations deemed necessary.

1.3 Study Purpose

While there has been extensive research on TGfU within physical education (Butler, 2005; Gurvitch, Metzler and Lund, 2008), there has been a dearth of research focusing on TGfU approach within the field of coaching (Harvey, 2009). Recent studies by Harvey et al. (2010) and Roberts (2011) have begun to address this issue by investigating the use of TGfU with participants of youth and adults in sports such as rugby, cricket and soccer. However, there has been limited research on its use with amateur soccer players who have partial experiences of high-level, competitive soccer. Furthermore, there has been limited research on the researcher adopting the role as a player- coach within the study; exploring how the approach works from a coach and player perspective, and then reflecting on practice based on personal interpretations (see Gubacs-Collins, 2007).

The following chapter will include a review of previous and current literature surrounding the use of tactical approaches in coaching. The third chapter will outline the methods and methodology to explain how the study will be conducted. The fourth chapter will discuss the findings of this research and how they may add to the current knowledge on implementing a tactical games approach to coaching. Finally, the discussion will be followed by a conclusion to the report.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Review of Literature

The following chapter will review the current literature within coach education (CE) and its adoption of game centred approaches (GCAs). A critical analysis will explain how reflective practice can benefit coaches and its importance in improving future performances. After establishing the need for reflection, the use of Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) will be explored and more specifically, why a Tactical Games Approach (TGA) should be utilised within adult amateur soccer. Finally, the latter sections will discuss other, common variations of TGfU by comparing them with TGA and will then justify the reasons, aims and objectives for this research.

2.1 Current Coach Education and use of Reflective Practice.

The educational development of sports coaches in the UK is complex and for many coaches necessitates the pursuit of an individualised and, often, ad hoc learning pathway (Knowles *et al.*, 2001). The Welsh Football Trust (2015) is one such CE programme – created by the Welsh FA – that provides courses for all candidates, at all levels, to help develop coaches' technical, tactical and medical knowledge in Wales. It aims to provide opportunities for coaches to enhance their skills and knowledge and progress through respective coaching qualifications. These courses occur in short blocks of time, usually several months if not years apart (Galvin, 1998), consisting of taught and examined elements; including coaching and training principles and sport specific coaching theory.

However, due to the majority of coach learning being interpreted and built upon personal experiences, Gilbert and Trudel (2006) suggest that formal CE lacks context, meaning and becomes low-impact in comparison (Mallett *et al.*, 2009). As a result, the coaches' practice is “guided primarily by tradition, circumstance and external authority” (Tinning, 1988, p82). In support of this statement, Potrac and Cassidy (2006) suggest that coaching has established a ‘traditional’ pedagogy over the years and is considered as being highly autocratic in nature where ‘instruction’ is the more commonly utilised approach across a range of sports.

In light of these findings, Wenger (1998), along with Sfard's (1998) second acquisition learning metaphor, highlight that learning can come from experience and participation in sport. Jones et al.'s (2004) study conducted interviews with eight elite coaches from national team sports to explore factors that made an impact on their practice. Most of the accounts revealed that practical experiences, either through observation or discussion with other coaches, seemed to be of more importance than their certification of becoming a coach. Similarly, athletes who evolved through sport were able to spend more time with experienced coaches, learning through observations and working with them (Salmela, 1995). Most of the coaches within this study agreed that in order to develop as a coach, expertise in formal CE along with experiences and forms of mentorship were still required. Even though this may be the case, to obtain practical yet thoroughly holistic CE programmes, Cushion, Armour and Jones (2003) suggest that complex ontologies of coaching and coaching knowledge itself needs to be established first before trying to develop ways to improve it. Conducting this study with a reflective practice design may provide further understanding on how pertinent education and experience is for coaching.

There have been recent studies discovering ways in which current CE programmes can be improved. One study in particular focused on the influence of implementing game sense pedagogy in a formal CE programme (Reid and Harvey, 2014). The research indicated that deep levels of pedagogical understanding from both coach educator and NGB were required in order to see any successful changes to occur within coaching practice. Moreover, due to a lack of support in applying the approach and misinterpretations of the concept, it was suggested that shifting traditional, directive coaching to one that was player-centred represented huge challenges and were therefore unable to effectively implement the approach (Reid and Harvey, 2014). Though the programme displayed the need for re-establishment, utilising this approach in itself required a change of fundamental ideologies; where there were concerns placed on what the learner learnt, rather than what the coach learnt - contrary to traditional viewpoints.

Innovations to improve CE programmes, like these, have yet to fully establish themselves and provide clear links for good coaching practice (Reid and Harvey, 2014). However, Knowles et al. (2001) explains that encouraging practitioners to reflect upon practice is thought to create the opportunity for an exploration of good practice, identifying areas for improvement and formulating ideas for change. Research within this area has identified that youth coaches learned more effectively by engaging with three forms of reflective practice: reflection-in-action (i.e. during the action), reflection-on-action (i.e. within the action present but not in the midst of activity), and retrospective reflection-on-action (i.e. outside of the action) (Gilbert and Trudel, 2001). For reflection to occur, Gilbert and Trudel (2001) discovered that the coaches' personal philosophy of coaching needed to coincide with what they perceived as a potential coaching issue; identifying which situation was/was not worthy of reflection. Although this method can be effective, problems can be exacerbated when individuals only focus on the negative aspects of performance and search for problems on uneventful days (Knowles *et al.*, 2001). This, as Dixon, Lee and Ghaye (2012) contest, proves that there is, at times, an over reliance of reflecting-on-action and calls for less mechanistic processes and more emotional engagement. Trudel and Gilbert (2006) highlight that reasons as to why coaches seek to identify and solve problems is because of the way the coaching programmes borrow from experiential learning; where coaches must be competent in setting problems and then develop a strategy to solve them. Interestingly, this notion of cherry-picking ideas from other fields; primarily from teacher education and health care, may be one of the reasons why practitioners resist reflective practice and why 'force-fitting' reflective models can lead to frustration (Dixon, Lee and Ghaye, 2012). Nevertheless, there has been a major shift in the field of reflective practice where a movement away from the cultured purpose of reflection (focusing on fixing what went wrong in a performance) is heading towards a practice of reflection that provides a focus on performance successes and strengths. This is crucial for developing and sustaining successful performance once it has been achieved (Dixon, Lee and Ghaye, 2012).

Though there is an emphasis on promoting new initiatives for changing CE in the UK (such as implementing the UK Coaching Certificate [UKCC]), significant steps for the inclusion of reflective practices – within the education of coaches – has been thought to have a potent role in facilitating the gap between education and knowledge. However, without careful considerations on the content, structure, delivery and outcomes, Cushion et al. (2003) believes the approach could just simply rebrand the current approaches to CE.

2.2 Adoption of Game-Centred Approaches

Although evidence from research has highlighted issues concerning current coaching programmes, coaching alone is becoming increasingly regarded as a social practice (Cushion and Jones, 2012). From this perspective, coaching is not just a simple application of an instructional model, rather, it is the result of complex interactions between coach and athlete (Cushion, Armour and Jones, 2006). Cushion (2011) explains that the way in which these factors interlink are the most important features to influence athlete learning. GCAs then, allow learners to become active participants in their learning where previous knowledge and experience can impact on how they learn within a physical and social environment. Learners are situated within this context so that social interaction becomes central to the learning process (Harvey *et al.*, 2010; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Light and Evans, 2010). Less attention can then be given to refining techniques of skills and moreover, participants can interact with others; solving tactical and technical problems by themselves (Light and Evans, 2010).

There have been many studies that question the effectiveness of GCAs and whether they facilitate learning (see Cushion, 2013; Harvey and Jarrett, 2014; Reid and Harvey, 2014). Cushion (2013) in particular applied GCAs to coaching and, using Windschitl's (2002) dilemmas of practice to illustrate the complexity of coaching, found that features which make GCAs effective are those that provide the most challenge to coaches. However, Butler (2005) and Harvey et al. (2010) highlight that although this may be the case, authentic practices of GCAs can be important catalysts for change. Evidently, some coaches are able to consistently and successfully employ GCAs within their own practice, yet the challenge requires a

joint transformation from researchers, coaches and coach educators (Roberts, 2011) to provide theoretical knowledge that can convert dilemmas into attributes and facilitate the development of coaching GCAs into practice (Cushion, 2013). Another study by Harvey and Jarrett (2014) reviewed GCAs within teaching and coaching literature to highlight a number of core concepts thought to provide justification for the use of GCAs. The conclusions raised were that GCA pedagogies are of significant importance due to the potential they have to promote change within adult-centric cultures of youth sport and an engagement in physically active lifestyles. Though the research into GCAs has been increasing across the world and evidence for promoting change is apparent, there are still a number of issues within GCA research that still remain; where there is a necessity for teachers and coaches to have further training (Harvey and Jarrett, 2014).

2.3 The TGfU Approach

As mentioned within the previous chapter, one constructivist model in particular, Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) (Bunker and Thorpe, 1982, 1983, 1986) allows the learner to become actively involved in understanding, interpreting and solving problems through social interactions (Kirk and McPhail, 2002). Roberts (2011) suggests that this approach also draws upon social constructionism where an emphasis is placed on cognitive learning theory (Butler, 2005); meaning that knowing 'what to do' rather than 'how to do it' is of more importance. Despite the considerable debate surrounding the contribution TGfU has made in physical education and sporting environments (Butler, 2005), research into game-centred coaching can aid in further developing the TGfU approach, which was originally developed as a PE curriculum model (Butler *et al.*, 2008). With regards to this matter, there have been numerous studies exploring the implementation of TGfU within physical education. Butler (2005) explored ways in which TGfU could become part of every-day practice for both beginner and experienced teachers; understanding why some teachers adopt TGfU and why others stick to technique-based approaches. Features, similar to those observed within CE literature, found that the teachers' feelings of moving out of their 'comfort zone' and into unfamiliar areas were challenging; where essential ingredients for change concerned the individuals' core belief as oppose to their previous practice and experience. In

addition, though beginner teachers recognised the benefits of applying TGfU to their practice, many had indicated that a carefully structured support system was required to help aid their development of the approach. Nonetheless, the paper set out to encourage the use of TGfU within mainstream practice and suggested student exposure to constructivist learning theory should be emphasised throughout major clubs worldwide (Butler, 2005). Similarly, Tan, Chow and David's (2012) research sought to provide further insight to the processes which underpin TGfU. Adjusting complex tasks to adequately challenge learners and exposing students with games that shared similar tactical characteristics allowed positive transfers of learning to occur from one game to another. These conclusions have helped physical educators solve some of the underlying issues to engaging student learning and instil appropriate resources for curriculum development in schools (Tan, Chow and David, 2012).

2.4 Tactical Games Approach (TGA)

While there has been a lack of research surrounding the application of similar approaches within coaching settings – particularly within football (Harvey, 2009), Thomas, Morgan and Mesquita (2013) suggest that applying TGfU variations such as Game Sense (Light, 2012), Play Practice (Lauder and Piltz, 2013) and the Tactical Games Approach (TGA) (Griffin, Mitchel and Oslin, 1997) to facilitate learning within physical education, the same could be applied to coaching as it experiences similar processes to teaching. A variation of TGfU in particular, TGA, amalgamates Bunker and Thorpe's (1982) six-staged TGfU model of: game, game-appreciation, tactical awareness, appropriate decision-making, skill execution and performance, into three stages: game form, tactical awareness and skill execution. Based on the latter approach, training sessions usually start with a modified game to assess the players' tactical and skill knowledge (Thomas, Morgan and Mesquita, 2013). The focus is then changed to a question and answer session to promote critical thinking and problem solving. From here, suitable skills are identified and practiced before reinforcing these skills in a game context to complete the session (Mitchell, Oslin, and Griffin, 2006). De Souza and Mitchell (2010) suggest that this idea is in contrast with 'traditional' coaching where techniques are developed in isolation to game context; a skill is explained or demonstrated then practiced before

concluding the session with a game. Though this dominant, traditional approach has proven to be successful in physical education (Butler, 2005; Gurvitch, Metzler and Lund, 2008) and coaching (Gubacs-Collins, 2007), it has had limited success in transferring skills from the training field into games (Bunker and Thorpe, 1982). Theorists within the discipline have begun to question its effectiveness as it fails to consider the contextual nature of games. Mcpherson and French (1991) state that adopting a games knowledge does not refer to the ability to execute complex skills alone, rather it helps an individual to understand how and when to use the skill within a game situation. If a soccer player dribbles the ball effectively but cannot react to team mates and the opposition during a game, the skill would not be beneficial. However, to become skilled in playing the game, the performer must develop the ability to evaluate a game situation, identify the response options and then select the most appropriate response for that particular situation (Mcpherson and French, 1991). By doing this, the player is able to understand the situation for themselves and implement a similar response when challenged with a related situation in the future.

2.5 Adaptations of TGfU

Although this may be the case, there is a need for further TGfU coaching studies to be conducted (Mitchell, Oslin, and Griffin, 2006). Areas of research that have attempted to apply TGfU variations in practice are rugby union (Light, 2004), cricket (Roberts, 2011) and football (Harvey, Cushion and Massa-Gonzalez, 2010). Light (2004) discovered that when the Australian national governing bodies promoted the implementation of 'Game Sense' as a coaching tool within rugby union, it had limited impact on the widespread of coaching practice. Despite the coaches value on game-based training, many experiencing 'Game Sense' identified the challenge of changing from an instructive coach to a more player-centred, facilitative one (Light, 2004). Other, more common areas of difficulty occurred when trying to use effective questions with the players (Light, 2004). Similarly, many cricket coaches found the same complications when trying to conceptualise the model and maintain a constructivist approach (Roberts, 2011). Both sets of coaches often reverted back to using traditional skill-based pedagogy due to the practitioners finding difficulty with questions, following a sequence that expects only one correct answer; therefore

preventing opportunities for discussion and becoming contrary to the constructivist approach (Wright and Forrest, 2007). However, using appropriate types of questioning such as *what?*, *where?*, *why?* and *how?*, more appropriate responses can be extracted from learners (Kidman, 2005). The application of these questioning techniques in TGfU have been criticised due to the lack of resources available to support coaches. Nevertheless, Fosnot (1996) looked at how a concept such as TGfU can be effective for questioning individuals who struggle to learn independently, Fosnot (1996) also suggested that there is potential for cognitive constructivism to be relative on an adult level. Ironically, many questioning sequences have promoted power relationships between learners and the coach which is incongruous with the constructivist approach developed for learning (Wright and Forrest, 2007). Since there is often an authoritarian culture to coaching, the power dynamic between player and coach is frequently expressed in every situation (Jones and Standage, 2006) where coaches, in practice, apply high levels of prescriptive instruction; devaluing the TGfU approach (Partington and Cushion, 2011).

Harvey, Cushion and Massa-Gonzalez (2010) study in particular looked at how changing established coaching practice can become problematic; where coaches - lacking a critical tradition - are more likely to stay with 'safer', 'tried and tested', traditional methods. Despite this, both football coaches involved identified that integrating TGfU into training sessions had a positive influence on players' game performances and allowed coaches to question their own practice and beliefs about the game. However, the coaches did not fully incorporate the constructivist approach into their practice. Rather, they implied that the pressures faced by competitive sport would not permit a fundamental change to their traditional practice (Harvey, Cushion and Massa-Gonzalez, 2010). Therefore, it seems to be that concerns are raised when a coach is given a choice of role to play in context of applying TGfU or one of its variations (Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2004). These folk pedagogies can result in coaches taking parts of GCA from its whole, meaning its application is distorted and cannot be fully understood (Roberts, 2011). In circumstances where the learner receives little guidance from the coach and is unfamiliar with the sport, the learner would need to require the ability to structure their own learning (Windschitl, 2002). This misunderstanding can lead to individuals believing that involvement alone will

be sufficient enough for drawing on prior experiences and constructing knowledge (Windschitl, 2002). Jones and Wallace (2006) suggest that coaches can oppose the notion of continuously dictating play by stepping back and 'steering' the coaching process, rather than controlling it. This may then allow the coach to become facilitative as oppose to being instructive.

Similar research by Harvey (2009) suggests that even though the benefits of TGfU are recognised within the literature, learner's experiences of such approaches have not been central to their work. This induces a certain element of useful-insight by player perceptions to facilitate the coaching pedagogy. A strength of this study underlined by the student's perception was that when the coach 'got the game right', a positive transfer of learning to match-type situations became successful. However, negative transfers occurred when the coach did not 'get the game right'. Although this was observed, Harvey (2009) explains that the solution may be more of a reflection on the way the intervention was conducted, rather than the pedagogy itself.

2.6 Justification for Research

While the traditional style of coaching has had limited success over the years for transferring skills into a game-play context, many coaches believe that traditional methods can still be just as effective (Richard and Wallian, 2005; Wright and Forrest, 2007) and suggest that adopting a new approach is unnecessary. Nevertheless, further research has shown that by implementing TGfU variations (such as TGA) can provide more effective ways of learning as it situates the player at the centre of the process. Thomas, Morgan and Mesquita (2013) infer that reflecting on coaching practice is also essential in developing the strategies required to implement a TGfU approach. While the process of self-reflection within teaching is well understood, the literature of TGfU within the coaching domain is sparse; especially in youth sport environments (Thomas, Morgan and Mesquita, 2013). An investigation within this area of self-reflection could unearth a better understanding of games related practice, especially in terms of learning how to use more effective questioning and providing a more player-centred approach (Gilbert and Trudel, 2006). Furthermore, reflective practice could be utilised to explore the factors that Jones et al. (2004)

eludes to as having an impact on coaches practice where learning how to coach can come from experience and participation in sport (Sfard, 1998; Wenger, 1998).

It is with this in mind that a number of issues regarding the adoption of pedagogical principles into coaching practice still remain where only a limited number of skilled coaches have been able to successfully employ GCAs (Cushion *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, this study will seek to understand the difficulty of applying a constructivist approach to promote learning in a social environment that encourages learning from a coach and player perspective. Also, it will investigate why it may be problematic for coach educators whose underpinning epistemology is of traditional coaching practice and instruction in nature. In addition, the study will challenge the hypothesis that formal CE is necessary in order to coach. Furthermore, the research will explore how the reflection on (and in) practice may improve future performance and provide effective strategies to address performance strengths and weaknesses.

This study is qualitative based and aims to explore the application of a Tactical Games Approach in senior soccer using a reflective practice design. The primary objective is to critically reflect on the application of TGA and the learning experienced by the players.

The main objectives are to identify:

1. What are the perceived outcomes of implementing TGA with amateur soccer players?
2. Does TGA have an impact on players' game-performance and knowledge of the sport?
3. Can reflective practice have a potent effect on the coaches' practice?
4. Can inexperienced coaches adopt a constructivist approach to suit the pedagogical underpinning of player-centred coaching practice?

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY/ METHODS

3.0 Methodology

The methodology chapter will discuss why this study is qualitative based and suggest how the data is going to be collected for analysis. Then, once the research design is clarified, the second part of the chapter – methods – will focus on the procedures that were taken to collect the data and what tools were used to collect it. Finally, the chapter will conclude with how the data was analysed and how the study could be made trustworthy.

3.1 Methodology and Research Design

Qualitative research is a process that eludes a fixed, measurable phenomenon, assumed to constitute the world and instead, create a social construction between individuals who interact with the world (Merriam, 2002). An interpretive paradigm of the world can allow researchers to interpret and understand the realities of emerging data that have not yet been discovered/ explored (Sparkes, 1992). This grants new knowledge to be created and permits the exploration of themes on new areas that have previously lacked research (Campbell, 2014). The reason why I (the principle researcher) have chosen this approach is because I acknowledge the complexity of reflective practice within coach education, yet alone TGA, and assume that I cannot predict what is going to happen. In addition, since the process is subjective in nature and is purely driven by interpretations of the constructivist approach, the methodology and methods are compelled by the research aims and objectives.

It is in light of this hypothesis that the intention and nature of this research will be of a reflective practice design. Clear definitions of what reflective practice is can be quite complex and therefore require an array of definitions; which are inherent within the

literature. Knowles et al. (2014) defines it explicitly as a “purposeful and complex process that facilitates the examination of experience by questioning the whole self and our agency within the context of practice” (p.10). The purpose for its use are evident as it has the potential to develop knowledge that sometimes, can be portrayed in a messy reality which is difficult to comprehend in sport (Heaney, Oakley and Rea, 2010). Furthermore, knowing that some situations are rarely represented as easily definable and resolvable problems, reflective practice allows professionals – especially trainees/ inexperienced individuals like myself – to bridge the gap between theory and practice; helping to reconstruct a way of developing full, professional knowledge (Knowles *et al.*, 2014).

Selecting a sample of participants has a profound effect on the ultimate quality of qualitative research (Coyne, 1997). The study requires purposeful sampling where informants are willingly able to share good, insightful knowledge with the researcher (Morse, 2000). Therefore the sample had been chosen based on these factors and were consistent with the criteria of the research question.

3.2 Participants and Setting

The study took place at a local leisure centre every Thursday evening with a local amateur football team. As head coach, the aim was to prepare the team for the competitive matches on the weekend. Ten TGA sessions were delivered over a period of ten weeks (Appendix A); which is a time frame considered in recent research within TGA sessions (see Thomas, Morgan and Mesquita, 2013). The sessions were designed to give players the opportunity to engage with a variety of different tactical football problems (Griffin, Mitchell and Oslin, 1997) and practice the appropriate tactical responses. This allowed a clear transfer of tactical knowledge to be conveyed in a real-game situation. In order to promote critical thinking and problem solving skills, five categories of questions were utilised. These questions involved; skill, movement, time, space and tactical awareness (Griffin, Mitchell and Oslin, 1997). The number of players attending each session, across the whole ten-week period, ranged from a minimum of 8 to maximum of 14 players. The participants involved with the focus group gave consent to conduct the study and were reminded that their involvement was voluntary and were free to withdraw at any

time without penalty (Appendix B and C). The Ethics Committee at Cardiff Metropolitan University approved the study's protocols in this regard, while all the names used within this manuscript and reflective diary are pseudonyms (Please see the evidence file attached for participant information).

3.3 Methods and Data Collection

The study was guided by an interpretive epistemology where emphasis was placed on constructivism; creating knowledge that was implicit and explicit (Sparkes, 1992). As the lead researcher and coach during the implementation of the TGA approach, I could adopt an insiders' perspective in relation to the work. Having this insight of the player's ability, personality, interaction, engagement and relationship with them allowed me to implement new ideas from an already-established position (Thomas, Morgan and Mesquita, 2013).

A semi-structured group interview and reflective journal (Appendix D) was utilized (Trelfa and Telfer, 2014) to gather information on players' performance, tactical decisions and thoughts created during training. The reflective questions included: Was the tactical problem appropriate to the session? Was there anything I could have done differently? (Gubacs-Collins, 2007; Thomas, Morgan and Mesquita, 2013). Each journal entry included the date, location, time of coaching, number of participants and the focus of the reflection itself (McKernan, 1996). Additionally, a semi-structured group interview was used to collect data related to the group's perception of using the TGA. The interview took place at a designated venue that ensured the participants comfort and familiarity. The aim of the interview was to understand how the participants interpreted their participation of the soccer TGA sessions (in comparison to other types of coaching experienced). Players were asked for their thoughts on the Q&A element of the practice segment, whether they preferred this style of coaching and how they perceived me as either coach or player in training (and/or in match-play on the weekend).

The purpose for utilising these qualitative methods were due to the research question itself. Gratton and Jones (2010) suggest that qualitative approaches are of more value when one's particular epistemological preference leads to an interpretive study of a phenomenon so that the research question may be developed. Therefore a focus group interview was utilised – as oppose to an individual interview – because the participants were relatively unfamiliar with the constructivist approach adopted for the study. Gratton and Jones (2010) explain that 'rich' ideas can be generated when groups of individuals interact with each other and have in-depth discussions to produce valuable data (that may not be evident with individual interviews). Furthermore, a reflective journal was chosen due to the nature of the study. Since I, the lead researcher, wanted to understand the ontology of TGA and implement it within an unknown environment, its inclusion helped make sense of the experience, through writing (Knowles *et al.*, 2014), and helped understand and cope with the complex context imposed by sport (Cropley and Hanton, 2011). Gratton and Jones (2010) highlight that other methods, such as a case study, would not be applicable within this style of exploration because case study research takes the perspective of those within the case, rather than the researcher's perspective. Therefore, comparisons and interpretations of the implementation of TGA, from coach/researcher and participant, would not have been made available to answer the aims and objectives of the study.

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Reflection and Focus Group Interview

The procedures of analysing the data were based on the inductive method suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) and followed a six-staged process (Appendix E). This approach allows data to be coded without trying to fit in with pre-existing coding frames or the researcher's analytic preconceptions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, it enables the analyst to search for patterns and areas of potential interest throughout the data collection process (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Writing down and recording data is an integral part of the process (as analysis involves a constant moving back and forward between data) (Braun and Clarke,

2006) and therefore started in the first week; continuing right through the entire analysis process. Once the data had been transcribed, I found myself reading through the text and underlining passages that seemed important in relation to the research question. Similarly, the focus group interview was transcribed verbatim; where the data was read and re-read the following day (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Once I had become familiar with the data, codes – which had already been identified – were matched with data extracts demonstrating that particular code. 31 codes were identified altogether where examples include; ‘Unfamiliarity with constructivist approach’, ‘Player ability’, ‘Knowledge of sport’, ‘Coach Identity’ and ‘Existing ideologies’.

When all of the data extracts had been coded in a systematic fashion, a collation of these codes - relevant to the research question – were gathered and placed in to potential themes. At this stage, it was important to start thinking about the relationship between codes and consider how they may combine to create an overarching theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The reflective journal and transcript established 11 sub-themes which included; ‘Delivering TGA’, ‘Understanding Participants’, ‘Changing Practice’, ‘Planning with clarity’, ‘Interpretation of TGA’ and ‘Inexperience’. A collection of candidate (final) themes and sub-themes were coded and taken to the next stage for review (Appendix F).

Once the themes were collected, it was important to review and check if they worked in relation to the coded extract of the entire data set. This led to each theme undergoing further analysis to refine and specify each theme before generating clear definitions and names for each one. Since the participants were inexperienced with TGA, the focus group allowed them to discuss – in great depth – their experiences of this approach in comparison to traditional coaching. This enabled a juxtaposition with the interpretations made in my reflections to provide a more in-depth picture of the contextual development (Thomas, Morgan and Mesquita, 2013). For example, the analysis in the reflective journal about the player’s unfamiliarity with answering questions during a training session was supported by the opinions of the players on the same subject in the interview. The final stage held a concluding analysis prior to producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.5 Trustworthiness

Qualitative research does not attempt to collect numerical and statistical data to represent the study's reliability and validity (Thomas, Nelson and Silverman, 2011). Rather, to generate research that is concerned with getting good, quality data that the reader can have faith in, Lincoln and Guba (1985) relate this to the term, trustworthiness. In all, trustworthiness is used to determine whether a study is competent or not and describes how a study is conducted; where credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are all issues that need to be considered (Thomas, Nelson and Silverman, 2011). Rossman and Rallis (2003) discuss these issues further and highlight them as being what constitutes a competent study. The first feature, credibility, describes how the accuracy of interpreting the context, participants and settings are all important for the reader to effectively evaluate the paper (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Secondly, concluding whether the results are of value and can be transferred into other areas of research – albeit relevant to that particular study – would be an important consideration during evaluation. Likewise, determining how well a researcher deals with any changes within the study (i.e. contingency plans) will influence the dependability of the data and will highlight whether the reader can place faith in their results (confirmability) (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). Therefore, including these characteristics within my study may help its competence and credibility.

In light of these guidelines, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest multiple methods in which the quality of a study's trustworthiness can be improved. Techniques include thick and rich descriptions of data, clarification of researcher bias and peer debriefing prior to investigation (Whiting and Sines, 2012). Additionally, spending extended periods of time with the informants/ participants, Krefting (1990) explains, can be important because as rapport increases, informants may volunteer different, more in-depth information that they may not provide at the beginning of the research. Furthermore, Krefting (1990) highlights that to improve a qualitative approach, the researcher needs to be a part of the research, not merely observing and being separated from it. In this case, as the main researcher and coach within the study, I was able to fully immerse and situate myself at the centre of the research process and adopt a crucial role within the study. To further develop the trustworthiness of

this study, a triangulation of data was used to increase the study's credibility (Thomas, Nelson and Silverman, 2011) where a variety of data were exploited to support the conclusions made (semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and reflective practice).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Discussion of Findings

The following chapter will provide an overview of the observations and interpretations made during the reflective process over the ten week block of tactical games approach (TGA) sessions. The results highlighted throughout the data analysis will facilitate the discussion. Comparisons with previous studies and current literature will provide further understanding for some of the underlying issues and benefits of implementing TGA with amateur soccer players and look to indicate potential areas of development. The content will be split across the five themes sourced from the analysis. These include; 'Planning', 'Implementing the TGA framework', 'developing a coach identity' and 'Player perceptions of TGA and training'.

4.1 Planning

4.1.1 Knowledge of Tactical Games Approach (TGA) and game.

One of the most significant changes that Mitchell, Oslin and Griffin (2006) refer to, prior to implementing a tactical games approach (TGA) is to examine one's core beliefs. Beliefs are highly resistant to change; where core beliefs are the most resistant and become part of us at an early age (Nisbett and Ross, 1980). In order for any significant innovation to result in change, individual implementers are required to work out their personal meaning in the process (Fullan, 1991). To be able to achieve this, I had to develop a more in-depth tactical understanding of football

which has been apparent with previous researchers (Thomas, Morgan and Mesquita, 2013; Berkowitz, 1996; Gubacs-Collins, 2007). Although I could see that the planning process was going to take a long time; where a thorough examination of the TGA framework was necessary, I did not expect it to be due to my tactical understanding of the game:

After reading over Mitchell, Oslin and Griffin (2006) TGA book, I discovered areas which, previously, I thought I understood well. However, it came to my attention that I had been creating sessions that did not allow game awareness to develop. When I realised these mistakes, I knew that I needed to adopt a totally different perspective to my understanding of the game and in a sense, re-learn how to play the game and what areas need to be focused on. (Reflective journal entry, 16th October).

Following this establishment of my own practice, I could see during my reflections that I had not considered the structure and timing of the session to facilitate the learning of all participants; where each tactical problem includes players on and off the ball (Mitchell, Oslin and Griffin, 2006). I had only focussed on the players who were involved with the scenario and did not utilise some of the players that could have represented the practice task more realistically. Shaun alluded to this change in practice during the interview:

I think that you (Luke) got better at doing it as we went along, like one of the first sessions, like the defenders were standing about for five minutes say – I don't know how long it was, and it felt like we were doing nothing, but then, that only happened once. (Shaun, Interview transcript, line 606 – 608).

4.1.2 Planning with clarity

One of the main reasons why training improved throughout the process was due to the way in which the sessions were being planned. I believed it was important to consider their playing ability and knowledge of the sport; which had been assessed through questioning and my interpretations of their gameplay, to provide a variety of

ways for learning to occur. Examples of this came through visual demonstrations, audible questions and kinaesthetic interventions (getting the players to play a game and intervene at the right moment). This is an essential part of the process and is supported by Reid (1995) who states that all individuals have different learning styles where there is a differentiation in preferred ways of understanding, processing, and retaining new information. Furthermore, learning is an inseparable part of social practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) where learning comes from engaging with co-participants and having the ability to perform tasks rather than learn within an instructional setting which is removed in an actual performance (Light, 2006). Therefore, providing this environment allowed the participants to learn sub-consciously and engage more effectively. In addition, when I initially conceptualised this approach, I believed that every training session had to be different from one and other; whilst maintaining its relevance and purpose to the team. However, it came to my attention that in order to get the players to develop their tactical awareness, repeating some of the key elements over a number of weeks deemed to be important:

The training plan was to look over some of the areas that we had covered in previous training sessions where the focus was again on crossing the ball into the box to score... It was difficult to focus on the same area again as I had done in a session a few weeks back. I didn't want any of my players to feel that my sessions were being repetitive every week however, with games on the weekend being my reference, I felt like I had to focus on this passage of play in training so that it could be evident in a game. (Reflective journal entry, 13th November).

This was also evident from the players' perspective as they found it quite challenging to understand new ideas really quickly:

I think there was one time where you tried drills and it's the new ones that feel like the sessions are not working. It's because you're learning a new one and it takes time to learn it but then as soon as you do it again, you know it... So that the next time you do it, it's easy. It's those initial

sessions that feel like it don't work. (Morgan, Interview transcript, line 610 – 613).

Whilst my training sessions were proving to be valuable for the participants learning and tactical development, it was still important to plan with clarity and consider a contingency plan for the group of players. This was tough because it meant that I had to have a thorough understanding of the TGA approach, adapt to any given situation and be quite creative when attendance was low i.e. below 10 players. Although advocates, who utilise the TGA approach, suggest that players are less likely to ask 'when can we play a game?' (Gubacs-Collins, 2007), these particular sessions had an instant effect on each of the players' mind-set where this question was highly prevalent:

Although I planned to do something, I think because there were only a couple of people turning up, they just wanted to play a game as oppose to going through some tactical issues. Even though in the game we focused on spacing, there was evidence towards the end of the session that they didn't really care about learning about this principle and rather, started to shoot from everywhere. (Reflective journal entry, 2nd October).

4.2 Implementing the TGA Framework

4.2.1 Delivering TGA

An integral part of planning a TGA session is to develop a set of *quality* questions that critically solve a problem; identified within a tactical game situation (Bunker and Thorpe, 1982; Mitchell, Oslin and Griffin, 2006). However, whilst delivering TGA, I found that the *timing* of questions was more of an issue that I had not contemplated prior to adopting this approach; a similar issue identified as a potential problem in previous research (Gubacs-Collins, 2007). Restricting questions to one section of the framework prevented me from effectively engaging with the learning of all participants across the whole session. At times, I felt like I was missing out on opportunities to improve the participants learning by 'freezing' the play and addressing some of the recurring issues. Not being able to ask questions when they

were needed and rather, sticking to a 'script', took my focus away from the needs of the players. As a result, I found recalling particular observations, identified at the beginning of the session, quite challenging and resulted in the accuracy of feedback being very limited (Franks, 2004). One of the players raised this point during the focus group interview when asked about this issue:

Well I don't know, because in the drill... well, it depends, you might forget about some things; unless you write them down. But you could forget about what people have done; might not remember the situation like the players. (Shaun, Interview transcript, line 238-240).

Alongside this issue, the *type* of questions I asked the participants were sometimes ineffective and did not allow any learning between individuals to occur:

I was not very comfortable with asking questions all the time, especially when I did not get any response from them. Also, because of the issue of them not responding to me, after asking a question I gave them two options. This was so that they could understand the sort of answer I was looking for and that they had a good chance of getting it correct. Although this way is a form of questioning, I forced the answer upon them; gave them a closed question instead of opening it up for them to explain their ideas. (Reflective journal entry, 2nd October).

This was quite ironic where the majority of them favoured the open-ended question because 'it made them think more, what you actually would do' and declined the option for closed questions in the future as 'it's not your own opinion is it?' (Shaun, Interview transcript, line 280 - 281). Nevertheless, for me, this highlighted a potential issue that was similar to those identified within Roberts (2011) study where many cricket coaches often reverted back to using traditional skill-based pedagogy due to the practitioners finding difficulty with questioning people and not having much experience of it previously. I felt slightly frustrated with the players for not answering simple questions where my impatience prevented the opportunity for any discussion to take place; contrary to the player-centred learning approach (Wright and Forrest,

2007). However, their lack of response was not only caused by the way in which I asked the questions, rather, it was supported by the external factors that I had no control over:

The weather also had an effect on the questioning aspect of the session. Since the questions are meant for the whole team, bringing them in together and asking questions whilst their standing still meant that they were getting cold and either focused on keeping themselves warm or just gave a quick, one word answer so that I would stop talking and let them get on with playing (Reflective journal entry, 16th October).

4.2.2 Understanding participants

Since most of the older players were experienced footballers (one in particular who played at a semi-pro level) and had a good tactical awareness of the game, I thought about new ways in which I could get the participants to understand and develop their own knowledge further. Rather than simply questioning them, I gave them tasks where they could go off into smaller groups and discuss new ideas (Race, 2000). I felt that it was important to be innovative and be able to find a way of receiving knowledge through a different medium other than verbally; dissimilar to Mitchell, Oslin and Griffin (2006). This, I believe, helped reduce the need for speaking out loud in front of peers and rather, feel more confident within their own separate groups:

I thought about new ways in which to coach the team, giving them particular scenarios of the opposition's position and let them discover - in groups - of how to create an attacking/ defensive opportunity. On the scenario cards [Appendix G], I provided a few questions to think about when creating new plays and questioned them on any contingency plans. (Reflective journal entry, 9th October).

This proved to be beneficial and something that was highlighted by a participant as being a 'good' method because it 'worked very well' (Dafydd, interview transcript, line 191 and 193). Also, it allowed me as a coach to understand what some of the players, who wouldn't normally give an opinion during the questioning phase, were thinking about and how they perceived the development of gameplay.

4.2.3 Changing practice

As highlighted within the literature, providing informative theoretical knowledge can advise coaches on how to change their practice effectively; especially when establishing authentic game centred approaches (GCA) (Cushion, 2013). Although I understood the differences between traditional, autocratic styles of coaching compared with the constructivist, player-centred style at the start of the process, I still found it quite difficult to come out of my 'comfort zone' [used to traditional-style coaching] and apply the theory to practice. During the review and evaluation of the initial training sessions, I could begin to see the potential TGA had with developing my own understanding of the game (as mentioned previously) whilst improving my knowledge and confidence in applying the framework as well. It was at this point where I knew that changing practice was not only beneficial for me, but for the players' learning experience as well:

It was positive to see that the players were understanding the differences between their old, incorrect decisions and now choosing the better option. It also shows that they are beginning to understand the 'philosophy' that I want to bring to the team, grasping my understanding of the game and applying it to theirs (Reflective journal entry, 4th December).

Harvey, Cushion and Gonzalez's (2010) study highlights a similar response to the benefits of a change in practice structure. Their research suggests that the coaches were able to transfer learning to match play from practice situations where match-type practices aided their players' learning in contextualised environments; similar to those they would face in a game. Within this study however, the players were becoming more aware of the benefits of implementing the TGA framework and could understand the differences between TGA and traditional approaches. One

participant in particular highlighted that in training, they needed to be more inclined towards the TGA model:

When we used to do the passing drills we used to just pass across the floor back and forth... We all know how to pass the ball... Like you said, we need to be more tactical where you have to think about what you are doing. (Morgan, Interview transcript, line 398 – 400).

4.3 Player Perception of TGA and Training

4.3.1 Existing ideologies

Throughout implementing TGA I found myself battling between the notions of players' pre-conceived ideas of training and the challenge of promoting an environment which is less instructive and more facilitative. Considering the participants standard of play and the nominal extrinsic values attached to amateur soccer, the players showed an automatic inclination towards low levels of effort and motivation when learning something new. This was most evident during the initial stages of the process where I received feedback from some of the participants to explain to me how they perceived the training sessions:

One of the senior players who has experienced higher level football, mentioned that what I was doing was great... However, some criticism came when he mentioned that people are not used to this kind of training, where they are given questions all the time. They turn up to training

because they want to play a bit of football and that's it. (Reflective journal entry, 9th October).

From receiving this feedback, I found that, initially, I had difficulty understanding what I wanted to achieve from the team within each training sessions. At first, I knew what the players wanted to do every week in training (which was mainly possession-based football). However, in preparation for the programme, I had already created a block-plan (recommended by Mitchel, Oslin and Griffin, 2007) highlighting different principles of play for each session. After a few weeks of implementing the TGA sessions, I felt that I had to stick with my plan and try and maintain a facilitative approach; even if it was not working. Yet, whilst reflecting on my practice, I knew that I needed to take a step back from the process and retrospectively reflect-on-action (Gilbert and Trudel, 2001). During this process, I decided to look for another viewpoint (courtesy of my university supervisor) to see how he would address this issue. After much deliberation, I came to a conclusion on how to improve my practice and engage the participants learning:

I feel that in order for the players to start to construct their own knowledge about the game, they need to be in the same environment every week and need to have the same/ similar tactical issue every week until they reach that level of understanding. Once this has been achieved, it can be linked to other areas that need addressing. (Reflective journal entry, 6th November).

4.3.2 Purpose and relevance

As mentioned previously, the majority of training sessions used the game performance on the weekend as a point of reference to conceptualise what the players needed to become aware of for the following game. Throughout the questioning phase of the training session, there were opportunities for the players to offer their opinion and discuss any highlights from the game they perceived as being important or noteworthy. Even though, at this point, maintaining authority over the situation was quite challenging – where the bold, open individuals voiced their opinion – the content communicated between the players had covered what I was going to question them on. For a moment, it showed me that there were different

ways to find out the participants understanding of the game and promoted the social construction between the players; where learning had become a social process situated within, and shaped by, the social and cultural context (Kirk and Macdonald, 1998; Light and Fawns, 2001). Furthermore, I believed it was important that the practice tasks, following the discussion, were relevant and had a purpose:

One member of the team came up to me and said that he really enjoyed the session not only because they were able to play a game, rather it was because the session felt like it had purpose, a sense of direction, something that was relevant to the team. (Reflective journal entry, 30th October).

Interestingly, Mayer (2004) explains that meaningful learning can only occur when the learner is able to connect to, and make sense of, what needs to be learnt. Cushion (2013) states that by just playing a game alone, a connection with the prepared material cannot be guaranteed as some form of guidance - though modified games or verbal instruction by the coach - is required. Metzeler (2011) reiterates that learning is not just playing games, rather, skilful and progressive instruction is required (Hopper, 2002). Unguided learning has consistently shown that it does not work (Mayer, 2004). Nonetheless, having a purpose within the session is similar to the findings of Harvey's (2009) study where, when the coach 'got the game right', a positive transfer of learning to match-type situations occurred.

4.3.3 Interpretation of TGA

To interpret the players' development of the approach, simple questions were imposed to understand their progress and justify whether they were learning. It was important to utilise this method of formative assessment because it helped me to decide where the learners were at in their learning, where they needed to go and how best to get there (Broadfoot *et al.*, 2002). However, sometimes, though they were able to demonstrate what I had planned for the session, they were unable to answer my questions or provide feedback on what they had learnt/performed in the session:

With regards to maintaining possession, questioning on where we should be to receive the ball, why we should be in space and why we should keep our heads up were ineffective during the questioning phase where I received very little feedback on the matter. However, once they started to play in the practice section, elements of what I tried to question them on were evident and reinforced within the game play context. (Reflective journal entry, 20th November).

While their inability to communicate their ideas to me seemed to be an issue, their subconscious actions on the field (game play perceived as being the norm) proved that they could show me their knowledge on the pitch. Similar examples are found within the literature which suggests that although some individuals are unable to answer verbally, they are still involved with the group learning process and are able to transfer an understanding from the question and answer section to the game (Thomas, Morgan and Mesquita, 2013). This leads me to consider how important social constructionism can be for participants who do not prefer an autocratic style of coaching but rather a social environment to learn in. From this perspective, learning is viewed not as the mere acquisition of propositional knowledge, but as situated forms of social co-participation (Light, 2006).

4.4 Developing a Coach Identity

4.4.1 Inexperience

Prior to conducting this research, I felt apprehensive about using the TGA because of my limited experience with the approach (similar to Harvey, Cushion and Gonzalez, 2010; Roberts, 2011). I recognised that it was going to be difficult for the players to be able to transfer their existing ideology of traditional coaching to one that promotes social constructivism. Due to its pedagogical underpinning, I knew that I would need to deviate from instructing the players and become more of a facilitator; which was quite a challenging prospect in itself. As soon as the coaching process begun, my habitus (a set of dispositions created by the coaching environment and coach's experience), that was already mediated by the players, had been exposed. The players' subconscious perceptions of me as coach had been determined by my

insufficient coaching history and the influence of contextual forces that actively shape the coaching process; what was going to be coached and why these things were important (see Harvey, Cushion and Gonzalez, 2010). Furthermore, one of the underlying issues I had to face when trying to adopt a coaching role was changing the way the players identified me; because they were more familiar with me as a player rather than a coach. Therefore, considering all of these issues, it was a very challenging situation to get a balance between facilitating and maintaining authority. Likewise, the players still took some time to get used to the delivery of TGA due to the power differential experienced between myself and one of the players:

I found that when one of the better, more experienced players talks, everybody listens to him. However, the style of coaching he projects is negative [Traditional style] in the sense that he does not give the player a chance to understand his mistake and look for ways of changing that for the future (lacking the positive reinforcement). (Reflective journal entry, 2nd October).

Knowing that an instructive approach to coaching can express a power dynamic between coach and player (Jones and Standage, 2006), I felt that applying low levels of instruction would promote the pedagogy required for a TGA session. My understanding of pedagogy allowed me to promote a more facilitative approach as I considered multiple ways for the participants to access their learning (Reid, 1995). One of the younger players, who has learning difficulties, mentioned that the previous, older coach 'made him flip at some points' [became quite angry at some points] due to not explaining things properly to him. Therefore, building rapport was an important characteristic that I needed to develop in order to gain a coach identity. Taylor and Bruner (2012) conducted a study to find the extent at which coaches built rapport with their players. Their study showed that the degree to which player's perceived coaches to build rapport with them was positively related to their *psychological need satisfaction* and suggested that coaches, who show concern for their players, create an opportunity to provide a foundation for positive player development to occur. Nevertheless, I can see the difficulty for amateur coaches – who are not qualified – to understand some of the important qualities constructivist approaches bring to coaching as they are only relaying what they have experienced in their own history of the sport. Therefore, developing a pedagogical practice can be

highly beneficial to improve the learning environment where similar research can be found within Roberts' (2011) study.

4.4.2 Player v Coach

Throughout the ten week process, the number of participants that were present each week had an impact on both the content of the session (e.g. how to adapt to the number of players available) and my position as a coach. When there were an odd number of players, I felt inclined to participate and engage with the play by adopting a player-coach role. Sometimes, this proved to be very useful as it 'allowed me to focus on each of the players there' (Reflective journal entry, 20th November) and the participants liked the fact that I could manipulate the session when I was involved with the game:

I like it when you stop in mid game, cos it's like, you know, everyone is playing and you stop it and you'll be like 'well look where you are', everyone sees where they are, say David is playing centre back when he should be upfront, it's like what are you doing there kind of thing, and you switch it and you know, go in formation, play it wide. Even if you're not doing it, you can stop it again and say, this is not the proper game. (Morgan, Interview transcript, line 251 – 255).

Using tools such as 'freeze replays' (pausing the tactical game for questioning to take place) and 'the coach as a player' (coach interacts with game play and joins in as a player) showed some understanding of the pedagogy required for a TGA session; similar to Harvey, Cushion and Gonzalez's (2010) study on the coach's use of TGfU. Nevertheless, there were moments where I felt that I was unable to focus on the development of some of the players as well as I could have when looking on from the side line:

One way in which being in the game with the players is of benefit is that I can see them making the decisions they do from a player perspective. I

can manipulate my own position to see how they react to it (Reflective journal entry, 2nd October).

Therefore, I decided that, even with low numbers, it was important that I did not include myself in the game all of the time and take a step-back and to coach and highlight ways performance could be improved from a bigger picture:

I think that 'being the coach' in this session rather than playing as well as coaching in the previous weeks had an effect when asking the group questions. I think that because they could see me walking around and watching everyone at the same time, I could see areas that needed improvement and could therefore offer advice - in the form of questioning. (Reflective journal entry, 9th October).

The players agreed and recognised the benefits of maintaining a side line perspective of the game because I 'had an overall view' of what was going on and 'told them to do more stuff on the side than in the game' (Morgan, interview transcript, line 435 – 438). Nevertheless, when I made this decision to remove myself from the game, the perceived level of engagement from the players was quite low and did not show any enthusiasm to play. This changed the whole dynamic of the session and is something similar to that highlighted within Light's (2008) study where learning was constructed based on the level of interaction between learners. Not only did this have an effect on the engagement of the session, it also made me unsure as to whether they had acquired and implemented the knowledge discussed during the questioning phase:

It may have been due to myself being involved with playing the game and not having the 'stepping in' approach. However, after trying this role previously and not getting much engagement from the players, I had to be involved not only to make the numbers, but to inject enthusiasm and energy into their play. I feel that players' level of engagement derives from those who are around them. (Reflective journal entry, 23rd October).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5. 0 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the implementation of tactical games approach with amateur soccer players, using a reflective practice design. This study has suggested that there are significant challenges when implementing a constructivist approach to amateur soccer players, whose fundamental ideology is constructed by traditional culture, to promote cognitive and social development. The results indicated that although potential benefits of utilising TGA could be achieved over a period of time, the effectiveness and pedagogical underpinning of the approach could not nullify the existing ideologies of traditional coaching. The participants within the study identified a number of positive aspects from the approach such as the opportunity to learn within the context of games rather than practicing drills outside of the game context. They recognised the benefits of correcting their own performance for themselves and believed that innovative ideas such as task sheets and group work could improve their learning. There were however, further challenges to implementing TGA and provoked underlying issues that have been highlighted within previous research. The difficulty in asking questions and the negative power

relationship between player and coach were evident throughout the study and are recognised as potential limitations for constructivist approaches (Roberts, 2011; Harvey, Cushion and Gonzallez, 2010). One of the more potent features that influenced this research was the coach's identity. The coach's habitus and experience can have an impact on the participants' predisposition and belief about their practice (Jarvey and Maguire, 1994). Since I adopted the role of player-coach for the study, the players already knew me as a player and therefore changing their perceptions of me was difficult.

5.1 Limitations of Study

Due to the time of the training sessions, I was unable to write my reflections straight after the session had been completed. Although reflections were recorded the following day, McKernan (1996) suggests that each journal entry should be written within four hours of completing the session to maintain accuracy and provide a detailed account of reflection. Following this limitation, an audio-recording could have been taken straight after the session which could have been transcribed to provide further, more in-depth analysis of each training session. Although this was not necessary, it would have strengthened my findings and reminded me of what happened in the session (especially since the reflections were written the following day). A limitation of using thematic analysis to reflect on my findings was that some of the interpretations described in my journal may not have been as accurate as what had actually happened. Harvey, Cushion and Gonzalez (2010) suggest that although they conducted a case study for their research, they believed larger scale studies needed to be implemented within formal coach education for coaches to understand theories of learning that underpin practice.

5.2 Area for Future Research

As highlighted by Harvey, cushion and Gonzalez (2010), a case could be made for more TGfU/Game Sense within formal coach education, not only as a means to develop athlete-centred coaching, but also as a way for coaches to understand theories of learning that underpin practice. Furthermore, new ways of understanding player development – other than through using questions – could be established,

especially for those who are not comfortable with speaking in front of their peers, by using task cards. Another suggestion may be to look at the main reasons why amateur players play football; is it their love for the game, the competition, physical activity, psychological reasons. Lastly, it would be interesting to see whether gender may have an effect on the effectiveness of a constructivist approach.

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APPENDICIES

APPENDIX A

Table 1. A ten-week lesson plan covering the content within each session.

Training session date	Session content
2nd October	Defending space: focussing on off-the-ball movements to prevent spaces in defence (limit opponents options)
9th October	Development in the attacking third: players developing their own strategies to creating opportunities in the attacking third of the pitch.
16th October	Maintaining possession: keeping the ball and creating chances from the back. Placing conditions on the game so that maintaining possession becomes the focus of the session.
23rd October	Developing width and creating goal-scoring opportunities: utilising the wide midfield players by playing the ball out wide and getting into the box to try and get on the end of the cross.
30th October	Expanding on creating width and crossing opportunities: Developing and keeping possession to get the ball wide, stretching the defence and looking for gaps to create opportunities.
6th November	Transition from defence to attack: Using the wide players to create counter-attack opportunities.
13th November	Attacking from wing to centre: once the ball is on the wing, players in advanced positions create off-the-ball movements to find space and collect the ball, working towards the opposition box.
20th November	Defending a lead: Create a scenario where one team is leading the game 2-0, the opposition have 15 minutes to win the game. The leading team then require to manage the game and keep the 2-0 deficit.

27th November **Positioning on the field:** During attack and defence, setting the importance of positioning on the field. Freeze plays will help insure play is stopped and players can place themselves in the correct place (if they are not there already – reinforcing the constructivist approach).

4th December **Moving off the ball and into space:** Ensure that once the ball has been passed, move into space to create an out ball for the player in possession. Preferably focus on getting in front of the man to make simple passes.

APPENDIX B

Participant Information Sheet

Title of project: "Exploring the application of a Tactical Games Approach in senior soccer using a reflective practice design"

Dear Participant,

As part of my final examination for my Undergraduate Degree at Cardiff Metropolitan University, a study will be undertaken in order to investigate the application of a Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) approach in senior soccer using a reflective practice design. The focus will be on a Tactical Games Approach (TGA) within the coaching practice and will concentrate on player-centred learning. The project has been approved by Cardiff Metropolitan's Ethics Committee and players from Inter Churches Aberdare have been selected to participate in this important study.

How/why?

Once consent forms are completed, the selected participants will be asked questions within an informal interview. The interview will take approximately 35 minutes. Questions will be based upon how the learner perceives the TGfU approach to learning and transferring skills into game-based situations and how they recognise the effectiveness of the coaching practice. The interviews will be recorded via Dictaphone. Personal information will remain anonymous to all but my supervisor and myself. The results of this study would be beneficial to both the participant and myself (as the coach) as it could improve learning and allow suitable skills to be identified and practiced; reinforcing these skills in a game context.

Your rights:

You will not be giving up any of your legal rights. In the very unlikely event of something going wrong, Cardiff Metropolitan University fully indemnifies its staff, and participants are covered by its insurance.

Risks?

The researcher has a full and valid CRB. We do not think there are any significant risks to you as participants. If you are feeling unwell, we'd advise that you do not take part. There is potential for injury whilst playing in each of the sessions. Therefore it is advised that you come to each session wearing appropriate kit (i.e. shin pads) and footwear. In the result of an incident occurring, the situation will be dealt with immediately and appropriately. The participant will be assessed prior to any further action.

What are the benefits?

The participants could gain a better understanding of game-situated learning and be able to identify and practice suitable skills before transferring and reinforcing them in a game context. Improve self-awareness of learning and engage more with training sessions.

Confidentiality:

Participants information, names and address, will remain anonymous to all but my supervisor and myself. At the end of the study we will destroy the information we have gathered about you. We will only keep the consent forms with your name and address. We keep these for five years because we are required to do so by Cardiff Metropolitan University. Anonymity is a high priority as the information will only be used for research purposes and the participant's identities will not be identified.

I have enclosed for your attention a consent form. These should be returned within a week. I hope that you will engage and participate in this project and ensure that you are free to withdraw from the project at any time. Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Luke Gowen

Researcher – L.J.Gowen@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Emergency Contact

Supervisor: Gethin Thomas

Email:

glthomas@cardiffmet.ac.uk

APPENDIX C

Participant Consent Form

Ethics Approval Reference Number:

Project title: "Investigating the application of a Teaching Games for Understanding approach in senior soccer using a reflective practice design".

Researcher: Luke. J. Gowen

Complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I understand that my participation within this study is completely voluntary and that I able to stop participating at any time without any reason.

2. I confirm I have read and that I understand the information sheet provided for this research. I have had time to ask questions and receive feedback and I am satisfied to take part in this study.

3. If I do stop participating, I understand that this will not affect my relationship with Cardiff Metropolitan University and my legal rights will not be effected.

4. I understand that this study will be used for reporting purposes but my identity will not be shown and that only the researcher and their supervisor will have access to this personal information.

5. I am comfortable and want to participate in this study.

Name of Participant taking consent: _____

Signature of Participant taking consent: _____

Date: ____/____/____

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

APPENDIX D

Week 1 - Defending Space

03 October 2014

10:25am

Players: 10

Thursday 2nd October

Time: 9:00pm – 10:00pm

Location: Aberdare Sport Centre

- Wanted to think of something that was new and hadn't been done before. Had some idea of what to do in my head but wasn't sure of how to execute it using this method of coaching.
- I found this method quite challenging because it really brought to light how much I didn't understand about the game in terms of what tactics to employ in different scenarios.
- Although I had a rough idea of what TGA actually was, trying to build a session on it was quite difficult. Also, delegating how much time I needed towards different parts of the session was tough because I hadn't done it before and didn't know how the players were going to react, understand, enjoy it or not.
- Having some idea of when to ask questions, that I needed to ask, was hard because I wanted to make sure that everybody was learning at the same time, not just one or two who could hear me.
- Making it challenging for everyone was quite difficult because the ability levels differ quite significantly between some of the players. Therefore planning it so that it is not too tedious for one group and not too difficult for another is quite a challenge.
- Didn't really have much experience of coaching this way before - felt nervous/ didn't know how the group would react/ perceive me as a coach who is quite inquisitive and asking questions all the time.
- Wasn't very comfortable with asking questions all the time, especially when not getting any response from them. Also, because of the issue of them not responding to me, after asking a question I gave them two options. This was so that they could understand the sort of answer I was looking for and that they had a good chance of getting it correct. Although this way is a form of

questioning, I forced the answer upon them; gave them a closed question instead of opening it up for them to explain their ideas.

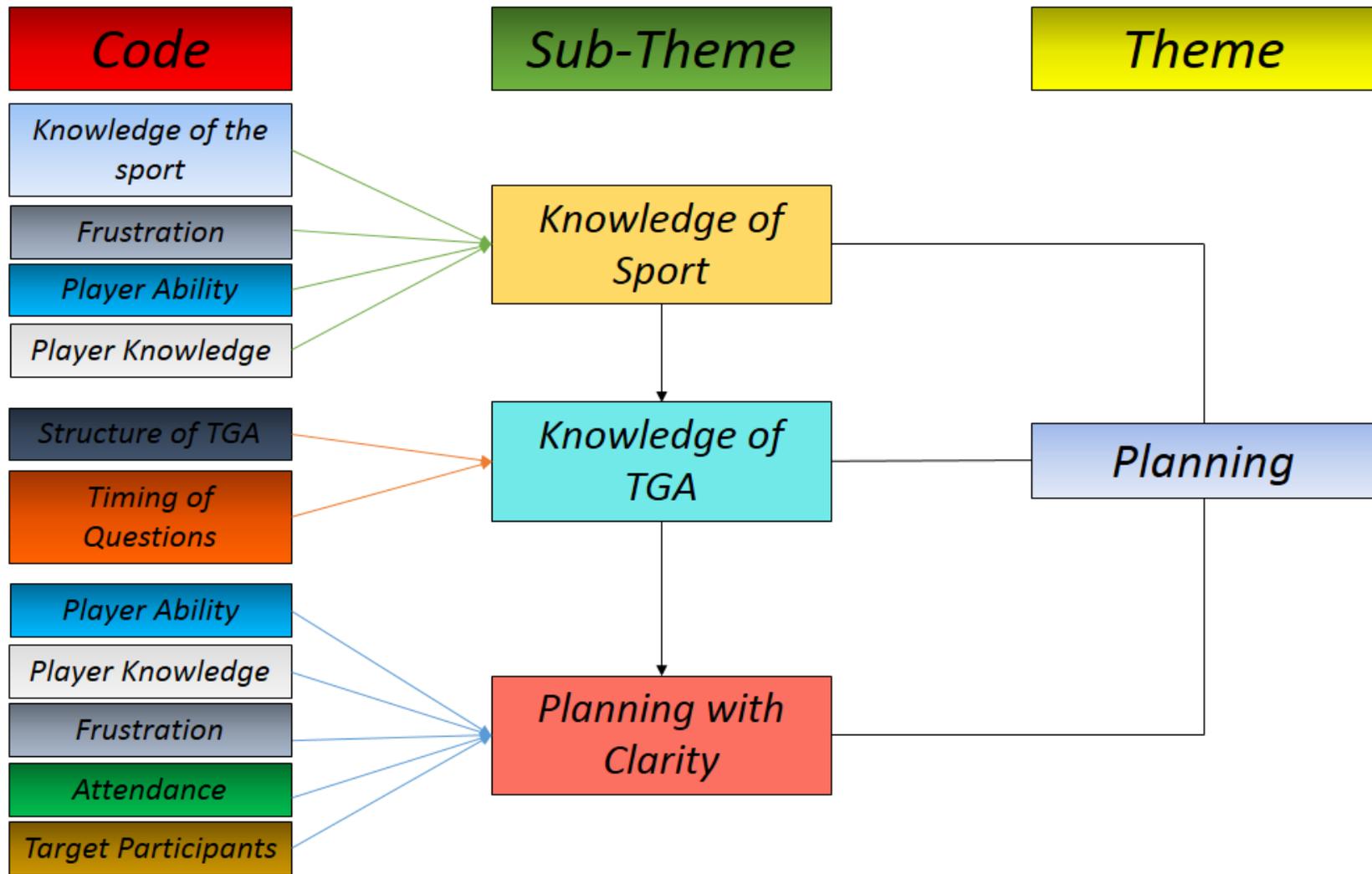
- Although I planned to do something, I think because there were only a couple of people turning up, they just wanted to play a game as oppose to going through some tactical issues. Even though in the game we focused on spacing, there was evidence towards the end of the session that they didn't really care about learning about this principle and rather, started to shoot from everywhere.
- One area which I found quite challenging was how much talking I should have done during the session; at what point to pause the play and question their thinking about some decisions they've made.
- Hard to maintain the authoritative role when there are players there that are older, more experienced at playing the game than I am. Also, they are not used to this style of coaching and therefore just want to get on with playing a game (don't like it when I ask questions frequently). This is quite a challenge as well because there is a range in ability of the participants and some require those extra few questions to improve their learning. Also, I found that when One of the better, more experienced players talks, everybody listens to him. However, the style of coaching he projects is negative in the sense that he does not give the player a chance to understand his mistake and look for ways of changing that for the future (lacking the positive reinforcement).
- Taking part myself changes the perspective of the way that I coach. I think sometimes because I am involved with the play, I only focus on one or two players - maybe just on my team; because they're on my team and I don't want to criticise or pick up on any mistakes made by the other side. One way in which being in the game with the players is of benefit is that I can see them making the decisions they do from a player perspective. I can manipulate my own position to see how they react to it i.e. If I close someone down, will someone come in to support? Or, when I have the ball and I'm running into space and no one is around me, I can pause the game with the ball and ask others if I'm making the right decision or not, or ask if someone else should be supporting me.
- Though I managed to address some issues through this style of coaching and allowed the players to learn from their mistakes, I didn't give much opportunity

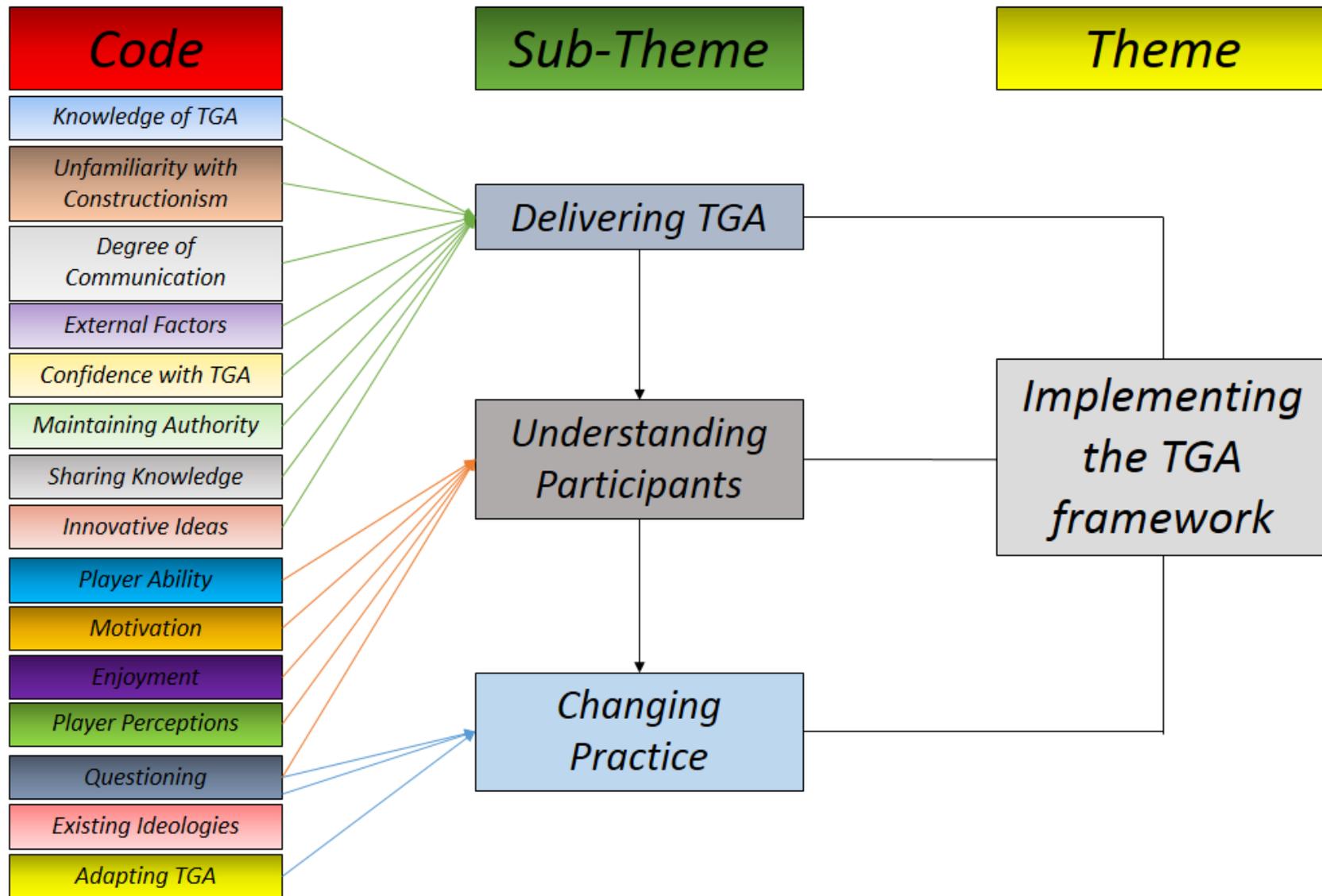
to all of the players; focused only towards the defending team who were letting
some goals in.

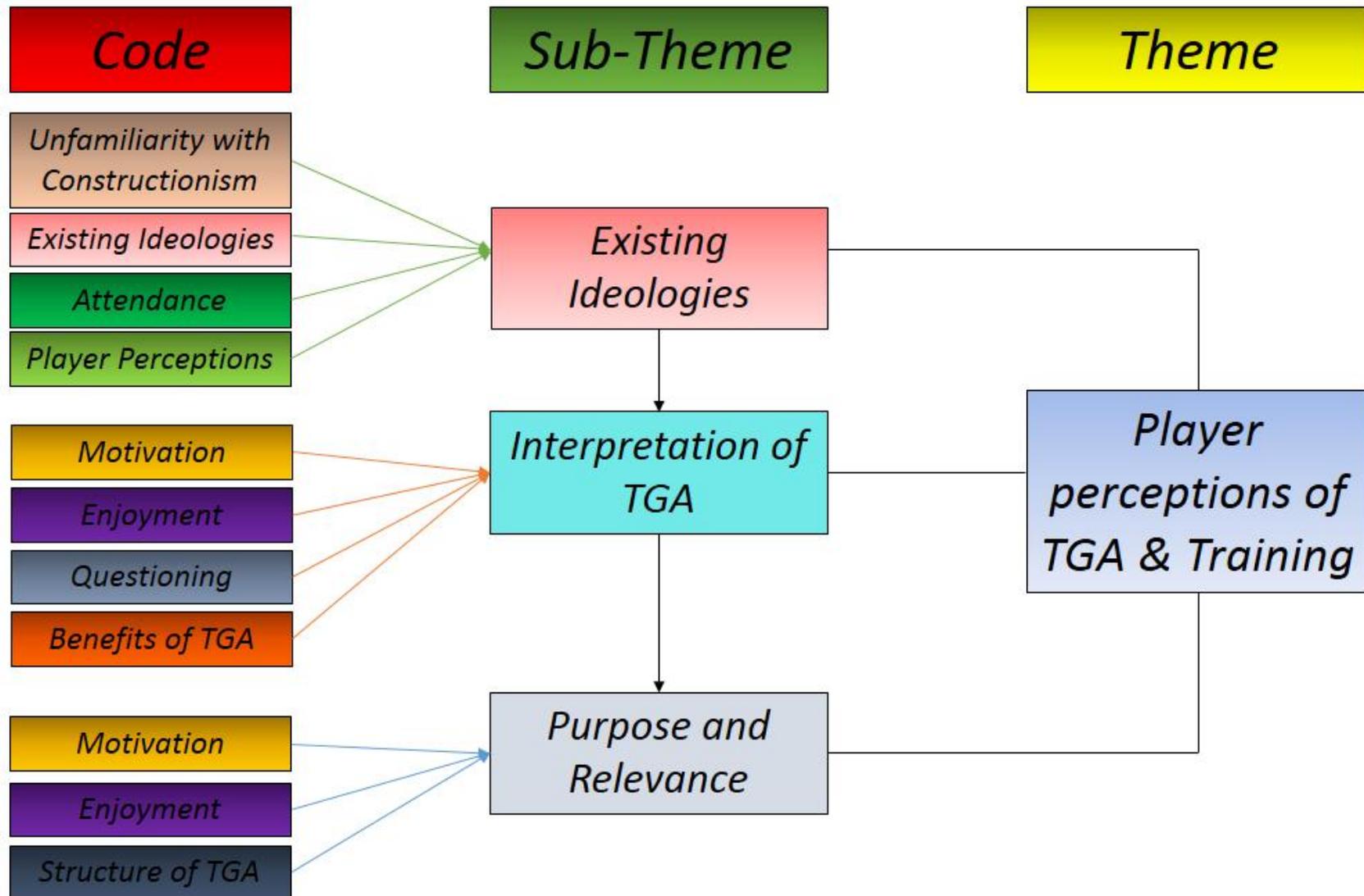
APPENDIX E

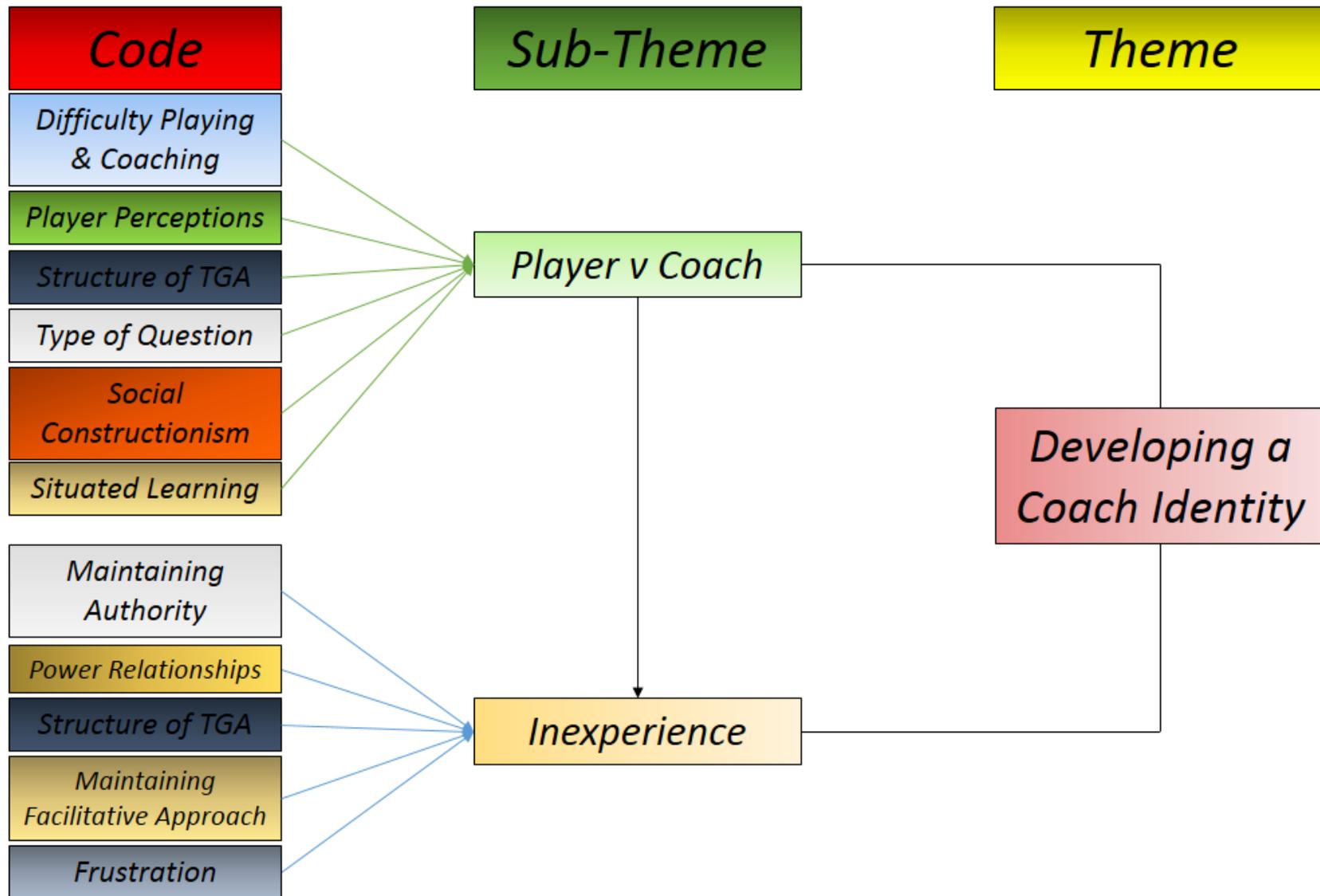
Table 2. Phases of thematic analysis adopted from Braun and Clarke (2006).

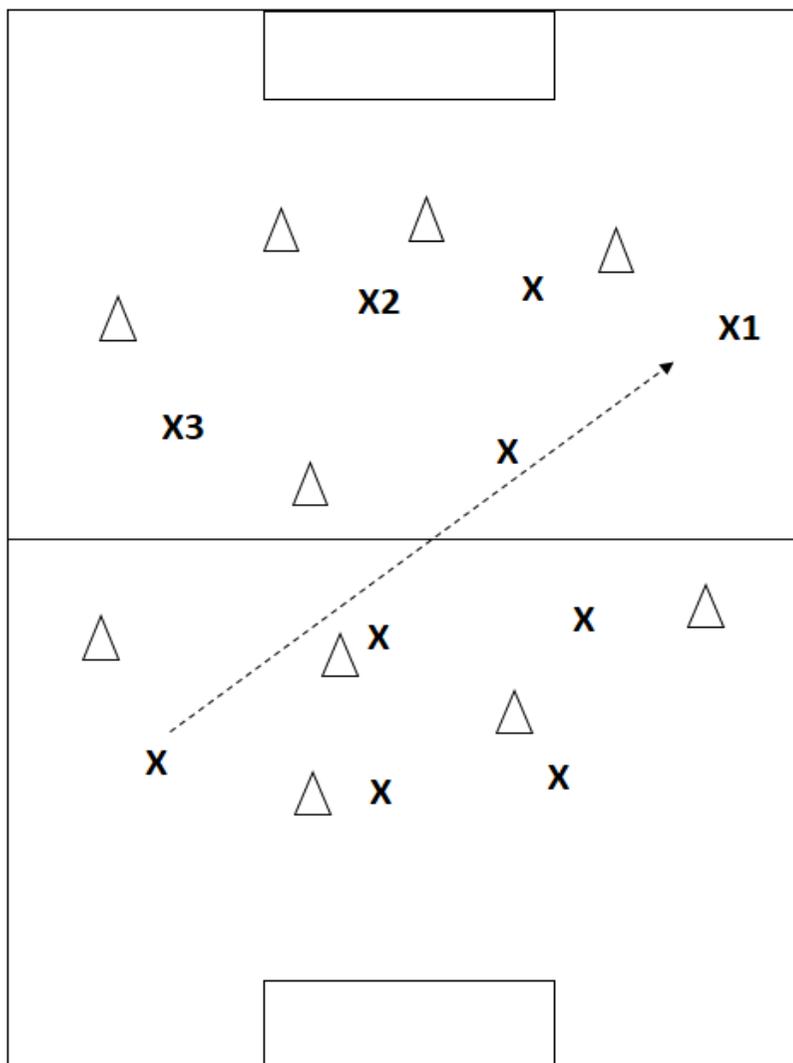
Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting feature of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	Final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.











Development in the attacking third

Task:

- Analyse the scenario
- Answer the questions
- Explain to rest of the group in practical setting

Scenario:

The X team have stolen the ball from the triangles and have played a long ball out wide to their winger. He is quite quick but you've noticed he's quite nervous on the ball.

- Q1. Which way should the defender show the winger? Why?
 Q2. Draw a line to show where you think 'X2' should try to re-position himself. Why have you chosen that place (*What will it do for the defenders?*)
 Q3. Draw a line to show where 'X3' should position themselves. Why?
 Q4. If 'X1' successfully passes the man, what could 'X3' do if the ball is crossed beyond the first man (Take into account whether there are players around him or not).

(Create a session that replicates the play in the diagram)

Answers:

- Q1).....

 Q2).....

 Q3).....

 Q4).....

