

Second International Coaching Conference

Coaching Philosophy

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My background...

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Performance during performance: using Goffman to understand the behaviours of elite youth football coaches during games

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This study was to investigate the social, contextual and situational factors that influence football coaches' behaviour in competition. Twelve English youth football coaches were observed over a five-month period using the Coach Analysis System (CAIS). Two sets of interpretive interviews were subsequently conducted to identify the underlying processes and motivations for their behaviour. Using Goffman as a lens to probe the data, it is suggested that coaching behaviours were largely performative, with the coaches' behaviours dependent on the situation and constraints. It is thus contended that the outcome was a form of 'coaching' employed as impression management, as opposed to behaviours based on pedagogical principles or the needs of athletes.

Keywords: coaching behaviour; football; youth; competition; Goffman

The body of research has focused specifically on the coaching behaviours of coaches during practice (Cushion, Ford, & Williams, 2012). This research, using participant observation tools, has identified 'instruction' as the most frequently used coaching behaviour within such coaching contexts (e.g. Cushion & Jones, 2001; Ford, Yates, & Jones, 2010b; Millard, 1996; Miller, 1992; Partington & Cushion, 2011; Potrac, 2009; Potrac *et al.*, 2007). It suggests that a deliberate behavioural strategy or 'style' contains a mix of instruction and positive verbalizations, along with encouragement (Cushion, Ford, & Williams, 2012a). These behavioural patterns tend to be stable, with only minor differences existing as a function of the age or skill level of the players coached (Partington & Cushion, 2011). Such differences are also related to coaching type, with a reduction in overall instruction and an increase in on-task coaching (i.e. fitness, technical and skill exercises) to 'playing form' (i.e. small-sided games, phases of play and conditioned games) (Ford *et al.*, Partington & Cushion, 2011). While such inquiry has provided valuable insight into the pedagogical styles utilized by coaches in training, it has only provided limited insight into the social and contextual factors that underlie and impinge on coaching behaviour. Although coaching has become increasingly recognized as a complex activity, coach behaviour analysis requires further detailed scrutiny to better understand the activity's inherent complexity (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Evans and Davies (2002) argue that deconstructing conventions and taken-for-granted assumptions help to understand how social reality is created and reproduced. For coaching, this means closely examining

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An investigation of the practice activities and coaching behaviors of professional top-level youth soccer coaches

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The aim of this study was to investigate the coaching behaviors of elite English youth soccer coaches in different practice settings and gain insight into the coaches' cognitive processes underpinning these behaviors. The practice setting was split into two types of activities: "training form" and "playing form", and behavioral data were collected using a modified version of the Coach Analysis and Intervention System. Interpretive interview data were triangulated with the behavioral data to ensure that both the "what" and the "why" of the coaches' behavior and practice were considered.

The results showed the coaches using more "training form" activities than "playing form", and using high levels of prescriptive instruction, regardless of practice type, in contrast to a stated desire to "develop the whole player", creating "decision makers" and being a "facilitator of knowledge creation". The interviews revealed that the coaches had a low self-awareness about their behavior, with an epistemological gap identified between understanding and practice, with statements of intent not being matched by knowledge and action.

Research suggests that coaching behavior and practice activities are currently guided by a combination of tradition of the sport, coaches' intuition, and emulation of other coaches (Cushion *et al.*, 2003; Williams & Hodges, 2005; Ford *et al.*, 2010). In sports such as soccer, this has resulted in an established "traditional" pedagogy or practice that is characterized by being highly directive or autocratic, and prescriptive in nature (Williams & Hodges, 2005; Potrac & Cassidy, 2006; Harvey *et al.*, 2010). This perspective is supported by behavioral research that has tended to find "instruction" as the largest behavior utilized across a range of sports including soccer (e.g. Miller, 1992; Millard, 1996; Kahan, 1999; Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac *et al.*, 2007; Ford *et al.*, 2010).

In addition, coaches' practice tends to be underpinned by a linear, process-product approach to learning, where "skills" are to be mastered first and form the basis for games play (Cassidy *et al.*, 2009; Harvey *et al.*, 2010). A good example of this is Ford *et al.*'s (2010) recent study that examined the relationship between different coaching behaviors and specific practice activity. The authors split practice activities into two broad categories: "training form" (i.e. physical training, technique, and skills practices) and "playing form" (i.e. phase of play, small-sided/conditioned games). Results showed that two thirds of practice time was spent in "training form"

activities with instruction the largest behavior. Moreover, these patterns of practice tended not to change as a function of age or skill of the players coached (Ford *et al.*, 2010).

Despite offering considerable insight, behavioral research is not able to provide detail surrounding the cognitive process underlying these behaviors (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac *et al.*, 2007; Rosado & Mesquita, 2009; Ford *et al.*, 2010). In addition, despite the overall quantity of behavioral research carried out, when divided into context-specific studies, the ability to draw meaningful comparison from the work seems limited, therefore we cannot blithely assume the transfer of research findings from one context to another (Cushion, 2010; Harvey *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, coaching behaviors have tended to be examined in isolation (Ford *et al.*, 2010). To fully understand the holistic nature of coaching, it has been argued that research focus should be given to the world of individual coaches, and how they operate within their given contexts (Potrac *et al.*, 2002). To this end, research needs to address individual coaches' interpretations of their experiences and the process by which meanings and knowledge are used to guide actions (Potrac *et al.*, 2002; Smith & Cushion, 2006; Harvey *et al.*, 2010). Such investigations expose the knowledge and strategies coaches use that underpin their behavior, while providing a deeper understanding



What is a coaching philosophy...

Practitioners...

Literature has prescribed different descriptors of what a philosophy consists of including...

...beliefs, values, attitudes and norms (Rokeach, 1973),

...a set of beliefs, principles and values (Burton & Raedeke, 2008)

...beliefs, values, principles and priorities (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011)

A coach's philosophy however is mainly described as a set of ***personal values and beliefs*** (i.e. Kretchmar, 1994; Vealey, 2005).

Philosophers...

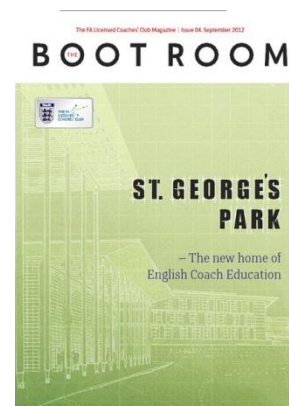
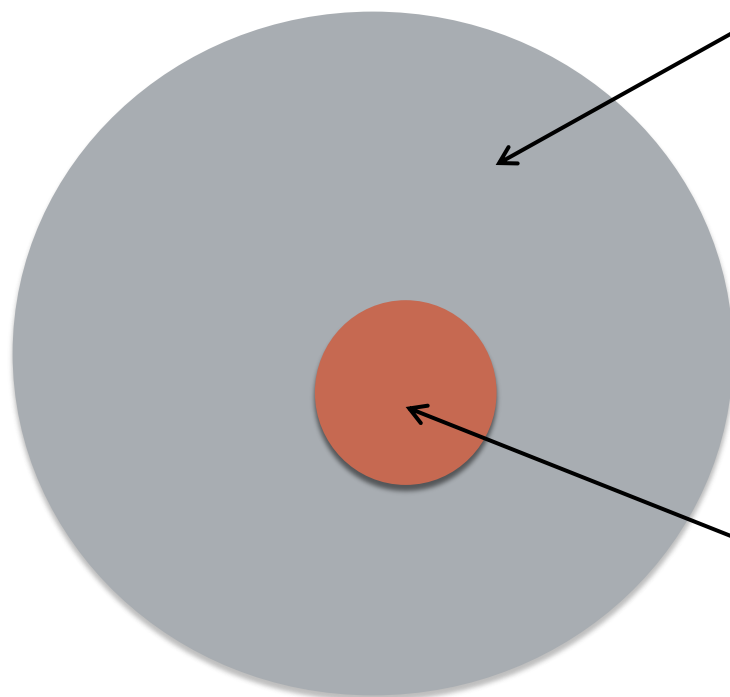
(Philosophy bites, 2010)

Coaching 'philosophy' is poorly understood and the majority of research lacks a clear definition and conceptual clarity over the term.



Currently...

Lots of 'grey' literature available...



...lack of **peer-reviewed empirical** papers (n = 12).

Selection...

| Study | Method | Critique |
|---|---|---|
| Pratt & Eitzen (1989) | Questionnaires. | Limited. Rhetoric. |
| Cross (1990) Voight & Carroll (2006) | One coach / interview. One coach / Interview. | Inconclusive. Rhetoric and ideology. |
| MaCallister et al. (2000) Schempp et al. (2006) Nash et al. (2008) Collins et al. (2009) Camire et al. (2012) | Interviews. Taken from a magazine. Semi-structured interviews. Survey / Interviews. Semi-structured interviews. | No observations of coaches in practice. Rhetoric and ideology. |
| Collins & Barber (2011) Carless & Douglas (2011) | Written statements. Story telling. | Rhetoric. |

Researchers need to ask philosophical questions to help identify the nature of coaching philosophy.

(Drewe, 2000; Hardman & Jones, 2013)

Therefore...

Although philosophy not explicitly mentioned.

| Study | Method | Critique |
|--|---|--|
| Trudel et al. (1996) | Develop a strategy to analyse the reasoning which underlies coaches behaviour - stimulated recall. | Describing factors which underlie decisions. |
| Wilcox & Trudel (1998) | One coach / Verbal cueing. stimulated recall. | Inconclusive. |
| Gilbert et al. (1999) Gilbert & Trudel (2000) | Stimulated recall. Verbal cueing stimulated recall / Three data collection points of a full season. | More true and complete picture of coaching philosophy. |
| Gilbert & Trudel (2001) Gilbert & Trudel (2004) | Interviews & Observation. Prolonged interaction (2 years). | Actuality. |



How...

Coaching philosophy have not been empirically investigated or **reflective tools** **philosophical, sociological**

How do you believe players learn?

Philosophical
(Axiology, Ethics, Ontology & Epistemology)
(Hardman & Jones, 2013)

Sociological
Contextual
Longitudinal
Number of coaches?
(more than just one)

Reflective tools
Observations
Interviews
Film
Stimulated recall

Using these tools may allow a deeper empirical understanding of coaching philosophy and conceptual clarity for practitioners.

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Any questions or suggestions?



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