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'Studentship' and 'impression management': Coaches' experiences of an advanced soccer coach education award.

Running head: 'Studentship' and 'impression management' in coach education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate how coaches perceived and responded to the content knowledge and assessment processes that they were exposed to during an advanced level soccer coaching award programme. In-depth interviews were conducted with six coaches who had successfully completed the UEFA 'A' Licence in the UK. Using the concepts of the 'dialectic of socialisation', 'studentship', and Goffman's (1959) work on 'the presentation of the self' as analytical pegs, the discussion highlights how the coaches were far from 'empty vessels' waiting to be filled. Rather, the findings reveal the active role that the respondent coaches played in terms of accepting, rejecting, and resisting the knowledge, beliefs and methods espoused by the coach educators. Finally, perceiving of coach learning as a negotiated and contested activity is discussed in terms of its implications for existing and future coach education provision.

Key words: Studentship, impression management, coach education, qualitative

‘Studentship’ and ‘impression management’ in coach education

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the provision of coach education programmes and the importance attached to them (Cassidy, Potrac, & McKenzie, 2006; Gilbert & Trudel, 1999; Lyle, 2002). According to Lyle (2002), this can be primarily attributed to two key factors; the increasing accountability of coaches for their actions in contemporary society, and the desire among many practitioners and coach educators for coaching to be recognised as a bona-fide profession. While the growth in such provision is to be applauded, there is a paucity of research on or in coach education (Cassidy et al., 2006; Nelson & Cushion, 2006). Thus, Gilbert and Trudel's (1999) earlier lament that 'the evaluation of coach education programmes has become one of the most pressing issues in sport science research' (p. 235) remains a valid one.

To date, the available literature on coach education has focused on coach development and learning (e.g., Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003; Gilbert & Trudel, 1999; Malete & Feltz, 2000), coach effectiveness in the context of youth sports (e.g., Smith & Smoll, 1990; Smith, Smoll & Barnett, 1995; Smoll, Smith, Barnett, & Everett, 1993) and the limitations of technical rationality which has tended to underpin much of the given provision (e.g., Abraham & Collins, 1998; Jones, 2000; Schempp, 1998). While this body of literature has provided scholars and practitioners with valuable knowledge about the role, nature and impact of coach preparation programmes, very little is known about how coaches experience such programmes. This is particularly so in terms of their structure, content and assessment, and the value that coaches attach to them (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004; Sullivan & Campbell, 2005; Cassidy et al., 2006; McCullick, Belcher, & Schempp, 2005). In an attempt to partially redress this neglect, the aim of this paper is to provide an insight

into UK soccer coaches' experiences of an advanced coach education programme. In particular, the study sought to examine the coaches' perceptions of the content they were exposed to on the programme and how their learning and development were subsequently assessed.

The physical education literature has reported several interesting findings with regard to how trainee teachers' perceive and respond to their formal preparation programmes (e.g., Anderson, 1997; Curtner-Smith, 1996; Doolittle, Dodds & Placek, 1993; Matanin & Collier, 2003). Here, trainees often enter teacher education with well formed views about, among other things, what it takes to be an effective teacher, how students should behave, what knowledge needs to be transmitted, and how students should be assessed. These beliefs subsequently act as filters which guide their decisions to accept or reject the material and ideas exposed to during teacher training programmes (Schempp & Graber, 1992). Such beliefs also shape the ways in which trainees engage with the coursework and assessments required during their formal preparation period. Specifically, it has been found that while trainee teachers often produce reports in keeping with the views and methods promoted by the teacher educators, they do not actually subscribe to them. It has thus been suggested that some students present the required 'front' in order to satisfy their examiners, while their eventual practice entails a reversion to previously held beliefs (Anderson, 1997; Graber, 1991). It has similarly been suggested that coaches' adopt particular strategies in relation to their certification process (e.g., Cushion et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2004). However, the limited empirical research carried out precludes anything but tentative conclusions. The value of this study then, echoing that of Doolittle et al. (1993) in physical education, lies in exploring how coaches accept, accommodate and/or reject the knowledge and methods presented to them on formal coach education

programmes. It also lies in providing some insights into the subjective and interactive nature of coach education through revealing its complex and messy realities (Jones & Wallace, 2005). Borrowing a sentiment from Jones and Wallace (2005), we believe that such knowledge can and should provide the basis to better inform future coach education provision.

Method

Interpretive interview techniques were used as the means of data collection. The interpretive perspective is fundamentally concerned with understanding how people construct and continue to construct social reality, given their interests and purposes (Sparkes, 1992). Relatedly, the paradigm recognises the existence of multiple realities, the socially constructed nature of knowledge, and focuses on exploring how meaning and action are constructed (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). It is widely recognised that such interviews lend themselves to research questions related to human behaviour about which relatively little is known, underlying their relevance to the issue in question (Denzin, 1989; Langley, 1997; Sparkes, 2000; Strean, 1998). It was thus hoped that the resultant data would serve to illuminate the multifaceted micro-level contested negotiations which appear an inherent feature of coach education provision, thereby providing a far-reaching insight into its complex realities (Purdy, Potrac & Jones, 2008).

Participants

Purposive sampling was utilised to select the respondent coaches for this study. According to Patton (1990), purposive sampling is concerned with constructing a sample that has meaning theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria that help to develop and test theory and explanation. He suggested that the logic and power behind the purposive sampling of respondents is that the sample

should be 'information rich'. The research participant then, should be one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, is articulate, has the ability to reflect, has the time to be interviewed, and is willing to take part in the study (Morse, 1994). More specifically, the cohort was recruited through use of a 'key informant', who was not only a willing and capable respondent but also able to introduce the primary researcher to other relevant coaches (Neergaard, 2007).

The participants, who had a mean age of 30, comprised six coaches who had successfully completed the UEFA 'A' License coach education course during the last 5 years. The UEFA 'A' License course is recognised as the second highest level coaching award within soccer in Europe. It requires student coaches to engage in theory and practical classes, and assessments related to the technical, tactical, strategic, organisational, physiological and psychological aspects of soccer coaching practice. To better contextualise the group, brief biographies of each participant, with pseudonyms used to protect anonymity, are given below (Kahan, 1999; Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002).

Steven: Is employed at a professional club where he works with senior players. He has coached at the international level and has completed several work secondments in both developed and developing soccer nations. He holds an undergraduate degree in sports coaching.

Derek: Is also employed as a professional coach where he principally focuses on the development of elite youth players. He has worked at several professional clubs and holds a masters degree in sports coaching.

Matthew: Coaches at an academic institution where he specialises in the development of young players aged 16-19. He holds an undergraduate degree in sports coaching.

Jamie**:** Is currently employed as a professional coach. He has held numerous positions in semi-professional and professional soccer, including coaching international teams and community development work. Alongside his coaching commitments, he is also involved in the development of national governing body (NGB) coach education courses.

Richard: Is currently employed at a professional club where he coaches elite junior players. He has also coached at the international level and holds a masters degree in sports coaching.

Lee: Is a former high school teacher who is currently a professional coach working with both junior and senior players. He has gained considerable experience at both the professional and 'grass-roots' levels of soccer coaching.

Procedure

The participants were interviewed for close to 90 minutes each by the principal author in an environment where they felt comfortable to discuss their experiences. Each interview began with general information about the purpose of the project and proceeded to focus on background and demographic issues (Potrac et al., 2002). The attention then shifted to open ended questioning relating to the nature and value of the content and assessment methods that the participants encountered on the UEFA 'A' License course. The interviews were broadly semi-structured in nature as, while a list of topics for discussion was prepared in advance, any new ones that emerged during the course of the interviews were probed and explored. Similar to the work of Potrac et al. (2002), it was believed that such an approach allowed greater freedom in terms of the sequencing of questions and the amount of time given to each topic.

The interviews were also reflexive in nature as the respondents were invited to explore particular topics with the principal researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Sparkes 2000). In this way, the coaches' perceptions and perspectives remained central to the interview process, with their views on nature of the UEFA 'A' License course being significant (Potrac et al., 2002). The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim in order to ensure an accurate and complete record of the data obtained. The transcripts were then returned to the respondent coaches for confirmation of their accuracy, both in terms of the words spoken and the meaning of what was expressed (Potrac et al., 2002). In line with Sparkes (1989), this taking of findings back to the field was considered as an opportunity for reflexive elaboration rather than a test of truth.

Data analysis

The data were analysed using a variant of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in an attempt to move beyond description to a theoretical, conceptual understanding of the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006). Indeed, Charmaz and Mitchell (2001, p. 161) have suggested that, through the application of grounded theory methods of analysis, researchers "can sharpen the analytic edge and theoretical sophistication" of ethnographic research and, as such, contribute to a more incisive understanding of social phenomena. In order to achieve this, the analysis aimed at identifying the social processes apparent within the data and the development of a theoretical framework that specified the "the causes, conditions, and consequences" of such processes (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001, p. 160). Specifically, having transcribed the interviews, a position of indwelling in relation to the data was adopted (Sparkes 2000; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). This involved an immersion in the data in order to understand the participants' point of view from an empathetic perspective (Sparkes,

2000). It entailed thoroughly reading the transcripts to identify and cross-check narrative segments and thematic categories within them. This comparative process also involved dividing the transcripts into appropriate pieces of information related to the participant coaches' perceptions of the UEFA 'A' License course, which were called meaning units. Common features between meaning units were established, which comprised of organising them into distinct groupings known as properties. The analysis then proceeded to a higher level of abstraction, which involved comparing properties in order to organise them into larger and more embracing categories (Côté, Salmela & Russell, 1995). During the analysis, 'analytical memos' were used to make preliminary connections to various theoretical concepts that might explain the key issues evident. This interpretive process was principally informed and shaped by the concepts of the dialectic of socialisation (Schempp & Graber, 1992) and the presentation of the self (Goffman, 1959).

Rather than being passive entities that willingly conform to structural forces, the dialectic of socialisation considers human beings to be active agents in their socialisation (Schempp & Graber, 1992). Thus, an individual is believed to have some control over which aspects of knowledge and beliefs are acquired and which are ignored (Graber, 1991). Such a concept allows us to consider how coaches' experiences act as filters through which they judge and subsequently accept or reject the ideas and methods that they are exposed to (Doolittle et al., 1993). Although it has been suggested that such predispositions are not easily changed or modified, the dialectic of socialisation was primarily employed in this study to examine the respondent coaches' engagement with the knowledge and methods exposed to by the coach educators responsible for the UEFA 'A' licence course; that is, to examine the

embodied "contest of social thesis against individual anti-thesis" (Schempp & Graber, 1992, p. 331).

The second analytical framework used was the dramaturgical theory outlined in Goffman's (1959) classic text, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. Here, Goffman (1959) examined how, through the process of dramatic realisation, an individual is required to present a compelling 'front' in order to fulfil the duties of a particular role in a way that meets the expectations that others have of them in that role. Through the application of micro-level analysis, Goffman's (1959) work highlights issues of individual identity, group relations, the impact of environment, and the movement and interactive meaning of information within it (Branhart, 1994). In short, Goffman's (1959) thesis allows us to explore how people produce recognizable performances for others (Williams, 1998). Goffman's work is principally used in this study to analyse how the respondent coaches sought to provide 'idealised' images of themselves to the coach educators that were responsible for assessing them. In this respect, and in utilising Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor, the coaches' engagement with the assessment process is examined in terms of it being somewhat akin to a semi-theatrical performance used instrumentally towards a given end.

Results and discussion

The coaches' perceptions of the course content

The data revealed that the coaches were at first positive and enthusiastic about the content they were expecting to receive on the UEFA 'A' Licence course. Their expectations then were high. For example, Derek and Steven noted:

> I wanted the course to be a lot more in-depth than the 'B' Licence that I passed. I wanted to test myself at a higher level and I wanted to observe other coaches and pick-up some tips and pointers from them. I wanted to develop a greater tactical understanding, you know, how different tactical systems work (Derek)

> Yeah, definitely to gain more knowledge. I have never felt like I could stop learning and gaining more knowledge. I think that's one of my biggest strengths, is the fact that I always want to learn. I'm a scholar of the game. I wanted to understand how to play in every different type of system and how to get those points across to the players (Steven).

While the coaches were initially passionate about what they hoped to gain they had, however, mixed reactions in relation to whether these expectations had been met. Consequently, while the coaches highlighted some positive experiences, there was a general consensus of unfullfilment following the course in terms of acquiring the knowledge desired. For example, Richard stated:

> There was a progression of sorts from the 'B' to the 'A' licence, but for me that progression meant that all we did was add 3 more players or so in the practice. On the 'A' licence most of the practice sessions are just based on 11v11 as opposed to 8v8. There was not much more in terms of the depth of content. For me, the step up was not sufficient.

While some coaches rejected the content and methods presented on the course almost immediately, others tried to implement the prescribed approaches when they returned to their clubs, but quickly came to reject them. Eventually then, all the coaches believed that the guidelines and methods for practice espoused by the coach educators on the course were generally not appropriate to use within their respective club environments. This was attributed to a number of factors including a clash with existing beliefs and situational expectations regarding what constituted 'good' coaching, the overly prescriptive coach-led pedagogy presented on the course, and a perceived lack of appropriateness between the 'off the shelf' material presented and the needs of the players whom the coaches' work with day-in day-out. Furthermore, the younger coaches also noted that, as they were required to act as players during the practical sessions on the UEFA 'A' licence course, they did not get to observe, analyse and engage with some of the material presented in the way that they would have liked. This ultimately led them to be reluctant to implement such methods and

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processes in their own coaching contexts. For instance, when discussing how he tried

to transfer the methods witnessed on the course to his own practice, Matthew noted

that:

> I had difficulty with that and I know others have had as well. I've found from
> my experiences of working with players three times a week that it's
> impossible to keep the players motivated by constantly doing functional
> practices and 11 v 11 [practices]. So it is difficult if not impossible to work in
> the ways that they [the coach educators] want you to.

The recommendations given by the coach educators on the UEFA 'A' licence course

conflicted with the well established methods, routines and practices that the coaches

had learnt from experience. In illustrating this point, Lee noted that on the course:

> You have to build up from a two, four, five, seven, nine, eleven players
> involved. It's drawn out, and that's why it is so different to the club because
> you can't run sessions like that there. I would start with an 11v11 and work
> backwards, that is how it is done at our club.

 In terms of the value and transferability of the course content then, the candidates

considered that, at best, there were only snippets of information they could integrate

into their own coaching routines. Richard stated:

> I think some of the fundamentals you get from the course can be tweaked and
> adapted in a way that you best think will meet the needs of the players. For me
> though, I'm a country mile away in my coaching practice in terms of what I do
> now and what I had to do to pass the 'A' licence course.

Such findings are in keeping with the work of Schempp and Graber (1992),

who explored how pre-service teachers negotiated the beliefs, ideologies and

knowledge that teacher educators exposed them to. Indeed, rather than being 'passive

entities' (Schempp & Graber, 1992, p. 331), the coaches here were active agents in

terms of deciding which beliefs and behaviours they would accept or reject from their

educators. The information presented on the A licence course was subsequently

evaluated against their conceptions of effective coaching practice that were

principally informed by their experiences of coaching in everyday contexts. Such

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coaching experiences had led to the development of strong beliefs, which ultimately

dictated which ideas and methods the coaches accepted from the course (Schempp &

Graber, 1992; Doolittle et al., 1993). Indeed, the respondent coaches only recognized

the methods that were considered to be in keeping with their existing convictions,

whilst largely rejecting those perceived to clash with or contradict them (Graber,

1991).

Similar to the work addressing educational Continuing Professional

Development (CPD) (e.g., Guskey, 2002; McLaughlin & Zarrow, 2001), it could be

argued that the UEFA 'A' licence course had little impact upon the professional

practice of the coaches subjected to it, because its foundations, by not sufficiently

accounting for the process of coach change, were "substantively and strategically

incomplete" (McLaughlin & Zarrow, 2001, p. 99). In this respect, Guskey (2002)

proposed that, rather than bringing about changes by attempting to alter individuals'

beliefs and values, professional development providers need first to supply evidence

of how a proposed initiative can improve practice. Change may have been more likely

then if the coach educators could have provided evidence to the coaches of how the

approaches they promoted could have been contextually applied in 'live' coaching

situation for the benefit of all (Guskey, 2002; Bowes & Jones, 2006). The best

practice presented standards set by the coach educators were considered to be

somewhat out of kilter with the respondent coaches' understanding of their daily

realities. It is a finding which resonates with the work of Jones (2000) and Cushion et

al. (2003), who argued that the technocratic and rationalistic ideologies that have

traditionally underpinned much coach education provision have failed to adequately

recognise the situational variability within which coaches' work. It is perhaps not

surprising then that the impact of coach education is often weakened as a consequence

of a lack of perceived fit between the content and methods that coaches are exposed to on such courses and their practical needs (Cushion et al., 2003; Jones, 2000).

Such a position is also in keeping with related work in education (e.g., Armour & Yelling, 2004; Day, 1997; Loughran & Gunstone, 1997), which has suggested that teachers often view formal Continuing Professional Development (CPD) with a degree of healthy cynicism as they 'wait to be convinced' of its merits in terms of enhancing their practice. Day (1999) argued that stimulating teachers to critically reflect upon their practice is not just a straightforward cognitive process, but is instead a complex, emotional activity that necessitates the involvement of teachers' heads and hearts. As such, Day (1999) suggested that CPD is likely to have less of an impact if it is "not based upon an understanding of the complexities of teachers' lives and conditions of work", and "upon an understanding of how teachers learn and why they change" (p. 204). It could be argued that this was certainly the case in terms of the nature of the UEFA 'A' licence course in this study. The results here also lend support to the work of Cushion et al. (2003) and Nelson and Cushion (2006), which suggests that coach educators should not assume that coaches arrive on professional preparation courses as empty vessels waiting to be filled. Instead, through their previous experiences as players and coaches, practitioners have often internalised and embodied coaching methods that are steeped in a particular culture (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003). As such, coach educators should not only recognise the power of experience in shaping individual beliefs on coaching, but also actively engage coaches in the critical analysis of how their personal biographies might influence their thoughts about effective coaching (Cushion et al., 2003; Nelson & Cushion, 2006). In this way, by deconstructing assumed know-how it may become possible to highlight

how coaches' beliefs based on past experiences are incomplete and constitute, at best, a limited base for practice (Anderson, 1997; Weinstein, 1989).

The findings here are also in keeping with Nelson, Cushion, and Potrac's (2006) assertion that much formal coach education provision could be described as indoctrination. This sentiment is based on their review of the coaching literature, and suggests that much of the criticism from coaches regarding coach education provision could be, in part, the consequence of coach educators engaging in "activities that set out to convince us [coaches] that there is a right way of thinking, feeling and behaving" (Rogers, 2002, p. 53). Here, they suggested that coaches are frequently exposed to a single set of prescribed values, attitudes, and practices that they are expected to abide by. The coaches interviewed here highlighted how this was the case in terms of what was expected of them in relation to the structure of coaching sessions, the delivery of information to players, and the feedback that they subsequently provided. Such a functionalist view of coach learning, which unproblematically casts the coach educators as knowledgeable experts and coaches as willing learners, fails to capture the complex, dynamic realities that are inherent within coach learning (Nelson et al., 2006).

With regard to the latter point, it would appear that it is important for coach educators to recognise that, as a consequence of their experiences in the field, coaches may develop strong professional identities. According to Kelchtermans (1996, 2005), our professional identity provides us with a 'personal interpretive framework' that not only influences how we view ourselves in the role of teacher or coach, but also impacts upon our 'subjective theory'. Such theory encompasses personal knowledge structures about how and why we act in the ways we do and, importantly, how well we think we are doing it; perceptions that can have a significant impact upon how we

engage with CPD provision. In this respect, Sugrue (1997) argued that, as professional identities can often become embedded and exhibit a high degree of tenacity, it is important for those providing CPD to probe participants' rationales for their behaviours rather than solely focusing on the participants' abilities to apply officially preferred means and methods. Perhaps then, coach educators need to more adequately recognise the importance that coaches may attach to the culture and demands of the workplace as they strive to get their message accepted. In this study, the workplace had its own sets of propositions, ideas and ways of acting that the coaches not only felt obliged to conform to, but also believed to be 'right' (Schempp, 1993; Kelchtermans, 2005). Indeed, it became obvious that the messages received by the coaches from their respective workplaces regarding 'what' and 'how' to coach were deemed more important than those provided by the coach educators.

The coaches' perceptions of the course assessment methods

The data also revealed some interesting findings regarding the coaches' perceptions of the methods used to assess their learning and development on the course. They highlighted how the coaching styles required for the practical examination sessions were very different to the way that they actually coached in everyday practice. Here, the coaches described how they consciously adapted their behaviours to meet the perceived expectations of the coach educators who were examining them. For example, Matthew, Steven and Lee noted:

> Yeah, I changed massively. I think you completely change the way that you coach to pass the assessment (Matthew).

> I was a lot different from how I usually coach…If I was brutally honest, I think I would find it very hard to do one of those sessions again now (Steven).

> The answer to that is 'yes'. You are really going through the assessment to highlight that you know the course content to the coach educators. You are really acting to meet the coach educators' needs and requirements rather than anything else (Lee).

The coaches also outlined how the need to regularly intervene in practices during their assessment was markedly different to what they would do in their normal context. Here, two of the coaches commented that:

> Because you are being assessed, you step into assessment mode. When coaching in the 'real world', to call it that, you coach the way that fits your own philosophy and how you think the players will best learn. In your club environment, you might intervene for 15-20 seconds here and there, whereas on your ('A' licence) assessment you might spend 1-2 minutes at a time talking because you want to show (the assessor) that you've got the knowledge (Derek).

> I came away from the 'A' licence thinking 'this is wrong'. Did you get all the points across? That is the first thing that everyone asks you and that's not coaching to me. That's just regurgitating coaching points and, with all due respect, that's not what coaching is all about (Lee).

The respondents thus, felt that they had to engage in what Jamie termed 'synthetic coaching' in order to successfully obtain the certification. This entailed mirroring the interactional style and appearance of the coach educators, as well as the session content and structure in order to successfully meet the needs of the assessment. In the words of Jamie, Lee, and Matthew:

> Yeah, I did it the way they wanted it to be done. They told us to build the sessions up like that, so I did it exactly the way that they wanted. I had heard stories of people who didn't do it that way and had failed their assessment (Jamie).

> Yeah, exactly the same, and that's no fault of anyone's really but you have to do it (Lee).

> My own style is very different to the way that tutors delivered, so I felt that I had to change it in order to pass (Matthew).

The coaches highlighted similar concerns in relation to the log-book of coaching plans that they were required to submit at the end of the course. According to the respondents, these log books were of limited value as they did not reflect how

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they would actually conduct their club sessions. Consequently, the coaches completed

the log-book in a way they perceived the coach educators expected. For example,

> I found the log-books themselves not relevant to me and the way I structured
> sessions. So, I wrote the log-book in the way that the assessors would want to
> see (Jamie).

> The log books only allowed you to structure your sessions in the way that they
> [the assessors] wanted, so you ended up planning a session for them rather
> than what you actually delivered (Matthew).

While Goffman's work on the presentation of the self in everyday life has

principally been used in the coaching literature to explore coaches' interactions with

athletes (e.g., Jones et al., 2004; Potrac et al., 2002), evidence of his discussed 'front'

and 'impression management' can be clearly seen in relation to the coaches' dealings

with the coach educators in this study. According to Goffman (1959), the 'front'

refers 'to that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a

general and fixed fashion to define the social situation for those who observe

performance' (p. 22). The successful construction of a 'front' requires an individual to

carefully control a variety of communicative sources in order to convince the

audience of the appropriateness of behaviour and it's compatibility with the role

assumed (Branhart, 1994; Jones et al., 2004). In this respect, the respondent coaches

highlighted how they utilised a number of props (e.g., clothing and the written

submissions in the coaching log-book) in combination with 'face-work' (e.g.,

mannerism and language) to provide the coach educators with a convincing

impression that they were acting in a way that was deemed appropriate. The coaches

were acutely aware of the powerful 'heirarchical observation' or 'surveillance' of the

coach educators assessing them and the subsequent need to appear to conform to the

latter's expectations (Foucault, 1979). Such behaviour is also in keeping with

Goffman's (1959) suggestion that, in order to uphold the standards of conduct and

appearance expected of someone in a particular position, a 'certain bureaucratisation of the spirit is expected' (p. 56). Indeed, the findings suggest that the respondent coaches put on a show for the benefit of their audience, the coach educators, irrespective of its sincerity in order to achieve the goal of passing the course.

The coaches' reactions to the practical assessment and log-book of coaching sessions can also be understood in relation to Graber's (1991) work on 'studentship'. Graber (1991) described 'studentship' as the set of behaviours that students use to progress through an education programme with greater ease, more success, and less effort, and includes cheating, taking short-cuts, psyching out the instructor to find out what might be asked in the exam, whilst projecting a self-image that is not necessarily congruent with what one actually believes. Indeed, the respondent coaches employed image protection and impression management behaviours that would lead the instructors to believe that they were actually buying into the orientation of the coach education programme (Goffman, 1959; Graber, 1991). However, the coaches only acted in this way so as to be viewed favourably by the instructors and to pass the course (Graber, 1991). Such behaviour can be understood in relation to the power dynamics that exist between coaches and coach educators. As the coach educators were the final arbiters of the coaches' grades, recommendations and certification, the coaches had much to lose in terms of directly or defiantly challenging and contesting the beliefs espoused by the educators (Goffman, 1959; Graber, 1991). The coaches chose instead to push back against the socialisation forces of the coach educators in a covert manner, through manipulating both their coaching behaviour and the nature of their written submissions (Schempp & Graber, 1992). Upon successfully passing the course, the respondent coaches then reverted back to using their preferred, often implicitly learned, coaching methods and actions. Given the discussion in the previous

section on notions of professional identity, the failure to understand coach change and the coaches' belief that many of the methods and views espoused on the course lacked contextual relevance, it is perhaps not surprising that the coaches engaged with the assessment process in the superficial ways that they did.

Concluding thoughts: Implications for coach education provision

The aim of this study was to explore UK soccer coaches' perceptions of course content and assessment methods experienced on an advanced level coach education programme. The coaches' general experience was a negative one. Although some content was deemed useful, it was only considered so if it was complementary to their existing beliefs about effective coaching. Given these findings, coach educators may benefit from considering the relevance and applicability of the various knowledges, methods and perspectives they promote and champion on formal coach education provision. In addition to considering the situational relevance of the content that they cover, coach educators also need to examine how they attempt to persuade and influence the candidates to 'buy into' and recognise the value of such content. While recent literature has concluded that coaches need to carefully consider their interactions in the quest to develop positive and optimal pedagogical relationships (e.g., Jones et al., 2003, Jones et al., 2004; Potrac et al., 2002), the same could be said coach educators.

The results draw attention to how the respondent coaches engaged in 'studentship' through adopting impression management and image protection strategies to portray the qualities desired to pass the course (Goffman, 1959; Graber, 1991). Having completed the course, however, they returned to their tried and trusted methods of player development. Such findings suggest that far from being an unproblematic and straightforward endeavour, coach education is very much a

negotiated and contested activity. It is, therefore, important for coach educators to recognise, consider, and act in relation to students' pre-existing culturally-influenced knowledge, which coaches bring to their educational endeavours (Kelly, 2006). We believe that acknowledging such realities, which include notions as learner knowledge, knowing, practice and identity (Kelly, 2006), holds much potential for enhanced coach learning through more progressive and engaging coach education provision.

While the findings of this study are not generalisable, they do raise some questions regarding the design and delivery of formal coach education programmes. In particular, it could be suggested that the 'gold standard' (Jones & Turner, 2006) approach utilised has significant limitations in terms of its ability to influence the thinking, and subsequent professional practice, of coaches. Similar to others' findings (e.g., Cushion et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2004; Jones & Turner, 2006), the coaches in this study were critical of what they considered to be the 'one size fits all' approach to coaching provided on the course. As such, coach educators may alternatively benefit from conceiving of their role as supportive facilitators in developing 'a quality of mind' in coaches that enables the latter to better deal with the problematic and contested nature of their work (Cassidy et al., 2004; Jones & Turner, 2006). This would entail coach educators playing an amended role in assisting coaches to deconstruct, explore and explain coaches' practice; a progressive dialogue with focussing on the exploration of coaches' previously formed assumptions, as well as utilising researched evidence to challenge 'common-sense' knowledge. Echoing the conclusions of Jones and Turner (2006) then, greater appreciation needs to be given to coaches' histories and their impact on personal learning. Indeed, it is important to recognise the interaction that occurs between beliefs established outside formal coach

education and those that coaches are exposed to by coach educators (Anderson, 1997; Cushion et al., 2003). In particular, and in drawing upon the work of Anderson (1997) in physical education, we believe that coach educators must find ways to deal with coaches' values and beliefs if coach education provision is to have a meaningful and positive impact. It is an issue that has a considerable bearing on the future endeavours of both coaching researchers and coach educators.

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