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## **Changing the face of coach education: Using ethno-drama to depict lived realities**

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## **Abstract**

*Background:* Coaching holistically and viewing coaching as interdisciplinary, where different knowledges meet, interconnect and dissect, has increasingly gained recognition. In an effort to engage more effectively with this agenda and to educate coaches to meet the integrated, fluid nature of their work, Jones and Turner (2006) advocated a problem based learning (PBL) approach to coach education. From a case-study example, the PBL approach was a general success, as proof emerged of a better appreciation by students of the inherent complexity of coaching, and of the many interrelated knowledges needed to excel at the activity. Despite such encouragement however, the presentation of static written scenarios, which could be revisited by the students as many times as they wanted in efforts to develop ‘preferred’ responses, lacked a degree of real-world credibility.

*Aims:* In an effort to increase the sense of problematic authenticity to PBL scenarios, the purpose of this paper was three fold. Firstly, to make the case for ethno-drama as a bone fide means to engage sport coaches with their practice. Secondly, to document a process through which such a multi-layered, dynamic pedagogy was presented to post-graduate sport coaching students; and thirdly, to record and interpret the students’ responses to the approach in terms of their learning experiences.

*Method:* Ethno-drama scenes were developed, produced and performed as part of a problem based learning (PBL) module on the MSc (Sport Coaching) programme at Cardiff Metropolitan University (CMU), in collaboration with the Drama Department at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). More specifically, a theatre director/educator from LJMU worked with student actors to dramatize sport coaching scenes developed and scripted in advance by the CMU teaching team. Following the performances, the coaching students (who witnessed the dramatization) participated in small discussion groups in order to develop preferred ‘solutions’ to the performed scenarios. Finally, an evaluation of the ethno-drama approach was carried out through three semi-structured focus group interviews.

*Results:* Inductive procedures were used to carefully examine, categorise and analyse the results. The findings suggest that the approach was generally successful in producing realistic dramatized scenarios that not only intellectually engaged the students, but also stimulated thought and discussion amongst them regarding issues of ‘preferred practice’..

*Conclusion:* Many further challenges exist in terms of the significance of using ethno-drama as a pedagogy to teach sports coaching. Nevertheless, we believe enough encouragement resulted from this project to merit further use, engagement and research into this potentially very innovative form of coach education.

Keywords: ethno-drama, problem based learning, innovative pedagogy, coach education.

## Introduction

During the past decade, coaching has been increasingly depicted as a dynamic intricate activity which precludes any 'paint by number' plans that practitioners can easily follow (e.g., Purdy, Potrac & Jones, 2008; Jones & Wallace, 2005). Consequently, the need to coach holistically in terms of viewing coaching not as multi-disciplinary, comprising unconnected strands of differing content, but as interdisciplinary, where such knowledges meet, interconnect and dissect, has increasingly gained recognition (Jones & Turner, 2006; Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2009). Some years ago, in an effort to better educate coaches to meet the integrated, fluid nature of their work, Jones and Turner (2006) advocated a problem based learning (PBL) approach. A principal reason for PBL's adoption in this context stemmed from the authors' belief in the need to increasingly 'intellectualise' coaching as a decision-making activity, appreciating the need to grow "a 'quality of mind' in coaches through habits of reflection, problem-solving and critique" (Jones & Turner 2006, 183). The value of doing so also rested on the need to close the theory-practice gap in coaching, thus further developing in coaches a knowledge of why they coach as they do and of the possibility of alternatives. The PBL approach was a general success, as proof emerged of a better appreciation by the students of the inherent complexity of coaching, and of the many interrelated knowledges needed to excel at the activity (Jones & Turner 2006).

Despite such encouragement however, the presentation of static written scenarios, which could be revisited by the students as many times as they wanted in efforts to develop 'preferred' responses, obviously lacked a degree of real-world credibility (a stated aim of PBL pedagogy itself). Consequently, in an effort to increase the sense of problematic authenticity, it was decided to present some coaching scenarios in the form of ethno-drama for the students to deconstruct. The subsequent purpose of this paper is three fold. Firstly, to make the case for ethno-drama as a bone fide means to engage coaches with their practice. Secondly, to document the process through which we presented such a multi-layered, dynamic pedagogy to MSc Sport Coaching students at CMU; and thirdly, to record and interpret the students' responses to the approach in terms of their learning experiences.

The value of the work lies in building on the case previously made by Jones and Turner (2006) in relation to better engaging students through innovative pedagogy. Here, they argued for pedagogical means that developed in students an integrated realistic knowledge base of how theory can and should be reflected in practice. Developing the perception of relevance was considered crucial, as continued commitment to a subject is dependent upon the inclusion of meaningful activities within it (Chen, 1998).

The significance of the paper also lies in response to the earlier work of Culver and Trudel (2006), Nelson and Cushion (2006) and Ollis and Sproule (2007) among others, who have called for more research into coaches' engagement with real world scenarios; information which, in turn, can be fed back into improved education programmes. For such scenarios to develop what Entwistle (2000) termed as 'knowledge transformation', they need to resonate with everyday experience and be couched in accessible language, preferably with metaphorical associations. They also need to provoke critical reflection on practice; thus possessing a *pedagogical fertility* (Entwistle, 1994). Here, as in coaching itself, space must be allowed for students to make personal constructions and sense of the information presented, thus demanding their constant engagement within the immediate. Allowing this space for individual creativity in terms of the

student responses was deemed essential, thus developing abilities to cope with ambiguous problems in a fast changing environment (Shaheen, 2010).

In terms of structure, we firstly discuss the concept of ethno-drama as pedagogy; what it is, and what is claimed on its behalf. This is followed by an explanation of how acted-out scenarios were delivered to a group of MSc students, and how data were gathered in relation to what the students thought about the approach. The students' actual responses are then presented, before a final concluding section analyses and makes sense of these data both in terms of previous literature and anticipated future uses of ethno-drama as a means to teach coaching.

### **What is ethno-drama?**

Ethno-drama has been described as 'a new form of theatre' (Mienczakowski & Morgan 2001) that seeks to communicate the emotional and contextual complexities of lived experiences through reflective, reflexive performances (Gilbourne, 2007). It represents a recent movement in the field of qualitative enquiry to use arts-based modes to both construct and represent research (Saldaña 2005). It utilizes participatory and interactive theatre to influence participants and audiences by inviting them to negotiate and construct understanding and meaning from ethnographic performances in order to effect change (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001). Ethno-drama is, therefore, an art form that "opens up institutions and their practices for critical inspection and evaluation" (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, 377). The power of this form of theatre is to "express the detail and depth of human experience including the sub-texts of thought and emotion" that allows an audience to experience the complex nature of everyday life (Llewellyn, Gilbourne & Triggs, in press). Crucial to this process, is the move from the cognitive to the emotional realm, where the attitudes and feelings of the audience can be tapped into in order to stimulate engagement (Cossa, Ember, Grover & Hazelwood, 1996). This increased relation with the emotion and affect, often through direct audience participation, can lead not only to seeing external events in new ways, but also provoke self-reflection on personal beliefs and actions (Carless & Douglas, 2010). It is a perspective which insists on immediacy and involvement, of respecting and negotiating "partial, plural and contingent understandings" as opposed "to analytic distance or detachment" (Denzin, 2003, 8). The point then, as with other performative pedagogies, was not to bring the dramatisation as 'proof', but as illumination to stimulate connection (Nielsen, 2008).

The scripts and performances of ethno-drama are based on research participants' experiences, thus depicting 'true to life' scenarios (Saldaña 2005). Such scenarios are designed to encourage interaction between the audience and performers in order to inform, contest and promote perceptual change (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001). The reality of the scenarios is, therefore, a crucial element of the approach. Hence, the scripts need to be representative of the range of behaviours in the chosen setting rather than merely fictional accounts to satisfy aesthetic or dramatic need, or to act as a form of entertainment (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001). This is because the ultimate intention is to involve the audience in a reflective post-performance deconstruction and discussion about the issues presented. The objective then, is to develop a "form of critical, collaborative enquiry where democratic public discourse can take place" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, xi). In this respect, ethno-drama "presupposes interaction stemming from performance" (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001, 221). In doing so, the approach also

provides an opportunity to bridge the gap between theoretical principles and practical application, thus bringing theories and concepts to life (Telesco, 2006).

According to Mienczakowski and Morgan (2001), the collection of data for critical ethno-drama should be an informant led process requiring the gathering of researched and observed accounts. The critical element of the process presupposes interaction and reflection stemming from the performance. It is, therefore, important that all characters and groups represented in the scenarios have a voice, with the potential for counter and divergent narratives to emerge and to be explored in the subsequent discussions. As the scenarios are usually performed to expert or informed audiences, the authenticity of the data depicted is crucial to gain their confidence and engagement.

The theoretical focus of ethno-drama is based on nascency; embryonic moments of enlightenment (Saldaña, 2005). In this way, the approach seeks to influence and change the perspectives and understanding of participants and audiences through emerging discerning moments, which may be immediate or follow sometime later. Hence, borrowing from Alberoni (1984), Mienczakowski and Morgan (2001) view such nascency as a form of latent insight or potential. Although it employs the media and conventions of theatrical production, ethno-drama's principal purpose then lies not only in presenting aesthetic entertaining performances (Saldana, 2003) but in "delivering narratives that inform, disturb, confront and hold the attention of an audience" to illicit change (Llewellyn *et al.*, in press); to promote considered reflection whereby students can confront and examine themselves in problematic situations and make sense of their subsequent multiple interpretations (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001). Consequently, the reason why we chose ethno-drama was not for its amusement value or novelty, but for its apparent appropriateness as a medium for highlighting problematic issues through credible, persuasive personal stories.

### **Methodology and the unit in question**

The ethno-drama scenes were developed, produced and performed as part of a problem based learning (PBL) module on the MSc (Sport Coaching) post-graduate programme at Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC), in collaboration with the Drama Department at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). More specifically, a theatre director/educator from LJMU worked with student actors to dramatize sport coaching scenes developed and scripted in advance by the CMU teaching team, all of whom had extensive experience as coaches and researchers of coaching. PBL is an approach to teaching which uses realistic, problematic scenarios and subtle tutor questioning to challenge and instill in students critical ways of thinking (Jones & Turner, 2006). As previously stated, although Jones and Turner's (2006) initial attempt at utilizing PBL to teach coaching was well received, a suggestion for improvement related to the development of material that offered an increased sense of authenticity. This was particularly so in terms of forcing instant decision making based on what is seen as opposed to evaluating written text. One way of achieving this was to present the scenarios as visual performances, thus better mirroring the fast-paced world of practice. What we sought to do here then, was to enhance an already successful PBL module through the introduction of performed ethno-drama scenarios. The students were already accustomed to the process involved in more traditional PBL pedagogy as they had previously experienced working through two such problematic scenarios earlier in the module. Here, in groups, the students were expected to identify and define the problem within

each scenario presented; consider the knowledge and source the information needed to deal with it; refocus on the problem to identify further issues and possible alternative solutions; before preparing and presenting negotiated group solutions (Jones & Turner, 2006).

### ***Participants and procedures***

Fifteen students participated in the module from a variety of backgrounds. In line with course requirements, all were currently coaching. Additionally, four staff were involved in teaching the unit; two had been instrumental in conceptualising and developing the module (with areas of specialisation related to sport coaching and pedagogy), while the other two were authorities in ethno-drama and its implementation in teaching and learning.

The first phase of the methodological process, which lasted approximately six months, involved writing the sports coaching scenes. One of the UWIC tutors took the primary responsibility for writing the scripts, which were based on his own ethnographic research and embodied experiences in football, as a player and coach. These writings were discussed, reviewed and amended through a series of meetings with the teaching team to better ensure their evocative, engaging, yet real-world relevancy (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001). The three separate, although inter-linked scenes dealt with a variety of issues that coaches encounter in their every-day jobs. In the first, coach-athlete and athlete-athlete relationships were explored, with the main plot based around the selection of players and its problematic legacy. In the second scene, the coach's relationship with an assistant was examined, where contrasting philosophies and methods were the primary focus. Finally, the third scene was situated in the coach's interactions with the other stakeholders (in this case, the club chairman), with issues such as power, negotiation and compliance coming to the fore.

In addition, two versions of each scene were written. The second versions included a series of soliloquies or extended passages of text reflective of inner thoughts spoken by a character to the audience. Saldaña (2003, 2005) suggests that such soliloquies reveal both personal and social insight, showcasing characters through given snapshot portraits of their lives taken from a particular angle. In doing so, if successfully written and performed, they hold the potential to generate emotional connections with the audience (Saldaña, 2003). The purpose here then, was to allow greater perception into the character's thoughts and motivations.

Following appropriate rehearsal, the second phase of the process comprised the live performance (and filming for subsequent use) of the scenarios during the MSc Sports Coaching module at CMU by the LJMU drama students. This took place during a three hour session and involved the two performances of each scene (one with soliloquies and one without), and post performance discussions after each one. After the first performances, the coaching students participated in small group discussions which were facilitated by the following questions:

- What did you see in the different scenes?
- What are the issues here?
- What has the coach got to deal with?

The second performances (including the main characters' soliloquies) gave more insight into the contextual issues faced. The student discussions were subsequently organised around the following questions:

- Now what do you think are the issues here?

- Have you altered your perceptions? On the basis of what?
- What are your 'solutions' to the problems you see? Why?
- What informs your thinking?
- What could further inform your thinking?

Consistent with the PBL process identified earlier (Jones & Turner, 2006), within their allocated groups, the students were also asked to identify areas for private research for the upcoming week in order to inform their decided upon preferred 'solutions'. In the following week's session, the students shared this research with the rest of the class.

The third and final phase of the methodological process involved an evaluation of the ethno-drama approach. This was carried out through three semi-structured focus group interviews of five participants each, randomly assigned and facilitated by the principal researcher (first author). Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and centred on the students' perceptions of the effectiveness and relevance of the ethno-drama approach used in terms of its impact on their learning. The focus groups' discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim, in order to ensure a complete and accurate record. The transcripts were subsequently checked by the research team for confirmation of accuracy, and to elicit the meaning of what was expressed (Stake, 1995). Any 'grey areas' were further addressed with the students to avoid misinterpretation, and also used as an opportunity for reflexive elaboration (Sparkes, 2000).

### ***Data analysis***

Inductive procedures were used to carefully examine and categorise the data garnered from the focus group interviews to identify common themes as related to the aims of the study and any unexpected features (Charmaz, 2006; Seale & Kelly, 1998). During this phase, a 'constant comparative method' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was employed to discover and ascertain similarities and differences within the data. An element of focused coding was subsequently embarked upon where the most frequent or significant earlier identified codes were used to further examine the data, thus refining the initial assumptions (Charmaz, 2006). Hence, the coding borrowed certain features from grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), but did not consist of the comprehensive interweaving of theory and data collection as advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The developed codes were then used to build categories of meaning in an attempt to create more generalizable statements that transcended specific instances and times (Charmaz, 2006). This later phase also coincided with some theoretical integration, where attempts began to analyse what the data actually meant. The resultant categorizations provide the structure for the following section.

## **Results and initial discussion**

### ***Initial impact, emotional engagement and the reality of the scenarios***

As mentioned previously, the purpose of ethno-drama is to communicate the emotional and contextual complexities of lived experiences through evocative and intellectually rich performances (Gilbourne, 2007; Saldaña, 2005). The data from the focus groups suggested that such a goal had somewhat been realised. Illustrative student comments in this regard included; 'visually, you could see the emotion that was involved with the situation, that you can't pick up from reading', and; 'he (the actor) was there, and you could see and feel what he was actually trying to do'.

Such preliminary responses led to considerable interaction in the post-performance discussions, a primary aim of ethno-drama (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001). As one student put it; ‘It was really good at provoking some kind of response from us ...really good to get everyone talking about it’. Others agreed, with the general feeling being that the dramatized scenarios had engaged them effectively in the issues presented (‘From what you saw, you tried to picture what you would do if you were part of it [the scenario]’). The fact that all of the participants were practicing coaches is a significant factor here and one that enabled them to relate well to the scenarios and to experience embodied and emotional reactions to them. According to Etherington (2007), the life experiences of the audience influence and inform the way in which the stories are received and result in a personal journey of reflection which is central to learning.

Saldaña (2005, 32) cautions that “the ‘reality based’ mounting of human life onstage is a risky enterprise”, as the scenarios must be realistic, depicting ‘true to life’ events (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001). In this sense, the ethno-drama scenes were deemed successful, as, in the words of one of the students; ‘You could draw a lot more depth from the acting of it rather than just reading it; a picture paints a thousand words’. Others agreed;

It seemed a lot more real, the interactions between people in terms of coaching; it’s what we do, we interact with people and you could see that in the scenes, how people were talking to each other, the words they were using.

I found it a lot easier watching the visual (scenario) to gain the body language they (the actors) were using rather than reading it off a piece of paper, where you had to imagine it yourself. Here, you could see what was actually happening.

This is consistent with Saldaña’s (2005, 207) suggestion that the non-verbal cues witnessed reveal much about the characters featured; the “subtextual inferences of the way participants facially react, walk, gesture, pose, dress, vocally inflect and interact with others”. All of these aspects were important in generating the initial engagement of the student coaches. In comparing this mode of scenario presentation with the previous written format, one student commented:

You gain a quicker and deeper level of understanding of the problem rather than having to rely on the next written word. You could watch different characters and try and work out the problem a little bit quicker because the depth was there; you could see the characters and try and work out the plot. Seeing the scenarios being acted out made it so much clearer, and I felt you got a better understanding of it straight away. It felt much easier.

One of the main aims of this project was to facilitate a view of coaching as a complex social activity, involving a myriad of interacting variables (Jones & Turner, 2006). Progress appeared to have been made here as well. For example, in the words of one of the students;

It illustrated the holistic side of things. So much of coaching is about the interactions between people at a particular time, the behavioural issues that go on, the roles people play and the power struggles. You can’t get the sense of that so much in written words. In my experience, it happens all the time with parents, with players. So from the visual point of view, it’s much more realistic. The presentation is still very strong in my mind. I can

just picture exactly what went on. It's the impact of interaction, of body language; that impact made it so real to me and (it stayed) in my memory.

Saldaña (2005) suggests that the ultimate judgement of an ethno-drama's success is for each individual audience member to determine. As the scenes were set in a professional football context, some students who had experience of this environment found it particularly realistic and powerful, and described embodied reactions to the performance as demonstrated by the following excerpt:

The dressing room, you can really see – it's a funny place but there's a kind of paranoia going on in there – people don't want to do certain things or be seen a certain way; even a small thing can make a massive difference in that kind of scenario. It was clear by one player's reaction when the coach came in that they were all pretending to be doing stuff. The coach is so powerful in those kinds of places; they have an aura about them.

For others, however, who came from different sporting milieus it wasn't as easy to relate to some of the issues evident in the dramatization. Despite that, the scenes were still considered real and generally applicable to their own coaching environments. In the words of one;

You have a professional situation there [in this scene], but our dressing rooms are not like that, we don't have that kind of relationship with the team involved –at a local level and in my sport there's an entirely different relationship. When it's down to team selection though, you do have the same sort of things and issues emerging – favourites, 'nobody talks to me' sort of thing, no-one says anything – you can see that in any sort of team type situation. Although it was not in my sport as such, I still thought it (the ethno-drama) was very, very realistic.

The common perception amongst the students here then, was that it was their responsibility to engage with the scenarios on a personal level. Hence, it was considered that enough material existed within them for all to relate to, despite their differing background in various sporting contexts.

### ***Insight into theory***

Overall, the students felt that the dramatized scenarios engaged them at a deep level of understanding of coaching issues and concerns. Additionally, they considered that the experience gave them further insight into theories that had been previously introduced in a preceding unit (Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2011). In the words of one of the students; "You could really start to see some of the theory" in action. Many of the post-performance discussions and deconstructions of the scenes were, therefore, shaped by the students' existing theoretical knowledge. As one put it:

I saw 'role theory' straight away, and when the coach presented himself you could see the players were nervous behind him – he enjoyed that, so I sensed there was a role being played there.

Consequently, an explicit link between theory and practice emerged, with the students using existing theoretical knowledge to make sense of what they saw. In doing so, the unit went some way to address Greenwood and Levin's (2003) call for coach education to provide learning situations where theoretical and craft knowledge are utilized in addressing and understanding real-life problems.

In many ways, this was reassuring for us as staff members who had consciously structured the larger course with such progression and development in mind. A challenge, however, emerged in terms of encouraging students not to be limited by previous theoretical knowledge and to think more holistically in considering solutions to the issues presented. Indeed, this is what distinguishes problem based learning from problem solving, in that it is meant to force students to identify and research areas they are not familiar with to find a good solution, rather than simply use the knowledge they already possess to solve a problem. The students' use of and reliance upon theory from the preceding unit was, therefore, both a strength and a weakness in terms of facilitating their learning; a strength in that it gave them a frame of reference from which to view and deconstruct the scenes, but a weakness in that it may have limited what they saw and how they saw it. This then, gave us, as tutors, a point to ponder. However, consistent with the primary aim of ethno-drama, which is to inform and question audiences (Llewellyn *et al.*, in press), evidence existed that the visual scenarios stimulated new and critical thought among the students through challenging existing assumptions.

### ***Developing more considered decision-making***

As mentioned in the methodology section, the scenes were interlinked and unfolded as the session progressed, revealing more about the characters through a series of soliloquies in the second performance of each scene. The intention here was to give the students more information about the characters, since coaches often have to make quick yet considered decisions based on initial reactions. In this respect, the students felt that the developing scenes, inclusive of the soliloquies, “gave us so much more insight into the individual people” and, therefore, “were an assistance, they were kind of necessary”. Similarly, in the words of another:

I think we probably had an initial view point from the first scene and then when the soliloquies came along we got a little more depth. It forced us not to let the first impression be the last one. You start thinking - is it really that?.....so you have a first impression of a person and then you have to rethink, re-evaluate everything.

The students, therefore, valued the soliloquies and, consistent with the aim of ethno-drama to effect meaningful change (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001), altered their perceptions and perspectives as the scenes unfolded; “After we saw the soliloquies, almost all of our opinions changed”. The general feel amongst the group, therefore, was that the unfurling nature of the scenes was positive; for example, “I really liked them, I thought they gave you a little bit more depth; they gave you far more of an understanding of what's going on in there and it certainly answered a lot of questions”. Importantly for the teaching staff, far from considering this second expanded performance to be unrealistic to real-time coaching, which had been a concern, the students felt that it made the depicted events and issues more real. Here, one student commented;

It was realistic to what coaching is, as you don't get a hundred per cent of the information straight to your face when you deal with it. You have to guess and work it out; you can't or you shouldn't jump to a conclusion regarding a character or player or fellow coach. You have to do some research to try and find out more. For example, we came to a couple of quite weak assumptions about the coach at the start, but with more information things made more sense. It reminded me that can't or maybe shouldn't make decisions immediately. You have to make decisions of course, but you need to be pretty considered and careful when you make them.

According to Cassidy (2010, 143), changing ‘time honoured practices’ or ‘day to day conventions’ in sport coaching is very difficult to achieve. This is because many coaches ‘find it difficult to reflect upon, and possibly critique, taken for granted practices that have become integral to their sense of self’. Contrary to this, but consistent with the work of Douglas and Carless (2008), the results here suggested that the coaches were open to changing perspectives as the scenarios unfolded, allied to having more time to reflect upon and discuss identified issues with other experienced coaches. This could be interpreted as a good starting point for developing more ‘open mindedness’ in coaches, thus holding the potential to enhance the ‘change process’ in coach education and to develop more reflective practitioners. Such open-mindedness, of course, is not a call to total relativism which can lead to drastic inconsistency. Rather, it is to better consider the information relied upon that create ‘first impressions’; to recognize that there is always more depth than can be immediately seen, to look beyond the obvious and work harder to notice the world of small realities (Jones, 2009). Potential then, appeared to exist within an ethno-drama approach to better reach such aims.

### *Future directions*

The study marked an attempt at implementing ethno-drama into a PBL coach education programme. Consequently, a number of issues were raised for consideration when possibly developing future projects of this nature. A principal issue discussed in this regard centered on exactly when to introduce the ethno-drama scenarios in the unit in order to maximize learning. For the majority of students, positioning the text based written scenarios first was considered a good ‘scaffolding’ experience, as the following extract suggests:

Having done the two written scenarios we had some more depth to our knowledge, which probably made it (engaging with the visual scenario) easier. Had we seen the visual scenes first, then it would have been a little bit more nervy, thinking ‘what’s going on here’? We were already into that mind set of identifying what would need to be done to solve the scenario. A lot of that information that we’d gone away and researched for the written scenarios we now had at first hand and could apply it to the acted scenes.

This view, however, was not universally agreed upon, as some students felt that it would have been interesting to change the order of the scenarios in the module. Here, one student commented;

It might have been interesting to put the ethno-drama at the beginning of the module, as you get more information through it, particularly with the soliloquies. I think you get less information from the written stuff, so you have to think deeper than when you visualise it.

When to introduce ethnodrama performances and how to best scaffold student learning for this mode of delivery remains, therefore, an area that requires further consideration and research.

Some of the more interesting suggestions for future directions that came out of the focus groups centered around issues of student involvement in the script writing and performances, and audience interactions with the actors. According to Telesco (2006), within the genre of socio-drama, real-life situational scenes can or even should be developed by students based on actual incidents. Consequently, the scene would be set for the audience to interact with the actors, who remain in character. Similarly, some of the students in our focus groups felt that being involved

in the creation of the characters and scenes would have been an effective learning experience; in the words of one:

The actual learning could take place in terms of the discussions around how you go about creating that character and why you are going to do it like that. I think that would be a very powerful learning experience for people.

This exercise would be consistent with the informant led process of ethno-drama as explained by Mieniczakowski and Morgan (2001) in their work with health professionals. The collection and interpretation of data for their critical performances required the gathering of ethnographic accounts, participant observation and a grounded theory approach. The research involved interviewing medical staff, student nurses and others in the health teams. Once this data had been gathered and triangulated, the informant groups (i.e., the medical staff and student nurses etc.) were specifically asked what they want to tell audiences about their work and experiences. These formed the basis of the subsequent scripts. As a future project, a similar critical process could be adopted in sports coaching using coaches, athletes and parents to develop the ethnographic scenarios. Although this could be a lengthy and time consuming process, requiring substantial resources and collaboration with a drama company or department, it nevertheless holds the potential as an excellent opportunity for stake-holders and practitioners to have a voice in the explanation of their lived realities and, hence, to further increase the relevancy of coach education (Mieniczakowski & Morgan, 2001).

In Telesco's (2006) description of socio-drama, it is the role of the facilitator to 'freeze' the scenes from time to time in order to guide discussion between the audience and the actors. Here, the audience members reflect on the scenes, identify the issues, and offer solutions for change through interaction with the actors who remain in role. During this process, the facilitator asks specific questions of the actors and the audience. For example, questions to the actors could include; 'how are you feeling right now?' and 'what do you think would make your situation better'? In order to respond, the actors need to be fully immersed in their characters' motivations and backgrounds, as well as the sub-culture of the context. For the actors then, this could be a very enlightening experience and is an argument for student coaches taking on the actors' roles themselves. However, when this was suggested to the students in this study, there were mixed feelings amongst the group. Some students were understandably anxious about their ability to role play and felt that; "if we didn't get it right then the people observing would not get as much out of it". Others, however, felt that it could be a valuable learning experience as the following comment suggests:

If we were given the script beforehand, and if we were engaged in a lot of theory and discussion about deciding how we were going to go about playing the role in terms of, if someone was actually going to be that coach, then it could have worked I think. If we had the script there, and then had to make up our minds about what character he or she is and in doing that have a discussion and create a kind of stage play for it; would that not create a very interesting learning experience?

There were also mixed feelings amongst the students related to them stepping into the scenes and taking on the roles of the central characters and revealing what they would do (e.g., "I think the idea is good but you could have severe amateurs going in front of people who are quite informed"). Despite such concerns, we believe that this remains a potentially very effective

learning opportunity, particularly with groups of experienced coaches who perhaps would be more comfortable in sharing their feelings and stepping into the roles provided.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of ethno-drama in coach education and to evaluate its effect on students' learning experience. The results suggest that the approach was largely successful in producing realistic dramatized scenarios that not only intellectually engaged the students subjected to it, but also stimulated thought and discussion amongst them that both informed and changed their perspectives on coaching issues. This collaborative venture, exemplifies how qualitative researchers, coach educators and theatre artists can effectively serve each other. In the words of Saldaña (2005, 29); "Scholars in ethnography have much to contribute to those educated as artists, [whilst] artists well versed in the creative process and products of theatre have much to offer ethnographers", with both disciplines sharing a "common goal to create a unique, insightful and engaging text about the human condition". The findings of this study suggests that the performance of such engaging texts also has much to offer coach education in addressing and confronting issues that coaches encounter every day. A particularly pleasing aspect in this respect was the space that the ethno-dramatic approach allowed for students to creatively negotiate their 'preferred' solutions. Being very aware of the need not to generate conformity, the students' engagement with the dramatic scenes brought home the personal constructivist nature of coaching to them, whilst remaining open to others' perceptions and ideas. This focus on student innovation was important, and contributes to an increasing call to give more credence to developing creativity within pedagogical curricula (e.g., Burnhard, 2006; Shaheen, 2010).

It would seem perfectly logical that in order to develop creative athletes, capable of making effective decisions in the heat of competition, that we should be aspiring to develop creative coaches. One way to achieve this in coach education may be through the use of innovative pedagogies, such as PBL and ethno-drama which encourage learners to think creatively and to solve problems collaboratively (Shaheen, 2010). Collaborative learning is based on social constructivist theory which assumes that learning emerges as learners interact in groups (Vygotsky, 1978) often in a 'community of practice' which has its own social and cultural customs (Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to Kettunen (2011), although individual learning has its place where relatively simple recall tasks are undertaken, group-based pedagogies are required for complex problem solving such as addressing the scenarios presented in this study.. Cognitive load theory (Paas, Renkel & Sweller, 2004) offers a possible explanation for this. It is a position which suggests that a group is more efficient at dealing with complex problems due to the vastly increased available processing capacity which is shared amongst the participants. According to Kettunen (2011) then, group based learning is often the best solution when a multi-disciplinary approach is needed to solve dynamic difficulties, as such a structure uses 'swarm intelligence' through distributed and emergent behavior (Huang & Liu, 2009).

In her article 'Teaching is performance' Elyse Lamm Pineu (1994, 6) criticized the notion of teacher-as-actor in terms of reducing performance to a style. For her, such a perspective privileges communicative behaviours over the quality of interaction, while positioning students as an unreflective body. Following such logic, we found that the ethno-dramatic structure adopted, based on group deconstruction of performed social narratives, stimulated insightful and

innovative classroom discussion. Hence, the goal of challenging assumed knowledge and roles, and to see the connections between social actors and the contextual culture (through further recourse to sense-making theory), was somewhat realized. In doing so, a realistic perception of theoretical relevance was maintained, helping to create a more credible working praxis (Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2011).

As with previous work (Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2011; Jones & Turner, 2006) we remain aware of the limits of what can be claimed by such relatively small scale pedagogical experimentation. Additionally, allied to some student skepticism and our own concerns in terms of genuinely engaging student learning above the value of a novel approach, many further challenges exist in terms of using ethno-drama as a stimulating and bone fide pedagogy to teach sports coaching. Nevertheless, we believe enough encouragement resulted from this project to merit further use, engagement and research into this potentially very innovative form of coach education. This is particularly in relation to the creative space it allows students to generate agential answers to complex social issues.

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