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Abstract

Despite the centrality of coach developers to formal coach education settings, only a handful of studies have begun to touch upon the role they play in mediating quality learning, while links between different layers of learning and impact on coach learners remains underexplored. This research explored English coach developers' understanding of learning, and the learning frameworks taught to them, through unstructured interviews and participant observation of a generic coach developer training course. Three coach developers were observed delivering formal coach education, to elucidate how understanding was applied in practice. Supporting interviews with 16 coaches attending the course gave an indication of reactions to developers' practice. Combined layers of data were analysed using a three-phase integrated analytic process. In the absence of pertinent evidence-informed coach developer training course design and delivery, implicit 'practice-theories', based on participants' experiences as coaches and coach developers, appeared to inform understanding and practices. Despite acknowledging 'learner centred' learning principles, coach developers experienced challenges implementing these in practice and coach learners perceived confusion and contradictions. Findings are discussed in relation to contemporary ideas around coaches' and coach developers' learning, to highlight potential ways that coach developers could be more effectively prepared and supported.

Keywords: Coach Developers; Professional Development; Coach Learning; Formal

Coach Education

42 Layers of learning in coach developers' practice-theories, preparation and delivery

43 Recent perspectives concerning the learning and professional development of sport
44 coaches have underlined a need to investigate social, relational, contextual and theoretical
45 issues in increasingly sophisticated and pragmatic empirical approaches (Lyle, 2018;
46 Townsend, Cushion & Smith, 2017). These approaches are aimed to better capture the well-
47 established multifaceted, relational nature of coaching and learning to coach (Cushion, Armour
48 & Jones, 2003), with evidence suggesting quality professional development involves
49 participatory, contextualised opportunities linked to practice and active knowledge
50 construction through social interaction (Phelan & Griffiths, 2018; Stodter & Cushion, 2017).
51 Perceptibly, if the role of impactful coach development is to accelerate learning processes
52 (Lyle, 2007), coach developers play a notable yet often overlooked part in this sociocultural
53 and relational context. Coach developers have a significant influence on the negotiation and
54 legitimisation of coaching practice (Cushion, Griffiths & Armour, 2018; Blackett, Evans &
55 Piggott, 2015), and their skills are crucial to the effectiveness of pedagogies and enabling
56 coaches to learn (Morgan, Jones, Gilbourne & Llewellyn, 2013). Nevertheless, there remains
57 little research on coach developers (Abraham, Morgan, North, et al., 2013), with the existing
58 work being largely instrumental, focusing on the various task demands, professional 'skill sets'
59 and exemplar behaviours associated with the role (Cushion et al., 2018).

60 Although the demands placed on coach developers are dependent on the overall
61 development approach taken (Morgan et al., 2013), a benchmark requirement is substantial
62 expertise in learning (Abraham et al., 2013; ICCE, 2014). Yet such qualities offered as
63 contributing to an 'effective' coach developer, often appear neatly compartmentalised and
64 disconnected from practice, context and subsequent coaches' learning (e.g. Abraham et al.,
65 2013; McQuade & Nash, 2015). Meanwhile, the origins and development of coach developer

66 qualities is not well researched or understood. In addition, Cushion at al., (2018) showed that
67 rather than being compartmentalised and existing in isolation, coach developers' practice and
68 professional learning are instead part of a broader system of power relations and interactions
69 in contextualised social practice. However, preparation of coach developers for negotiating
70 these challenges, as well as the links between their own learning and delivery, and the resulting
71 impression on coach learners remain underexplored. This paper goes some way to addressing
72 this by providing evidence for the multiple associated layers of learning in a formal coach
73 education setting involved with the development of coach developers and coach development
74 practices.

75 Reflecting what is known about how coaches learn (Cushion, Nelson, Armour, et al.,
76 2010), coach development consists of a varied collection of activities that range in formality.
77 Thus coach developers, also referred to in the literature as educators, tutors, facilitators, trainers
78 and coach development administrators (Trudel, Culver & Werthner, 2013), often perform a
79 mixture of formal coach education and non-formal workshop delivery, formal and informal
80 mentoring, evaluating and assessing coaching (McQuade & Nash, 2015). Indeed, the
81 International Coach Developer Framework put together by The International Council for
82 Coaching Excellence (ICCE) adopts the umbrella term 'coach developer' to 'include all those
83 who have undergone training to fulfil one or more of the following roles: coach educators,
84 learning facilitators, presenters, mentors and assessors' (ICCE, 2014, p.6). This definition
85 emphasises the necessity of *training* to set coach developers apart from merely experienced
86 coaches, framing them as 'experts' in learning who can optimise opportunities for coach
87 learners. What this training does or should involve, however, is not defined, and the
88 effectiveness of training for coach developers' subsequent understanding and practice is
89 unknown. There remains little research to evidence the preparation and overall development of

90 developers (ICCE, 2014), leaving sporting organisations unclear on how they can best support
91 the growth of these practitioners' skills (McQuade & Nash, 2015).

92 One reason why coach developers require expertise in learning relates to the wide-
93 ranging nature of coach development, with the developer's role influenced by the particular
94 approach taken (Trudel et al., 2013). In contrast with more traditional, standardised and
95 typically technical content-driven forms of educational delivery and certification, a
96 contemporary 'paradigm shift' towards ongoing 'learner centred' and bespoke professional
97 development approaches places greater demands on coach developers (Cassidy & Kidman,
98 2010). While didactic, instructive presentation positions the coach developer as a 'transmitter'
99 of information to be acquired, participatory and constructivist-informed programmes place
100 more emphasis on pedagogical skills, raising responsibility for subsequent learner interaction,
101 listening and reacting to group exchanges (Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012; North, 2010;
102 Stoszkowski & Collins, 2017). The shifting role of the coach developer can be represented on
103 a continuum from educational delivery to enabling, facilitation and even developing coaches'
104 capability to learn and self-direct their own future learning (Stoszkowski & Collins, 2017). In
105 practice, it is likely that individual developers must gauge and manage a balance between
106 content delivery and facilitation to meet coach learners' varied needs. The success of
107 contemporary and innovative approaches are largely dependent on the capability and
108 willingness of coach developers to adopt the necessary roles, especially when this requires a
109 departure from long-practiced and deep-rooted reproductive pedagogies (Abraham, Collins &
110 Muir, 2009; Savin-Baden, 2003). Coaching approaches also need to be effectively modelled
111 by educators in their delivery (ICCE, 2014; McCullick, Belcher & Schempp, 2005), creating a
112 'dual role' whereby developers can simultaneously coach and support others' learning about
113 coaching (Ben-Peretz, Kleeman, Reichenberg & Shimoni, 2010). In order to effectively
114 balance their roles and bring about learning in coach development, developers need to draw

115 upon particular expertise in, and understanding of, learning and learners (Abraham et al., 2013;
116 ICCE, 2014; Cassidy, Potrac & McKenzie, 2006). Research by Abraham et al. (2013) with 15
117 experienced coach developer professionals specified the professional skills, required
118 knowledge, typical leadership, management and coaching behaviours that demonstrate
119 understanding of adult learning for coach developers. According to their definition, 'expert'
120 coach developers have a 'broad and deep knowledge base of learning theories and their
121 application' alongside 'a rich set of critiqued experiences within the domain of operation',
122 allowing them to 'develop and monitor relevant learning environments, tasks and
123 communication strategies to meet learning goals' (Abraham et al. 2013, p. 179).

124 Despite necessary knowledge and expertise being clearly defined, little is known about
125 how coach developers achieve and then implement these (Jones, et al., 2012). In the related
126 world of teacher continuing professional development (CPD), research has identified a clear
127 need for support to enable professional educators to engage learners (Armour, 2010). This
128 literature has emphasised educators' professional learning as taking place within socially and
129 culturally situated work contexts, with inextricable bonds formed between learning and identity
130 (e.g. Brody & Hadar, 2011; Cochran-Smith, 2003, Swennen & Bates, 2010). Similarly, in sport
131 coaching, it is suggested that due to their biography as coaches, products of coach education
132 systems and later educator training, coach developers are shaped by, and simultaneously
133 shaping of learning cultures and contexts (Cushion et al., 2018; Nelson, Cushion, Potrac, &
134 Groom, 2014). Certain practices, expectations and ways of doing and being become considered
135 'normal' and reproduced in day-to-day activities (Cushion et al., 2018; Piggott, 2012).
136 Although coach developers may not articulate clear beliefs about learning, their practice
137 invariably rests upon assumptions deeply embedded in culture (Light, 2008). Implicit theories
138 or 'folk pedagogies' (Bruner, 1999), rooted in personal experience and strong beliefs about
139 how people learn best, are reflected in customs and overt behaviours. For example, normative

140 beliefs about 'good' teaching are associated with particular educator 'positionings', then
141 manifested in use of strategies like modeling to prioritise learners' needs or technical feedback
142 and correction (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2014). Thus, different accepted practices in
143 professional development reflect diverging assumptions about learning, pedagogy and
144 teaching.

145 Shulman (2005) takes a broader view in referring to sets of disciplinary assumptions
146 and normative forms of learning and teaching as 'signature pedagogies': pervasive types of
147 teaching that shape the fundamental ways practitioners are educated for their professions,
148 implicitly defining what counts as knowledge and how things become known. He separates
149 three dimensions of signature pedagogies: surface structure, deep structure, and implicit
150 structure. Surface structures are concrete operational acts of teaching and learning,
151 demonstrating, questioning and interacting, while deep structures reflect a set of assumptions
152 of how best to impart a certain body of knowledge and know-how. Implicit structure is a moral
153 dimension that comprises a set of beliefs about professional attitudes, values and dispositions
154 (Shulman, 2005, p. 55). These distinctions are useful because what people believe in does not
155 always duplicate what they actually do; in other words, their espoused theory may not match
156 their observed 'theory-in-use' (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Indeed, a recent study showed that
157 while teacher developers articulated strong views about the importance of practical learning
158 opportunities, these beliefs did not always materialise when delivering a formal course, with
159 variations apparent in actual time dedicated to practical vs. theoretical learning opportunities,
160 as well as quality of implementation between developers (Makopoulou, 2018). More
161 fundamentally, while such habits and implicit folk pedagogies or practice theories can act as
162 useful scaffolds for complex professional learning, they are worth reviewing critically as
163 potentially limiting or dangerous sources of rigidity and reproduction (Armour, 2010;
164 Shulman, 2005).

189 observed others, shared course delivery, then completed the process. Coach developers'
190 primary preparation therefore took place in stage two, with completion of the SGB's generic
191 coach developer training (GDT), a minimum entry requirement for UK Coaching Certificate
192 (UKCC) Level 3 and above qualified coaches to deliver coach education in the sport. The coach
193 developers were involved in the design and delivery of a formal age-appropriate youth coach
194 education course, part of a new national youth-specific coaching qualification pathway. The
195 research reported here forms part of a wider project that evaluated the impact of this course on
196 coaches' learning.

197 **Participants**

198 Following institutional ethics approval, three full-time professional male coach
199 developers and 16 coach learners (15 male, 1 female) were purposively selected to take part in
200 the study. Sampling was theoretically driven, with participants selected due to their particular
201 characteristics as either coach developers or coach 'candidates' on a formal coach education
202 course delivered by the coach developers; the aim being to create a theoretically meaningful,
203 'information rich' sample (Patton, 1990).

204 The coach developers, with a mean age of 47 years (SD = 12.0, R = 35-59), had been
205 working as coach development practitioners for a mean of 18.8 years (SD = 10.7, R = 12-31).
206 All three were SGB licenced and were responsible for the design and delivery of an age-
207 appropriate youth coaching course. This course was framed as 'progressive' and packaged as
208 a 'truly athlete centred approach' to the coaching and development of young athletes. The
209 intended outcomes included enabling coaches to 'design practices specific to the needs of
210 individual athletes' and 'link the design of practices to match day and athletes' role specific
211 requirements'. Working within teams of four coach developers, they delivered the course that
212 comprised of two weekends' contact time, one month apart. Each weekend involved a mix of

213 classroom-based delivery; group work; 'showcase' coaching; and simulated coaching practice
214 with educator feedback. Through the SGB's candidate lists for the youth coaching course,
215 coach learners (M age = 34.3 years, SD = 6.9, R = 22.4 – 43.7) with an average of 6.7 years
216 coaching experience (SD = 3.3, R = 2 - 14) were invited to take part. Each was qualified to
217 UKCC Level 2 or above, and primarily working with sport participants of ages ranging from
218 three to nineteen in a mixture of settings from participation to performance. Informed consent
219 was obtained from all participants.

220 **Design and procedure**

221 This research positioned the coach developers as the central unit of analysis, each of
222 whom in combination worked across four cohorts of the same youth coaching course. To enable
223 a multi-layered and integrated investigation of the phenomenon of coach developers'
224 preparation and practice within the course context, interview and observational data were
225 collected by the first author, a UKCC Level 2 qualified coach with six years' youth coaching
226 experience, across three levels and phases: coach developer training, coach developers'
227 practice, and coach reactions.

228 **Phase one.** Participant observation was employed to gain insights into coach
229 developers' preparation on the SGB's generic coach developer training. This three day long
230 residential course was a prerequisite qualification for all SGB developers who deliver formal
231 coach education courses. It aimed to 'support and develop the teachers' of the sport, covering
232 modelling of good practice, planning using a learning cycle, learning styles, inclusive methods
233 and activation and engagement of individuals and groups. Primarily delivered through group
234 work and interactive activities, the training culminated in an assessment involving a ten minute
235 individual presentation. Following completion, developers received individual action plans that
236 allowed them to proceed to course specific familiarisation, or recommended deferral or

237 withdrawal from the programme if they were deemed not ready to proceed. Audio recordings
238 were taken on all training activities, generating 871 minutes of data alongside field notes, hand-
239 written during breaks and at the end of each day of training. Similar to previous studies in coach
240 education (e.g. Gilbert & Trudel, 1999; Stodter & Cushion, 2014), notes were taken on content,
241 the training activities that took place, developers' reactions and learning, general atmosphere,
242 physical settings and timings. Materials in the form of the training handbook were also
243 examined for corresponding content and assumptions relating to learning. Participant
244 observation thus generated a combination of notes, transcribed quotes and descriptions of
245 events such as tasks, training activities and social interactions.

246 **Phase two.** The coach developers' practice was examined using observations of the
247 youth coaching course they led, across the four different cohorts. In line with previous studies
248 in formal coach education settings (e.g. Gilbert & Trudel, 1999; Stodter & Cushion, 2014),
249 non-participant observation allowed more structured notes to be taken on coach developers'
250 practices, coaches' learning, feedback and assessment, coaching practice, atmosphere, content
251 and other comments, as well as timings. Course materials were also collected in the form of a
252 'participant pack' and audio recordings of classroom activities. A key part of this phase was
253 unstructured interviews that were conducted with each participating coach developer during
254 breaks in the youth coaching courses (cf. Makopoulou, 2018). Interviews lasted 30 minutes,
255 yielding a total of 91 minutes of audio data. Questions centred on developers' views on
256 coaches' learning, for example 'do you think that coaches learn in the same way that players
257 learn?' and 'how do you know that will assist coaches' learning?', while remaining flexible to
258 the situational and time constraints as well as the answers given.

259 **Phase three.** Finally, six months after completing the youth coaching course, coach
260 learners took part in semi-structured interviews face-to-face or by phone. Ranging from 30 to

261 85 minutes long, and generating 648 combined minutes, open-ended questions focused on
262 coaches' perspectives of the course. For example, coaches were asked 'what did you learn from
263 the course?' and 'what did you think of the teaching you received on the course?' All coach
264 learner and coach developer interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The
265 methods in combination gave voice and perspectives to both coach developers and coach
266 learners, demonstrated practice and interactions, and enabled links to be drawn between
267 developers' preparation, their coach development practices *in situ*, and coach learners'
268 reactions to these practices.

269 **Analysis**

270 Aligning with the three levels of data collection, a three-phase integrated analytic
271 process was adopted with similar principles and procedures to both thematic analysis and
272 grounded theory (e.g. Cushion et al., 2018; Makopoulou, 2018). First, coach developer
273 interviews were examined, subjected to coding, and organised into initial themes relating to
274 views on learning, the origins of these views, and perceived practices. For example, the excerpt,
275 'I think you have got to again recognise the differences' was coded as 'individual differences',
276 while 'in terms of how do they learn best, I think one of the things is they have to have a bank
277 of experiences to call upon and then our job, for me, is to try and put it in the context of those
278 experiences' was coded as 'relate to learners' existing experience'. These codes were
279 assembled together as aspects of an initial theme named 'individual learners'. The next phase
280 involved reviewing and developing themes, and generating new dimensions that were evident
281 within the broad areas of interest. This process occurred through matching, constant
282 comparison and integration of GDT observation data. Here, excerpts from audio recordings
283 such as, 'everyone's got a different starting point' and 'it's about self, it's about the learner
284 looking after their own learning needs' were grouped with 'individual learners' to develop a

285 broader theme. The third layer of data, from structured observations of coach developers'
286 practice and coach interviews, were then deductively combined with the themes to further
287 refine them and provide depth. For instance, the following quote, 'there's such a variety of
288 coaches here even. We've all got different problems and people don't always appreciate that I
289 don't think; it's not, it can't be one-size-fits-all, and that's how it's put across to you
290 sometimes', was coded as 'one-size-fits-all' and added learners' experiences as a further,
291 contrasting, dimension to the individual learners theme. Analysis based on an integrative logic
292 allowed for interaction and linkages between the different components of the study (Mason,
293 2006), eventually creating three themes that ran through the various layers of this context of
294 coach development. These were; complexity and challenges in learning, active learning, and
295 individual learners.

296

Results and Discussion

297 Results are reported within three themes centring on how coach developers understood
298 learning as underpinning 'practice-theories'. Each theme will be explained in turn to
299 demonstrate links to coach developers' training and preparation, their delivery of formal coach
300 education, and coaches' perceptions of this delivery. Interview, observations and field-note
301 excerpts relating to each theme are provided to offer illustrations of the key points, and
302 identified by initials and participant number (Coach Developer = CD, Generic Developer
303 Training = GDT, Coach = C).

304 Complexity and challenges in learning

305 Coach developers' understanding of coaches' learning was characterised by a variety
306 of related practice theories, with a key theme the inherent complexity and challenges. For
307 example, CD3 acknowledged that coaches' learning is not a straightforward process:

308 That's the whole process of learning is that you challenge and change and you chop
309 based on the more information that you gather, and I accept that there will be peaks and
310 troughs and you're on this roller coaster and that you're not always going to go on an
311 upward plane.

312 Aligning with these assumptions, there was frequent reference to coaches learning from
313 trial and error and difficulties, conceptualised as 'the proverbial train crash' (CD2). Echoing
314 constructivist-informed approaches (Schunk, 2012), these ideas about the characteristics of
315 learning were also apparent in the generic coach developer training, which advocated that 'it's
316 about being persistent, because learning is messy, there will be blockages at times, when you're
317 like I didn't quite get that...And it's not an easy subject sometimes' (GDT).

318 At the same time however, the coach developers displayed contradictory notions of
319 learning as easily defined and systematic. Drawing upon underpinning approaches to
320 enhancing learning that can be classified as cognitive-behaviourist (Schunk, 2012), they talked
321 about 'constantly reinforcing the messages' (CD2), 'adding bits on' (CD1), and referred to
322 simplified personal models:

323 They want two things, they want curriculum and they want confirmation...cause that's
324 just learning principles. (CD3)

325 Although these underpinning models or approaches to learning were not explicit in the
326 coach developers' training, the GDT course was grounded in similarly straightforward
327 frameworks. Primarily, a Sport Governing Body-specific, four stage cyclical 'learning model'
328 that 'brings all our understanding of learning into one system' (GDT) formed the basis of GDT
329 design and delivery. The learning cycle was used to give structure to coach development
330 practice, postulating that any learning experience should be organised sequentially to 'connect',

331 'activate', 'demonstrate', then 'consolidate' learning. Rather than drawing upon specified
332 evidence *of* learning and 'what learning is' however, this constituted an idealistic model *for*
333 structuring and apparently enhancing learning (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006), with the
334 implication that learning happens unproblematically by following each stage of the cycle.
335 Rather than accounting for the acknowledged complexity of learning, coach developers were
336 simply encouraged to 'remember the four-stage learning cycle', as illustrated by field notes
337 describing one GDT activity:

338 Task: groups bid for a 'learning contract' to market learning across the sport. They
339 create a five-minute presentation of the marketing strategy to present to the 'chairman
340 of the board' (the GDT trainer). The trainer is deliberately 'obtrusive' when questioning
341 presenters. During the debrief, he says that the task should highlight the importance of
342 using the four-stage learning cycle and to refer back to that in difficult times.

343 When coach developers delivered formal coach education, there was very little explicit
344 reference to the cycle, although C1 remarked that 'I think the whole learning cycle and learning
345 process is really beginning to work.' Yet coach learners expressed a sense of confusion and
346 difficulty, in particular in reconciling the coach developers' messages with their previous
347 learning. One explained being 'caught between, do I do it like that, or do it like this. The old
348 and the new, yeah...I just found it confusing' (C6). This uncomfortable 'disjuncture', arising
349 from conflict between new material and an individual's existing biography, presents a critical
350 moment of potential for learning (Jarvis, 2006). However, some coaches felt unsupported by
351 developers in adapting their cognitive structures to re-establish accordance with the learning
352 experience; with one expressing that 'they just leave you to just go and get on with it' (C3).
353 Observations of coach developers' practices indicated that some did attempt to work with

354 complexity and challenges in learning, for example through an activity where coaches
355 identified the following:

356 Three areas where you've had something confirmed, something's been a challenge for
357 you, or whether you've collected something new; and then any questions that you have
358 at all, let's put them up there and let's deal with those issues. (CD3)

359 This activity was not applied across the four observed course cohorts, reflecting
360 individual developers' varied practice and understanding of learning according to their own
361 biographies. In the absence of nuanced training and preparation that enabled developers to
362 effectively deal with the complexity and challenges of coaches' learning, developers relied on
363 their own ideas based on life experiences and 'reading stuff about it' to 'support and confirm'
364 (CD2) their practices. Coach developers equated coaches' learning to their own previous
365 learning experiences as coaches, in their wider job roles, and even as players of the sport. In
366 the words of CD3, 'I can only go on my experiences as a coach and as a coach educator through
367 things that I've been exposed to'. This led to a variety of established individual 'common sense'
368 (CD1) practices drawing upon a central 'signature' sport coaching pedagogy of learning
369 through accumulated practical experience (Shulman, 2005). This reliance on individual
370 interpretations of experiences resulted in inconsistency between developers, and perceptions
371 of ambiguity from coach learners:

372 Some of it's become mixed messages because some of the staff delivering it were
373 saying: this is the way you do it, this is how it's done. Let the game – they teach you
374 to, you know, let them make mistakes. And then on the flip side you go down two weeks
375 later, and you've a different coach developer: no, no if there's a problem you just need
376 to go in and sort it out. And then that's caused a lot of confusion, its worrying. (C16)

377 As CD1 acknowledged, 'I don't work the same as [CD2], but the philosophy and the
378 ideas behind it are similar, but they are not the same.' Indeed, generic developer training
379 enabled and encouraged the reproduction of individually specific practice theories based on
380 previous learning experiences, while consolidating the persistence of the signature pedagogy
381 (Shulman, 2005), for example through the following activity:

382 Think about what helped you learn best and list specific things that helped you learn.

383 Then who helped you best, not just how, then think of strengths/qualities/what they did
384 that inspired you. The most important to you. Creating your own philosophy. (GDT)

385 **Active learning**

386 A second underpinning assumption placed great emphasis on coaches' learning being
387 active, participatory and experiential. Learning was portrayed as occurring through coaches
388 being involved in interactions, 'having a go', practicing and experimenting. As one coach
389 developer explained, 'people like to be involved, so the more we involve them and the less
390 time they spend sitting down watching loads and loads of PowerPoint's, the better' (CD1),
391 while another emphasised that 'learning means they have got to get off their backsides and do
392 stuff, get out and experience things' (CD2). These constructivist-themed 'active learning'
393 assumptions (e.g. Schunk, 2012) aligned in some ways with the 'player centred', game related
394 coaching approach advocated by the course itself, and coach developers' practice was intended
395 to model these same principles:

396 If you talk about creating the same environment [as for players' learning], we do try
397 and create an environment where they [coaches] are comfortable, we do try and create
398 an environment where we want them to join in; we do create all that sort of stuff. We

399 do give an opportunity to talk, chat, experiment, feedback their ideas and all that sort
400 of stuff. (CD1)

401 There were clear parallels between these learning assumptions and aspects of the
402 generic developer training, which was introduced as 'experiential learning, you will be
403 involved in different ways and at times you might think 'I like that', and jot it down, 'I could
404 use that there and steal it' and that's what this three days are here for' (GDT). The GDT learning
405 cycle placed emphasis on 'activating' learning through posing problems and inviting solutions,
406 and materials featured a hierarchical 'learning pyramid' (e.g. Lalley & Miller, 2007)
407 advocating the effectiveness of 'teaching it to someone else' or 'working it out for yourself'
408 rather than 'listening' or 'reading' as methods of learning in classrooms. This meant that the
409 training was delivered wholly through varied interactive individual and group tasks, a style
410 mirrored on the formal coaching course run by the coach developers. Coach learners spent over
411 half of their on-course time taking part in practical sessions, with the second-highest proportion
412 of time spent in group work or discussion tasks. The emphasis on 'active learning
413 opportunities' appeared to align well with coaching practitioners' preferences for involvement
414 and interaction with other coaches. They felt that these activities helped them understand 'what
415 worked' (C14) and made 'practices stick in the mind' (C5).

416 Despite the espoused constructivist-themed practice theory evident through interview
417 and GDT observational data, some challenges were encountered by coach developers in
418 implementing this, particularly in relation to the context of learning. Tensions were apparent
419 between traditional classroom-based course delivery, seen as 'giving information and tools'
420 (CD3) to coach learners, combined with practical 'showcase' and simulated coaching sessions,
421 and connections to coaches' subsequent practice outside of the course setting. The prominence
422 afforded to 'gold standard' coach developer demonstrations followed by practice sessions

423 meant that coaches were expected to learn by modelling the required coaching behaviours and
424 receiving reinforcing negative and positive feedback. Although many coaches felt that the 'best
425 thing was you get to do a session and they feed back on it' (C3), and developers verbally
426 emphasised their demonstrations as just one way of doing things, this form of delivery left
427 some individuals feeling the need to outwardly mimic the developers' style (Chesterfield,
428 Potrac & Jones, 2010), stating 'you have to do it their way, that's the difficult thing, your
429 freedom has to go out of the window' (C7). Conceptualised as reinforcement, feedback is a
430 central concern of behaviourist learning theories (Tusting & Barton, 2003), and in 'training'
431 learners to respond in a certain, correct, way. As one coach learner explained, developers'
432 practice therefore contrasted with their espoused theory:

433 The philosophy there, they're sort of saying is that children learn through doing stuff
434 and that seems to be what they've been saying throughout the course, but I just felt that,
435 from all of the courses I've been on, it's kind of like they don't really follow that
436 philosophy in the way they're teaching the adult coaches on the course, it's much more
437 of a kind of, this is how we want you to do it, here's a demonstration, you go and do it,
438 if you don't do it quite how they've done it, then it's like, no we don't want you to do
439 it like that, we want you to do it like this. (C1)

440 While aspiring to relate learning to coaches' previous experiences and current practice
441 contexts, this de-contextualised, behaviourist interpretation of constructivist-informed delivery
442 left coach developers merely able to 'raise awareness' (CD1) around certain coaching issues
443 or topics. Responsibility was shifted onto coach learners to try things out and learn instead,
444 without support, in their own authentic day-to-day practice settings. In the words of CD1,

445 Because it is not real, it is not the real world, it is showcasing and just putting on bits,
446 so I don't function particularly well in this environment.

447 I don't think you learn it on the course, I think you learn it when you go out and do it,
448 that is the thing. Then you learn to become the coach you want to become and you learn
449 the stuff that works well for you.

450 **Individual learners**

451 A final theme of coach developers' understanding of learning concerned individual
452 learners, their differences and needs. Each of the developers talked about having 'a variety of
453 people in the room' (CD1), 'all at individual stages' (CD3) and 'recognising the difference'
454 (CD2). This was briefly acknowledged in coach developers' training through discussions that
455 'every course is going to be different due to the needs of your students' and 'everyone's got a
456 different starting point, everyone will have a different journey when they leave the course'
457 (GDT). Individual learners' differing motivations or willingness to learn was a further aspect
458 of this theme. Coach developers perceived that some coaches are open to trying new ideas and
459 learning, while others attend formal education simply to gain the qualification. As CD1
460 commented, 'the ones that want to change will change'. These perspectives mirrored the GDT
461 statement that adult learning is 'about self, it's about learners looking after their own learning
462 needs'. Despite verbal recognition however, general frameworks that failed to address
463 individual learning were used to support coach developers' preparation. For example, training
464 materials and delivery explained what 'adults need in their learning' (GDT) based on Maslow's
465 hierarchy of needs, which has been criticised for a lack of empirical support, rigour and overall
466 relevance to learning (Coulter, Gilchrist, Mallett & Carey, 2016). Meanwhile, the idea of
467 individualised learning was explained only in relation to the first, 'connect' stage of the GDT
468 learning cycle, through surface-level activities that promoted getting to know names and each
469 other, presented as 'little connectors' or ways to relate content to individuals. Detail of how to
470 work with individuals' differing starting points and needs was therefore overlooked.

471 In practice, then, although coach developers tried 'to meet the [coaches'] needs, I try to
472 feed information that's relevant to them' (CD3), course delivery followed the same format for
473 each learner and developers encountered challenges with limited knowledge of individuals. As
474 one coach developer put it, 'half the problem is I have no idea about these people' (CD1),
475 resulting in reliance on a flawed 'idea of where they are at' (CD2) based on universal course
476 pre-requisites. In practice, this engendered somewhat 'one-size-fits-all' delivery that was noted
477 by coach learners: 'it's really generic...you need to spend more time coaching and they need
478 to know what your capabilities are to be able to help you' (C10). In an extension of this issue,
479 coach developers recognised, yet were unable to work with, the additional subtlety of
480 unevenness of coaches' learning across the course cohort. Received learning was different from
481 the intended learning 'set up' by coach developers, and also varied between individuals:

482 It is hard, people get different things from courses, they walk away with different stuff
483 and they walk away with bits and pieces that they have got and they fit into stuff that
484 they already do and people will always say 'you always pick up something', well yes
485 but do you use it. (CD1)

486 This issue was 'almost impossible' (CD1) to overcome within the confines of a short,
487 de-contextualised formal coach education course with no continuity or follow-up, resonating
488 with familiar criticisms of such learning situations (Cushion et al., 2010). Nevertheless, there
489 were opportunities to utilise the significant set of skills involved in tailoring individual
490 provision through supporting, nurturing and challenging learning (Makopoulou, 2018).
491 Developers noted that SGB staff working regionally were better able to build knowledge and
492 relationships with individuals, following and supporting learners' development over a longer
493 period of time, although this occurred on a serendipitous basis: 'two or three months down the

494 line hopefully I will bump into them and we'll have a debate about stuff they have tried, but
495 only if we have that support out and about for them' (CD2).

496 **General Discussion**

497 Taken together, the three themes of coach developers' deep structure (Shulman, 2005)
498 practice theories constitute an alignment to implicit 'learner centred' interpretations of
499 constructivist assumptions of learning (Schunk 2012) that is complex, active and
500 individualised. Coach developers' training, in contrast, was largely driven by simplified,
501 generic frameworks for learning that recognised but did not adequately tackle these essential
502 elements of the process (Cushion et al., 2006). The GDT suffered from the promotion of
503 popular learning myths such as learning pyramids, deemed 'the Loch Ness Monster of
504 educational theory' (De Bruyckere, Kirschner & Hulshof, 2015. p.33) due to their persistence
505 and false claims about learning. This worrying propagation of flawed pseudoscientific theories
506 jeopardises the quality of coach development and the wider credibility of coaching as a
507 legitimate profession (De Bruyckere et al., 2015). In addition, a divergence or 'epistemological
508 gap' (Light, 2008) became apparent between coach developers' espoused learning theories and
509 the observed theories-in-use of both their training and delivery of formal coach education.
510 Although coach developers were comfortable with traditional delivery of content such as
511 showcase sessions and passing on technical coaching knowledge, they experienced challenges
512 relating to coaches' day-to-day learning contexts as well as knowledge of individuals across
513 cohorts. This meant that they ultimately settled for raising coaches' awareness around certain
514 topics rather than impacting upon meaningful learning. Although coach developers were aware
515 of the characteristics of coaches' learning through their several years of varied experiences, a
516 broad and deep expertise in learning (e.g. Abraham et al., 2013) and practice was limited to
517 some extent by the simplified nature of frameworks employed in their generic developer

518 training. This situation left developers feeling underprepared and restricted in developing
519 others, using predominantly self-taught knowledge:

520 The only training we have is two days generic developer training, that is all we have,
521 then we are expected to go and do a job like this. And we just do our best, we just do
522 what we can do and we just try and make it a good experience for people and we give
523 them some information that they might be able to use, that is as far as we can go really.
524 (CD1)

525 The multiple layers of evidence in this study highlights drawbacks to coach developers'
526 reliance on their own personal practice theories, derived largely from several years of
527 experience of 'what works' for them as developers, coaches and even sport participants
528 (Cassidy & Kidman, 2010). With a lack of critical scrutiny of the quality and meaning of such
529 experiences, not addressed by their training, the learning process was assumed to be equivalent
530 across these different domains. Moreover, as coach developers progress through the 'system'
531 they learn to value certain types of knowledge over others and, in turn, perpetuate these
532 perspectives (Cushion, et al., 2003). Not unlike coaches (e.g. Cushion et al., 2003; Piggott,
533 2012), developers evolved an accepted 'common sense' approach with a strong cultural element
534 and these discourses helped produce and reproduce coaching, in turn giving current practices
535 legitimacy.

536 This approach limited the provision of adaptable, individualised pedagogical strategies
537 with heightened relevance to coach learners' realities and practical needs (Cushion et al., 2003;
538 Piggott, 2012). While positioned as active learners with different needs, learner subjectivity
539 was, in fact, suppressed. Instead, learners were recipients of coach developers' universalised
540 learning frameworks that often advocated a singular or 'one-size-fits-all' approach seeming to
541 contradict athlete centeredness, and deny, or minimize, individual difference (Cushion, 2013).

542 In this sense, coach developers engaged with naïve constructivism (Cushion, 2013) and, as a
543 result of their differing biographies, constrained knowledge of individuals, and understanding
544 of how to cater for individual differences, an inconsistency of practice and learner confusion
545 was evident.

546 Similar to findings on short CPD courses with physical education teacher educators,
547 there were variations in the ways different developers structured and supported learning,
548 accompanied by mismatches between overall intentions and practice (Makopoulou, 2018).
549 Across all three themes, it was apparent that developers' well-intentioned practice theories did
550 not straightforwardly materialise in practice, characterised by struggles to help learners
551 overcome potentially powerful 'disequilibrium', inadvertent limiting of experimentation with
552 new ideas, and failure to individualise provision. Although the context of a short formal course
553 limited what was feasible, activities that foster the debate, experimentation and rationalisation
554 of pedagogical strategies and draw upon and challenge individual coaches' existing practices
555 in non-threatening ways would better align with developers' constructivist interpretations of
556 professional learning (Makopoulou, 2018). It is important to consider how developers can be
557 made aware of potential intention-practice mismatches, and be better prepared to implement
558 such activities with the skills necessary to effectively maximise participants' learning from
559 them in short-course settings. Indeed, there was some indication of assumptions that if one is a
560 'good' coach, this expertise can and will automatically carry over to working with coach
561 learners, without extensive additional preparation (Zeichner, 2005). Although the International
562 Council for Coaching Excellence's Coach Developer Framework (ICCE, 2017) emphasises
563 *training* in defining coach developers, this evidence suggests *quality* of training and wider
564 preparation is crucial in maximising developers' effectiveness in practice.

565 Considering the findings alongside research with teacher educators, quality
566 professional training and preparation should strike a balance between honouring the autonomy
567 of coach developers to utilise and critically reflect on their various experiences, and utilising
568 evidence-informed frameworks based on strong empirical data (Ben-Peretz et al., 2010; De
569 Bruyckere et al., 2015). Integrating the two can lead to improved practice alongside conceptual
570 insights, at the same time emphasising interpersonal, social and contextual aspects of learning
571 (Ben-Peretz et al., 2010). Scholars in sport coaching have for a number of years advocated that
572 to better inform practice, there is a need for more realistic, empirically grounded
573 representations of coaching processes (e.g. Cushion et al., 2006). In coach learning specifically,
574 recent research has used practice-linked data to build a more sophisticated, evidence-based
575 framework of the learning process, which elaborates the role of individual biography and
576 context in 'filtering' concepts to construct knowledge and practice (Stodter & Cushion, 2017).
577 While coach developers noted some aspects of coaches' learning relevant to this process, such
578 as picking up 'bits and pieces' from a course, the two key areas of challenge experienced by
579 coach developers also relate directly to the central 'double-loop' filter process. Such evidence-
580 based frameworks could be used to enhance the impact of coach developers in overcoming
581 these and other challenges, by making connections with practice and integration into coach
582 developer training (Lyle, 2018; Cushion et al., 2006). Alongside this, if personal experiences
583 and thus implicit learning theories or folk pedagogies remain unseen and unchallenged, it is
584 likely that coach developers may never realise their influence and the ways in which powerful
585 assumptions about what is best for learners guides what they do (Armour, 2010). Although
586 educators might prefer a more instrumental approach through the provision of practical tools
587 to implement with learners, the current evidence supports suggestions that a deeper
588 understanding of personal implicit theories, and how to apply theoretical frameworks, based
589 on critiqued experiences is most effective (Abraham et al., 2013). Coach developers, akin to

590 teacher educators, ultimately develop within a community of others in an 'extended journey'
591 along a career path (Cushion et al., 2018; Brody & Hadar, 2011). There also may be merit then
592 to the continual recruitment of more diverse educators to create a longer-term ability to focus
593 on pedagogical strategies while challenging culturally ingrained beliefs and assumptions
594 (Jacobs, Assaf & Lee, 2011). Sporting Governing Bodies may also wish to plan for the staffing
595 of formal coach education courses to balance different coach developer biographies and
596 practice theories, perhaps even with consideration of a potential 'best fit' for learners. These
597 ideas will remain speculative however until further research elucidates the specific needs and
598 learning processes of coach developers themselves, in order to plan more useful professional
599 preparation and ultimately improve impacts on coach learners. Indeed, a pertinent question that
600 remains to be evidenced is whether 'better' coach developer preparation would have any
601 greater impact on coaches and coaching (Lyle, 2018).

602 **Limitations**

603 The data presented here is limited by a sample size of three coach developers, which
604 despite the added layers of data from developer training, coach education and coach learners,
605 provides only a 'snapshot' of practice around one particular formal coach education course.
606 Therefore caution is encouraged in generalising findings to contexts dissimilar to the one
607 described here. The preceding discussion has highlighted the commonality of aspects of this
608 case to other work in coach and teacher development, suggesting that practitioners in
609 comparable learning environments may recognise similarities and differences to their own
610 experiences, ideally stimulating debate around key issues in coach development (Smith, 2018).
611 In collecting and analysing the data, the researchers brought a set of assumptions linked to their
612 backgrounds in the sport and previous experiences of having been educated by the SGB. Being
613 a visible 'outsider' as a young female researcher in a context dominated by older males, within

614 a culture of suspicion and anti-intellectualism, there may have been a lack of willingness from
615 participants to share their experiences. However, following rapport building across four course
616 cohorts, the data suggests participants were honest and open despite the added constraints of
617 time and location in conducting interviews during opportune breaks in course delivery. This
618 situation did inhibit in-depth investigation of coach developers' wider biographies.
619 Fundamentally, in the absence of operationalised and easily measurable learning outcomes, it
620 is extremely challenging to identify the impact of coach developer training and preparation,
621 and likewise formal coach education courses. Indeed, investigating intended and observed
622 outcomes may facilitate necessary pragmatism as to what can realistically be expected of short,
623 initial training episodes (Lyle, 2018). Tracking coach developers longitudinally through such
624 training as one likely small part of their wider development would provide more robust
625 evidence upon which to draw more functional conclusions.

626

Conclusion

627 This study aimed to provide insights into the underlying learning practice theories of
628 coach developers, drawing connections between these and their training, observed practices,
629 and coach learners' reactions to this practice. Themes relating to the complexity and challenges
630 of learning, active learning, and individual learners made up coach developers' understanding
631 of coaches' learning. Aspects of these practice theory themes were apparent within a generic
632 developer training course, however in the absence of detailed, evidence-based guiding
633 theoretical frameworks, developers relied on their experiences and encountered problems in
634 generating impactful practice on a formal coach education course. Coach learners were subject
635 to the resulting epistemological gap between developers' espoused theories and observed
636 theories-in-use, experiencing inconsistencies in pedagogical practice and confusion. The
637 results add nuance to existing recent research suggesting that coach developers' practice and

638 preparation is multifaceted, challenging, and worthy of further investigation on a larger and
639 more in-depth basis (e.g. Cushion et al., 2018). Articulating and interpreting deep structure
640 learning assumptions (Shulman, 2005), which in this study appeared to be derived from the
641 experiences of individuals over various levels of coach developer to coach and sport
642 participant, is crucial in order to investigate how these might be positively influenced (Lyle,
643 2018). Challenging 'common sense' implicit learning theories through critical reflection on
644 experiences and assumptions and raising awareness of observed practice, combined with the
645 integration of evidence-based theories of learning, may be a fruitful approach in the preparation
646 of coach developers. However, research that takes a multi-layered, longitudinal *in situ* view is
647 necessary to more appropriately understand how best to go about supporting and enhancing the
648 impact of coach developers on coaches and coaching.

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