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THE CONTEXTUAL AND MICROPOLITICAL WORLD OF ASPIRING PROFESSIONAL COACHES

By

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A thesis submitted to the University of Wales, Newport.

(PhD Study)

EXAMINATION OF PhD THESIS: UNIVERSITY OF WALES, NEWPORT

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Abstract

The traditional perception of the Coach as being *all-powerful* within their sporting domain has recently been challenged due to the growing recognition that coaching is a sophisticated, interpersonal process constructed within different social constraints and involving complex, multivariate human beings who attach different values and meanings to the interactions that take place (Jones & Wallace 2005; Jones et al., 2011a & 2011b; Cruickshank 2013a). The aim of this thesis therefore was to investigate what the job of coaching actually entailed in an attempt to inform future Coach Education to the practical needs of aspiring Professional Coaches within Rugby Union (Potrac & Jones, 2009b). This was achieved by examining the daily practice of a selected group of aspiring Professional Coaches in a developing Rugby nation (Hong Kong) over a two year period, utilising an (Insider) action research framework where the Researcher (IAR) adopted a multiple-role function as National Coach Development Manager (CDM), Line Manager (LM) and Head Coach (HC) of the Men's Senior National Team.

The action research rubric followed a cyclical process utilising Stringer's (2007) *Look-Think-Act* model in the analysis (Look), planning (Think) and implementation (Act) of appropriate interventions to aid the development of the Coaches, while also gaining important insight into their daily complexities and subsequent needs. Data gathering techniques included formal and informal interviews, focus groups and participant observation, with a reflexive and reflective log maintained throughout. Thematic analysis and NVivo were used jointly to interpret the collated data with the evaluation and reporting process unearthing a number of final themes and theories.

Results from the study were divided primarily into two categories, initially reporting on aspects of the multiple-role function which supported the existence of previously identified role-complexity issues (cf. Watson et al., 2006; Watson & Clement, 2008) while also raising awareness to the existence of *tier-conflict*, an occurrence which potentially affects those practitioners who deal at varying levels of management in their multiple-role capacity. Potential benefits of the multiple-role application included *knowledge transfer* from one area of expertise to another, in enhancing the overall service delivery of the multiple-role Researcher (IAR)

Main study themes reporting on the needs of aspiring Professional Coaches highlight the requirement for future development programmes to consider: (a) emotional intelligence training to assist in the daily management of issues and complexities that arise; (b) insights into how to develop an inclusive and progressive team culture/environment, with attention focused towards technical and tactical, team building, conflict management and various managerial components; and (c) consideration be given to the specific needs of player-coaches in achieving a successful playing and coaching balance. Underpinning all these themes was the need for *contextual relevance*, in all aspects of future training with consideration given to how external bodies can also assist in providing suitable contextual surroundings to make the learning more realistic to the Coaches' needs. The use of focus groups and practical workshops proved effective within this study, with further investigation required into other potentially beneficial areas.

Acknowledgements

I would like to offer my most profound thanks to Dr Nicky Lewis and Dr John Deering for their unwavering support throughout this PhD project. Your direction and guidance has been superb.

My sincere thanks also go to the HKRFU for their innovative approach to Coach Development, and open-mindedness in supporting the production of this PhD. I believe it has added great value to my contribution as both Coach Development Manager and Head Coach for the HKRFU. Also, a particular thank you to Dai for being a supportive manager throughout.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution and dedication of all those who agreed to participate in the study, and particularly Jim, Sid, Aiden, Ken, Greg, Brad and Pete for their support over the two seasons, and beyond. Also to those club and HKRFU bosses who gave up their valuable time to provide insight and opinion on many matters. Good luck and good health to you all.

Finally, at a professional level I would like to acknowledge the work of Dr Robyn Jones for the research that he and other colleagues have produced in the field of Sports Coaching and Micropolitics. Much of that work has been used as a foundation and inspiration for this project.

Personal Thanks:

On a more personal level I would like to thank Amélie for her patience, long hours of support and outstanding efforts at 'proof reading' in, what is, your second language. Many thanks, ma chérie!

To my son Sam, I hope in some small way this inspires you to the realisation that you can achieve what you wish in this life, if you so desire.

Finally to Mostyn, with whom it all started – many thanks!

Author's Declaration

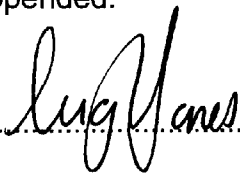
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Epilogue

As the main aim of this thesis was to investigate the developmental needs of aspiring professional Coaches, it was not deemed appropriate to over-burden readers with the array of personal emotions experienced throughout the course of the study period as a multiple-role researcher. Therefore, in concluding of this project I offer an opportunity to pass on some of the deeper personal emotions experienced throughout so as to provide insight for others who may be considering undertaking a similar multiple-role stance.

From the outset it should be noted that I am the product of a stoic generation where the expression of personal feelings was, and is, very much aligned with displays of weakness by many from my era, and deemed to be an unnecessary and inconsequential bi-product of events. This stance has been further compounded in my professional coaching capacity, where the regulation or masking of emotions was important in making objective selection and career based decisions regarding the players in my care, while also projecting an appropriate aura of calmness and control within the often tense and chaotic professional rugby environment.

That said, and as is described in Chapter 10 (p.292), I mention being placed on a *parental pedestal* where I was visited by various study participants for wisdom and guidance whenever problems arose, or when it otherwise suited their personal agenda to privilege me with their personal information. The utilisation of this *parental* terminology was certainly not misplaced, often experiencing the same fluctuating emotional responses with the Coaches that I did when nurturing my own family offspring. To better explain this I shall draw on the use of an emotional continuum on which I was naturally located in a position of neutral indifference (in keeping with the ideal epochal researcher state), only to find myself experiencing large shifts to states of either disappointment and betrayal or to positions of immense pride and euphoria.

The *betrayal and disappointment* stemmed largely from the discovery that participants had been clandestinely colluding over matters of salary and recruitment policies, feeling I had been 'played' or 'made the fool of' by not second guessing their motives and movements. When all became apparent, descriptive adjectives like 'sly' and 'underhanded' made regular appearances in my diary when expressing my disappointment in the Coaches actions from the perspective of Coach Development Manager and (Insider) Action Researcher (IAR). At other times also experiencing downright *anger*, particularly in the case of Jim (i.e. misinforming his club boss – Chapter 9.1.2, p. 213), who in many ways best epitomised the strong parent-child relationship referred to above. Here, I often had to redirect or channel his abounding, but often misguided enthusiasm, while at other times simply having to dispense a good 'old fashioned bollocking' when failing to conform to expected demands in not preparing, not listening, and/or generally not complying. In all such instances however, there remained that element of parental compassion and fondness, even at times having to suppress a smile in how he and others went about their daily dealings.

At the other end of that same continuum I also experienced the feelings of immense pride and achievement, particularly when observing the group in full flow during the many workshops and focus groups held. Witnessing within, a level of commitment and personal exposure that I'm not sure I could have matched if roles had been reversed. A level of exposure that led ultimately to self-enlightenment and self-growth on the part of the Coaches, and indeed on my own part as Action Researcher. Here I often found I had to check or regulate my own standpoint, at times in danger of transgressing beyond a level of parental admiration, to one of self-adulation in the type of environment procured in my multiple-role capacity. Fortunately, some critical self-analysis allowed me to remain objective in ensuring that the environment was *for* and *about* the Coaches, hence engendering a level of ease and comfort where they were eventually happy in exposing their own shortcomings and character flaws. I say eventually, as the initial process was usually veiled behind a facade of humour or measured self-deprecation on the part of the Coaches. A persona which bought them sufficient time in ensuring the environment was conducive enough for the coaches to remove their emotional safety-net in revealing the 'inner' truth that lay beneath. The key or knack as Action Researcher was encouraging them to drop their guard, facilitating a silent removal of protective barriers so as to observe what character flaws or problems lay below. This became somewhat of a focus group ritual, skirting or evading the real issue for a while before removing the final layer of protective gear. And indeed, it was often when below the safety-net that I witnessed the concept of 'honesty breeding honesty', with the open revelation of one person's inadequacies usually leading to a similar outpouring from others, all towards a quicker fix or partial resolution of the problems discussed.

A similar analogy is also utilised in best expressing a different, but equally poignant and wide ranging spectrum of emotions, this time in connection to worries and concerns at one end of the continuum, to experiences of epiphany and eureka moments at the other. These shifts were best portrayed in my early dealings with the perennial request for salary increases (Chapter 6.2.3. p. 137) and the revelation that study participants had little intention of staying in Hong Kong if other more favourable job opportunities arose elsewhere. As described within, this was a fact they failed to share with club bosses who represented their cause in requesting the proposed salary increase, leaving me in an invidious position as to how I could best manage the situation while not compromising those within. Although I can say I never lost sleep over any of the events that occurred, this particular issue did encourage uncomfortable feelings within. An empty, nagging feeling at the pit of the stomach which lingers and intensifies as the impending meeting drew closer. Toing and froing about how I was going to manage the forthcoming discussions from my position as Action Researcher (and Line Manager) while not compromising the position of the Coaches who had taken me into their trust by revealing their true career intentions. Fortunately the particular epiphany for this problem arrived during discussions with the Head of Community for the Hong Kong Rugby Football Union who had been initially responsible for setting up the 50-50 Job-share Scheme. During an informal chat he revealed that the project had been initially "cobbled together" at short notice, with him seizing quickly on the good will of people involved in the rugby community to get the scheme off the ground, while having no firm rationale for where it was likely to go. So there it was: my out! A golden opportunity to define, or redefine, the scheme so that all parties were aware of its longer term aims

and objectives. This revelation of facts, fuelled the first *eureka moment* in offering me 'an out' in how I could best deal with the situation while not compromising my or others position(s). The story as a whole is relayed within the listed chapter, but perhaps does not accurately reflect the levels of personal angst experienced in the lead up to that warmly welcomed eureka moment.

The second such instance arrived during the data analysis and reporting phases where themes originated as a result of the data produced. Here, I was initially at a loss in not being able to substantiate (relate to current literature) key findings surrounding the need for teams and Coaches to develop a progressive and dynamic team culture and environment. For what seemed like an eternity of journal, internet and library searches, with little result, I began to get thoughts of reframing or reshaping my findings. This was a course of action that no matter how unsavoury, was one I had to seriously contemplate, proving very disconcerting - and bloody annoying – on a personal level as I felt I was compromising my researcher credibility in having to 'fit' my findings into existing paradigms. Enter eureka moment two, as during another chance conversation held over skype with a sporting colleague who was employed within academia, and who was seeking my advice about external issues, I aired my frustration at to not being able to substantiate my original findings. After some shuffling below camera level, he held up a fistful of journal articles all of which he had received earlier that very week to peruse at his leisure in line with his own sporting interests (Cruickshanks et al., 2013a and 2013b). The journal articles themselves could not have been better placed, focusing on cultural and environmental change within professional rugby union team setting towards maximising the performance levels of all involved. Had he not been at the end of the camera, I would have undoubtedly subdued my stoic nature to give him a manly hug, a statement and reaction that best displays the level of relief experienced at that precise moment in time.

Then, as now, the event provides a fitting end. Then, providing a sure sight of the home straight and finishing line in respect of the PhD project, and now offering a fitting finale for this brief and final epilogue. However, as euphoric as both these moments were, and are, they are also tinged with healthy doses of apprehension and realisation. The reality in just how dependent, even cathartic, the whole doctoral process had become for me - a sanctuary of sanity in an otherwise mad sporting world. Also bringing with it no small measure of apprehension in just what I will do without my old study ally of the past four years. This means, departing the project with a huge sense of achievement and satisfaction, but also with an element of sadness that can be likened to losing a valued and dependable friend.

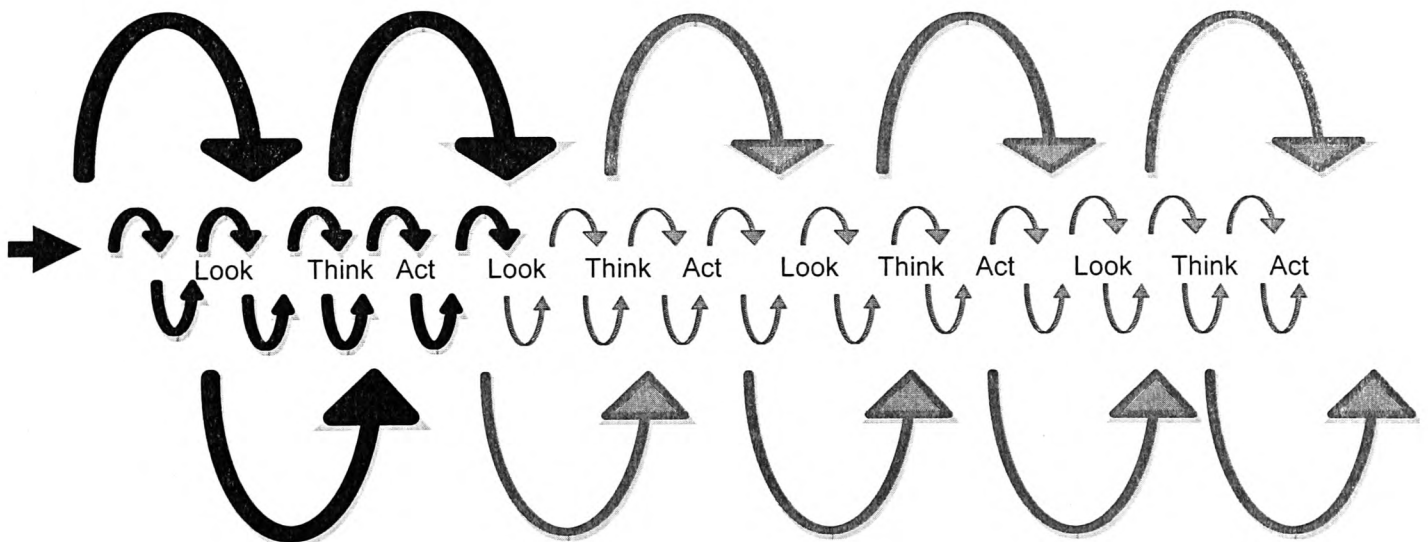
SECTION 1 (LOOK PHASE)

GAINING A CONTEXT

Section 1
LOOK PHASE
(Gaining a Context)

Section 2
THINK PHASE
(Methods)

Section 3
ACT PHASE, Look, Think, Act....
(Discussion & Analysis)



CHAPTER (1)
LETTER TO THE READER

1.1. The What & Why – In Brief

This work is the result of over 35 years of involvement in the sport of Rugby Union at all levels of the game. Initially involved as a player, and then as a Coach at amateur, semi-professional, professional and international levels of the game for over 20 years. In recent years, I have diversified into the field of Coach Education, an interest that started very early on in my coaching career and one which has run concurrently with my own development as an applied Coach. Fortunately, circumstance has now provided me the opportunity to combine the two, with my day job currently that of a National Coach Development Manager (CDM) for a developing Rugby nation, while also undertaking the role of National Head Coach (HC) for the men's senior team. This presents me with an ideal opportunity to address a deep-seated personal ambition, and the wider call, for a meaningful investigation into 'what the job of coaching actually entails' (Potrac & Jones, 2009b, p.233), and what knowledge coaches 'require to survive in highly competitive environments' (Potrac & Jones, 2009a, p. 573). The aim to examine the daily practice of aspiring Rugby Union Coaches and explore if the current National Governing Body (NGB) Coach Education delivery is meeting their needs in the quest to function effectively in their role (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Callow et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2011).

My motives for the work are both selfish and selfless; selfish, as it allows me to achieve some notable academic standing from a late starting point, and selfless, in its intention to provide what Jones and Turner (2006) describe as cutting edge content that can be readily integrated into coaching practice. The challenge is to investigate the dark and as yet, uncharted territories of coaching, towards unearthing the complex intricacies, tensions and social dilemmas faced by myself

and other would-be Professional Coaches (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). The aim of the work is to deconstruct some of the everyday aspects of the coaching role towards isolating complexities of the job that are not yet considered within current development programmes. It is hoped that by analysing my own experiences, both past and present, along with those of selected Coaches, the work will illuminate a clearer and more expeditious pathway for future aspiring Professional Coaches on their developmental journey (cf. Jones, 2000; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Cassidy et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2011b).

It is perhaps appropriate at this early juncture to explain that the focus of the study involved the development of a group of aspiring Professional Coaches in Hong Kong (HK), along with my own thoughts, actions and experiences in the roles of HC and CDM. The selected Coaches were employed as Club Coaching Officers (CCOs) on the 50-50 Job-share Scheme, an initiative introduced by the Hong Kong Rugby Football Union (hereafter referred to as the Union or the HKRFU) in conjunction with HK's leading club teams, whereby funding from both factions was combined as a means of attracting better quality Coaches to the region in an attempt to raise the overall standard of the game.

As the CCOs are central to this project as study participants, they and the 50-50 Job-share Scheme are afforded appropriate time and space within later sections of this thesis (Chapters 3, 9 & 11). At present however, the reader is armed with adequate detail in understanding the origins of the scheme and the knowledge that all the study participants possessed aspirations of establishing full-time careers within the top-tier of professional rugby playing nations; some harbouring ambitions to Coach at the highest levels of the game, while others envisaged their future as developers of young elite talent. Most participants had already sampled the delights of

professional and international rugby as players and regarded coaching as a natural career progression. Others however remained happily unaware of the competitive and ruthless world of professional sport that awaited them, having progressed their coaching through the community ranks to successfully justify their position within the Performance game in HK (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). The term *aspiring Performance Coaches* will be adopted throughout this thesis as it best describes the group in question and the level of competition in which they were involved; a level that in all good conscience cannot be described as *elite* or *professional* due to the developing status of the home Union, but nevertheless a standard that produced an 'intensive commitment to a preparation program for competition and a planned attempt to influence performance variables' (Cote & Gilbert, 2009, p. 314).

At one level, my role as CDM was geared toward the development of a selected group of Performance Coaches (and others) through the implementation of 'effective coaching performance guidelines' (cf., Lyle, 2002, p. 259). At another more personal level, it was about examining what else went on to influence the practice and development of the would-be professionals, investigating what barriers and obstacles confronted them, and the organisational, political and interpersonal issues that arose to hinder or aid their, and consequently my own progress. My role was also to examine how each Coach navigated his way through the issues that arose in studying the hows, whys and wherefores of coaching practice. To achieve this, the scrutiny will have to penetrate further than the mere superficial levels of *good Coaching Practice* highlighted in the plethora of functional models currently available, and delve into the murkier and clandestine depths to unearth *what else* goes on (e.g., Lyle, 2007a; Jones, 2009; Lyle et al., 2009; Mallet et al., 2009; Lyle et al., 2010; Cushion & Jones 2012).

As previously stated, the motivation for this venture was born out of 20 years of personal frustration as both Coach and Coach Educator, often enduring first-hand as a young aspiring Professional Coach, the feeling that I was out of my depth and ill-equipped to deal with some of the many issues that arose. Such occurrences throughout my early semi and professional coaching career were dealt with from a purely intuitive and naively belligerent perspective, with little experience or formal training from which to elicit appropriate solutions or responses. Decisions were arrived at through thinking on my feet, feeling it more prudent to make an educated guess rather than appear indecisive or uninformed (cf. Cushion et al., 2006; Vella et al., 2010). Fortunately, I muddled through in what can be best described as the embryonic era of professional Rugby Union, where poor management and errors in judgment were examined with far less scrutiny and consequence than would be the case today.

On reflection of the early gestation period, it was perhaps understandable and to a degree, acceptable that Coach Education and Coach Development was left in the wake of professionalism, struggling to keep abreast of the rapid changes forced on the game (Malcom et al., 2008; Mellalieu et al., 2008). Yet, following over 20 years of professionalism, while scrutinising and mentoring numerous aspiring Coaches through the Performance Coaching ranks, the metaphor of *same horse, different jockey* springs to mind. My observations and interactions confirm that even today, many young Coaches are experiencing similar feelings of inadequacy and are at times caught off guard within the recently acknowledged, chaotic and challenging world of coaching they find themselves embroiled within (Bowes & Jones, 2006; Jones et al., 2012). This raises obvious and on-going concerns surrounding current NGB Coach Education provision, with evidence suggesting that it is still failing in

some areas to equip practitioners with the necessary tools needed to deal with the complexities that confront them (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Kavussanu et al., 2008; Mallet et al., 2009; Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Cushion & Jones, 2012).

While there can be little doubt that NGB Coach Education programmes provide important building blocks towards becoming an effective Coach, research also highlights that significant flaws still exist within the learning process and that current programmes are overly theorised and drawn from ideal world perspectives where the Coach is perceived to be all powerful within their realm (Lyle 2002; 2007a; Potrac et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2011a; Jones & Cushion, 2012). From personal experiences in many different coaching environments (both semi-professional and professional) I know that this is not the case, with many Coaches attempting to function in an uncertain world of negotiation, manipulation and coercion to ensure that some level of progress is made. This uncertain environment is one which current Coach Education initiatives have hitherto failed to visit, ignoring the ambiguous, chaotic and dynamic context of the role, and thus overlooking key training components in their design (Mallet et al., 2009; Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Jones et al., 2012).

When reflecting on my own development as an aspiring Coach, I can relate to some of the current criticisms expressed by researchers (cf. Jones, 2000; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Cassidy et al., 2009), often departing development courses and seminars with renewed levels of enthusiasm, but also with some degree of disappointment; feeling somehow that there was *something missing*, a failure to grasp the real essence of the chaotic, dynamic and manipulative coaching environment that I, and others, were caught within (Potrac & Jones, 2009a).

Over time, this cultivated what I can best describe as a *personal itch* that has remained largely unscratched until the production of this thesis. Indeed, if anything, the itch has intensified over time, largely as a consequence of professionalism's unyielding progress and its impact on all areas and levels of the game.

Since rugby became a professional sport in 1995, the game has continued to evolve, promoting significant advancements in the levels of knowledge and expertise required in all disciplines of the game (Malcom et al., 2000; Mellalieu et al., 2008). The size of playing squads have grown, full of more technically and tactically proficient players, many of whom have been developed through progressive academy systems that educate players towards the needs of the professional game (Malcom et al., 2000; Cruickshank et al., 2013a). The increased squad size has also seen a growing army of expert Coaches employed to manage and develop the playing numbers (Cresswell & Eklund, 2005; Cruickshank et al., 2013a). This has brought corresponding improvements in the various support disciplines such as notational analysis, conditioning, nutrition, physiotherapy, and sport psychology. These improved levels of technology and esoteric knowledge have in turn placed an extra burden on Coaches to meet the increased expectations of their players, support staff, administrators, owners and supporters to *get it right* on the field. This trend has also permeated down to the semi-professional and supposedly amateur ranks of the game, placing relative pressures on the Coaches to become more adroit in integrating new knowledge from their own and other support disciplines. Unfortunately, it would seem that current NGB Coach Education courses have failed to embrace professionalism with the same vigour, unsuccessful in integrating new knowledge into their courses and texts at a sufficient rate (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Callow et al., 2010). As a consequence, current programmes still remain incomplete,

failing to address what Potrac and Jones (2009a, p.559) described as, 'the dark side' of coaching, hence leaving a void between what Coaches *need*, and what they *get*. Now, as I move into a new career phase as CDM and HC for the HKRFU, I thought it appropriate that my *itch* finally be addressed; to investigate just what it is that current Coach Education needs to consider in meeting the 'complex or even chaotic' endeavours (Jones et al., 2012, p. 271) of the Coach, in attempting to fill the existing knowledge gap (Bowes & Jones, 2006). In doing so, the work achieves a level of originality on a number of fronts. Initially in addressing the paucity of research currently existing 'within' (as opposed to 'on') practical coaching environments (Potrac & Jones 2009a). In line with this, the multiple-researcher standpoint adopted throughout provides a unique level of access and integration in a region where the top Performance Coaches (study participants) are able to interact on a regular and coordinated basis (Lyle, 2002). This subsequently promotes a distinctive methodology where the practical development of each participant Coach is a key feature of the research produced, while all taking place in team set-ups where each participant's livelihood is ultimately dependent on their ability to progress their respective multiple-team environment, with many doing so in a (Head) Player-Coach capacity. This work therefore holds the potential to inform practitioners and future Coach Education programmes as to *what else* Coaches need to carry out their roles more effectively, also providing further assurance that they are better prepared for the uncertain world of Performance/Professional Coaching that awaits them (Lyle et al., 2010; Cruickshank et al., 2013a).

1.2. The How – In Brief!

Having presented the reader with a summary regarding the *what and why* of the study, it is equally important to provide an insight into the *how*. Offering an appropriate epistemological and methodological foundation in meeting the underlying ontological assumptions surrounding the study (Culver et al., 2012) while also displaying a sound rationale regarding the selected modes of inquiry, data collection techniques and the final presentation of facts in an accurate portrayal of events (Gray, 2009). To achieve this, certain variables need to be acknowledged; most importantly, recognising that my multiple-practitioner standpoint as Researcher, HC and CDM (which also incorporated various Line Manager [LM] duties) holds the potential for various aspects of role conflict and role ambiguity to skew or contaminate study outcomes (cf. Jones et al., 2007; Brumbles & Beach, 2008; Pitney et al, 2008). While some research paradigms leave the investigator happily detached from proceedings, thus avoiding any action that might tarnish results, my involvement meant the roles were inextricably linked, making non-involvement as Researcher, unavoidable. While the remit as CDM/LM was to cater for Coaches at *all* levels of the game within the home Union (Hong Kong) through the integration of well-grounded NGB principles, my role as Researcher was to focus specifically on those Performance Coaches selected to take part in the study. The appointment as HC of the National Team also had to be acknowledged as it allowed me to bring my own experiences to life, as well as those of the Coaches in my care. This meant treading a delicate path throughout, being constantly alert to the perils of multiple-role application to ensure that the reporting process was transparent, transferable and meaningful rather than insignificant and meaningless (Brumbles & Beach, 2008; Pitney et al., 2008; Gray, 2009). The consequences of adopting multiple-roles often

involved the analysis of interventions influenced by me as CDM, in assisting the Coaches to address some of the complexities they faced. This of course meant that I was heavily engaged in the change process as CDM/LM, thus eliminating the possibility of remaining outside of the research process. Table 1 outlines the specific duties involved within each of the adopted multiple-roles, while also highlighting the potential interconnectivity between roles and my inextricable link to the development of each Coach and the study, in general.

1.3. Breakdown of Multiple Role Functions

Table 1 - Insider Action Researcher (IAR) Duties

<p>Insider Action Researcher (IAR) Duties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the welfare and confidentiality of participants throughout the study period (and beyond) through the implementation of a clear and transparent communication process which addresses ethical considerations regarding; informed consent, confidentiality, the implementation of study ground-rules, member checking (interviews and final transcripts), and potential dissemination outlets (Gray, 2009). • Work with participants to design and implement appropriate intervention strategies to enhance their coaching practice. • Gather relevant study data through the appropriate methodological techniques. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Formal and informal interviews. (b) Field observations through regular visits to each of the selected CCO (study participants) team environments to view training sessions and games. (c) Observations and conversations held during CCO visits to Performance Department headquarters and/or weekly CCO meetings, workshops, and focus groups. (d) Formal and informal conversations held to discuss aspects of the CCO coaching role towards prompting critical thinking regarding issues and complexities faced. • Collate, analyse and present data using the appropriate methodological tools in accurately representing final themes and theories.
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Table 1(a) - Coach Development Manager [CDM] Responsibilities

<p>Coach Development Manager (CDM) Duties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and implement a progressive Coach Education development pathway for <i>all</i> levels of the game within HK. • Coordination and delivery of generic IRB Coach Education Courses to train and formally accredit Coaches to Foundation, Level 1 and Level 2 standard dependant on their needs and abilities. • Management and coordination of four full-time HKRFU Coach Education staff (in addition to volunteer staff) to achieve these outcomes. <p>Key personal objectives included:</p> <p>a) Developing levels of coaching expertise within the 'Performance' game in HK, which specifically involves the leading Premiership clubs, each of whom employed a Club Coaching Officer (CCO) as part of the 50-50 Job-share Scheme.</p> <p>b) Developing levels of coaching expertise within National Age-grade and Senior International teams (male and female). CCOs were employed within many of these National Age-grade or Senior Coaching positions.</p> <p>Key objectives achieved through:</p> <p>a) The coordination and delivery of necessary Coach Education workshops and seminars which included formal, informal and non-formal modes of learning (Lyle et al., 2009 & Lyle et al., 2010).</p> <p>b) Formal and informal visits to club and international training sessions where each Coach was formally assessed on a periodic basis.</p> <p>c) Formal visits to club and Age-grade International games to analyse each Coach's <i>game-day management</i>.</p> <p>d) Formulation and application of individualised action-plans for CCOs (and other International Coaches) based from observations and appraisals to improve their current practice.</p> <p>e) Numerous informal discussions in a mentor capacity to chat through issues that each of the CCOs were experiencing from a work/coaching/rugby perspective.</p>
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Table 1(b) - Line Manger (LM) Responsibilities

<p>Line Manager (LM) Duties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinate and facilitate weekly department meetings involving Performance and Community department members monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of current HKRFU Rugby Development initiatives. Assess and demarcate individual roles/responsibilities for current and forthcoming events. (These meetings also became an added forum for Coach Education, whereby workshops and focus groups were periodically scheduled to concentrate on specific aspects of the CCO Coaching roles and their personal development). <p>Establish and monitor daily/monthly/annual work schedules for CCO study participants and other Coach Education staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interface/liaison between club senior management and HKRFU regarding the 50-50 Job-share Scheme to ensure both Club and Union needs were being met by each of the appointed CCOs and the scheme in general.• Liaise with senior executive HKRFU staff regarding various aspects of the 50-50 Job-share Scheme (i.e. progress reports, disciplinary issues, contracting/re-contracting negotiations).• Initiate joint appraisal scheme involving club bosses to formally assess effectiveness and future needs of CCOs (via implementation of appropriate action plan) should their employment be continued.• Numerous informal discussions with staff members (including CCO study participants) regarding both work related and non-work related issues.
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Table 1(c) – Head Coach (HC) Duties

Head Coach (HC) Duties (National Men's XV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In conjunction with the Head of Performance for the HKRFU, select Senior National (and A Team) playing and management squads for two major international competition phases over the course of the domestic season. This involved selecting two of the most suitable CCOs as Assistant Coaches (based on their formal assessments), along with other medical and support staff. <p>This entailed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Coordination and implementation of appropriate training programme leading up to the international competition phases.b) Liaison and discussion with senior club management regarding the release of selected players for each competition phase.c) Attendance at various club games to monitor and assess the performance levels of players.d) Discussions with leading club Coaches (many of whom were CCO study participants) regarding the form/abilities of their players with a view to International squad selection.
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The nature of my multiple-role standpoint posed questions as to which investigative process would be most effective in producing the types of data required, and how best to report information and results. The answer to both questions lay in my *ground-in* and inextricably linked IAR position; better placed to embrace the interwoven standpoint, rather than try to avoid or overly defend it (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). This unorthodox stance also prompted an unusual approach in how best to present the final data. Following the advice of eminent researchers, I eventually opted for a more 'evocative' style of presentation (Jones, 2009, p.378), in an attempt to avoid the more traditional and academically bound representation of facts and results (Sparkes, 2002; Jones, 2009; Smith & Sparkes, 2011), This involved the

blending of 1st and 3rd person perspectives in conjunction with realist and confessional writing styles, to best represent the facts and events as they actually occurred (cf. Sparkes, 2002). As such, different writing genres are adopted for appropriate sections of this thesis; sometimes the more traditional 3rd person 'author-evacuated' perspective is employed, as would be expected for doctoral level work (Sparkes, 2002, p. 57) and at other times, the realist perspective is used to offer the insights and experiences of others involved. Alternatively, the *confessional* 1st person standpoint is employed to acknowledge my unavoidable presence in proceedings. On occasions, both realist and confessional styles are blended in order to offer the most tacit and realistic portrayal of events, experiences and emotions. A comprehensive rationale for this approach is provided in the methodology section (7.9) of this study, but I thought it prudent to raise this point early in proceedings so as to inform readers why such an approach has been adopted.

In regards to which research design would produce the best results when considering the ground-in multiple-role standpoint, the obvious solution was to simply *go with the flow* and embrace the opportunity to focus on both *action* and *research* in eliciting positive and participatory change (Coghlan & Brannick, 2004). This offered a natural calling towards Action Research (AR) as the most suitable framework for the study, a methodology previously employed for unravelling the everyday problems experienced by practitioners in the field towards the production of new knowledge (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The fundamental aim of AR is to problem solve through enhancing communication and collaboration amongst groups in making their organisational environments function more effectively (Hart & Bond, 1995). Particularly pertinent to the current study, AR is renowned for helping members accurately define their issues, empowering them to think of innovative ways of

solving both old and new problems alike (Susman & Evered, 1978). This is often achieved through its potential to unleash hidden energy within individuals, stimulate creativity, instil pride, commitment and responsibility in those involved and thus promoting an added sense of ownership and investment for all (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Stringer (2007) also highlighted that AR was not necessarily about providing precise answers to particular problems, but more about revealing different truths and realities, as a means of reaching positive and consensual change.

To assist this process an *Insider Action Research* (IAR) approach was embraced as it facilitated a branch of AR inquiry that allowed researchers to engage in projects within their own organisations. As such, researchers were able to improve their own understanding of internal organisation systems, as well as the understanding of others involved, directing members towards positive and consensual change through providing their own expert knowledge of the subject matter being studied (Coghlan, 2001). Gray (2009) suggests that this approach provides an opportunity for the IAR to become fully inclusive with the culture, jargon and internal landscape of the organisation, thus establishing a better means of communicating or observing freely, without others necessarily being aware of their presence as researchers. Gray (2009) was equally vigilant that IARs also achieve an appropriate level of detachment and objectivity, at times, in order to maintain the overall validity of their findings. Attentive to these concerns as both a multiple-role practitioner and IAR, various measures were implemented prior to and throughout the study process to ensure that all ethical and study protocols were met (Mason, 2002).

These measures included:

- a. On agreeing to take part in the study (Appendix 1 – Acceptance Letter) participants were provided with relevant ethical information regarding the nature and aims of the study, possible dissemination outlets and issues surrounding confidentiality. Particular emphasis was placed on their potential vulnerability in light of the fact that complete anonymity could not be guaranteed due to the nature of the study environment. Following this open and transparent overview, all necessary forms of informed consent were attained from study participants prior to and during the study process (Appendix 2 – Informed Consent). Interview transcripts (Appendix 3 – Interview Transcript) were also presented to participants prior to the actual interviews taking place to ease any potential concerns they may have held regarding the nature of inquiry. This transparent process assisted in building trust and rapport with each participant (Crow et al., 2006).
- b. The welfare of participants was further safeguarded through the formulation and implementation of flexible study ground-rules (section 3.4.2.2).
- c. Multiple data gathering techniques were employed to reduce the possibility of data error and improve the reliability of evidence collated. Individual and group observation, interviews, and diaries were all utilised to cross-reference sources of data for consistency and accuracy (Patton, 2002; Hemming, 2008).
- d. Requests were made to the selected Coaches, gate-keepers, internal stakeholders and significant others to evaluate my effectiveness and report on the veracity of accounts throughout the research process (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000; Gray, 2009).
- e. Ensuring the methodological rigour of interview design and application with Coaches and significant others who were asked to authenticate interview and final transcripts in the form of member checking (Hall & Hall, 1996; Patton, 2002; Culver et al., 2012).
- f. Working closely with my PhD supervisor in the form of a critical friend to assist in maintaining levels of objectivity.
- g. Utilisation of reflexive journal to monitor thoughts, emotions and observations and to assist with the planning and implementation cycles evident throughout the duration of the study (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000; Evans et al., 2004).
- h. Through peer assessment and validation via the dissemination of study data to various National Governing Bodies of sport for appraisal, comment and circulation (Guion, 2002; Patton, 2002).
- i. Through self-validation as an accredited member of the (BASES) British Association of Sports and Exercise Science (Sport Psychology) for over 10 years. In keeping with their strategic objective towards the 'development and maintenance of high professional standards for those involved in sport and exercise sciences,' thus providing confidence in my abilities to establish professional boundaries, codes of conduct, and work within an ethical framework to maintain objectivity and impartiality within a research environment (www.bases.org.uk/About, p.1).

It was also important for the study that the AR methodology was seen only as a reporting mechanism and intervention vehicle for this work, and not a focal point in itself (Lomax, 1994). While the AR environment proved integral in allowing all practitioners to make sense of their practice and in the propagation of appropriate data, it should be judged as a process of disciplined intervention and by how effectively that process is communicated (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). It is important to look upon it as a means rather than an end, as standardised methodology and formalised assessment has proved elusive due to AR's adaptable nature in dealing with the unique problems and unique solutions (Carr, 1989). In response to this, Lomax (1994) suggested that ideally, AR practitioners should be implicated in the assessment of their own work, developing a set of criteria against which their work could be judged.

With this in mind, I ask readers not to lose sight of the overriding objectives of this study: improving the practice of an aspiring group of Performances Coaches, while analysing exactly what complexities they faced in carrying out their daily practice; a work that holds the potential to assist or inform future Coach Development programmes. In doing so, I would request that both neophytes and experts alike base their judgments on the criteria listed below, scrutinising how effectively the various implementations and interventions were applied and reported in my multiple-role capacity, towards illustrating (a) an intention or commitment to solving practical problems; (b) an intervention; (c) a cycle of critical reflection, action and evaluation; and (d) praxis (i.e., committed action giving rise to knowledge). Furthermore, that the application of Action Research methodology was: (e) systematic; (f) strategic; (g) collaborative; (h) empowering for participants; and (i) conducted within a mutually acceptable ethical framework. Additionally, did it: (j) employ recognisable research

methods; (k) demonstrate a conscious partiality; and (l) communicate findings to other Practitioners-Researchers (Evans et al., 2000; Evans et al., 2004).

If my efforts match the requirements listed, I will have achieved some personal aims. Initially, by improving aspects of my own learning through the required focus and discipline needed in evaluating the specific character of this AR study (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). Secondly, by prompting the interested reader and fellow practitioner into a deeper reflective state through assessing if the study criteria have indeed been met and finally by providing interested parties with guidance to inform their own practice or actions in the future, through my critical analysis and reflection.

Having presented a broad overview for this project, the following chapters will construct a more detailed account of the journey travelled towards the data collection and presentation period. This will begin by providing the necessary historical context and foundation for the study, which in turn informs the scientific rationale and selection of methodological tools used in accurately portraying the study environment and events that occurred during the study period. This journey begins by offering relevant historical information pertaining to the development of rugby and coaching in HK.

CHAPTER (2)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1. Introduction

As the subject matter for this thesis surrounds Rugby Union Coaching within the developing rugby nation of Hong Kong (HK), it is important to provide background information pertaining to the development of the game in the region, along with the subsequent development of coaching and Coach Education, so as to equip readers with an appropriate contextual underpinning to the thesis. Therefore, the early chapters focus on the origins of coaching and Coach Education from a generic sporting and rugby specific perspective. This will then be supplemented through insight into the inception and development of Rugby Union in HK and its inextricable links with the socio-economic growth in the region, thus marking the way for the study and data collection period (Way, 2011).

2.2. Historical Context - Coaching

The emergence of coaching as a social practice has been shaped by ideologies from various disciplines including sport (Lyle, 2002; Evans & Light, 2008; Jowett et al., 2010), business (Dayton, 2007; Dagley, 2010), psychology (Corrie & Lane, 2009; O'Donovan, 2009; Marsden et al., 2010; Passmore, 2010), psychotherapy (Schofield et al., 2006) and education (Jenkins & Veal, 2002; Jenkins et al., 2005). As well as being applied in what are considered mainstream areas such as the development of executive talent within business (Tobias, 1996) and peer development within education (Scarnati et al., 1993); coaching practice has also been utilised in a surprisingly widespread and diverse range of disciplines (Passmore, 2010). Some of these areas include, infertility training for older adults (Scharf &

Weinshel, 2000), helping couples resolve relationship difficulties (Jacobson, 1977), assisting disadvantaged people to gain and retain employment (Davis et al., 1983), aiding those with cognitive difficulties to learn new skills (Dalton et al., 1997), and even coaching individuals to fake malingering on psychological tests (Suhr & Gunstad, 2000).

With such an extensive usage, a consensual definition that encompasses all the different techniques, strategies and goals has proved elusive for researchers (Stojnov & Pavlovic, 2010). However, some consensus has been reached with suggestions that *performance, learning and development* are key outcomes that pervade throughout the range of coaching disciplines highlighted (Parsole & Wray, 2000; Ives, 2008). Downey (1999, p.15) perhaps best encapsulates this within his definition defining coaching as, 'the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another.' The subsequent array of coaching and leadership models that have arisen as a consequence of this wide spectrum of activities have been equally diverse. Each of these models armed with good intention in offering coaching practitioners some definitive direction pertaining to the principles, objectives and behaviours required to support best practice, while also attempting to adequately inform education and development programmes within each of the designated disciplines (Vella et al., 2010).

While some of these models have served to successfully inform the training of individuals within organisational and educational environments, they have proved to be far less influential within sports settings (Lyle, 2002; Cushion, 2007; Vella et al., 2010). To date, reports suggest they have raised confusion for Coaches and Coach Educators who have attempted to base their

behaviours and programmes around the current frameworks available (Avolio et al., 2009). Question marks surround how informative and influential these models actually are within applied sporting contexts, engendering frustration in practitioners who still lack a clear conceptual basis or definitive set of principles that adequately defines the Coaching Process and their corresponding practice (Lyle, 2002 & 2007b). As a result, current Coach Education programmes are purported to be irrelevant and too far removed from real-world coaching practice (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Cushion et al., 2006; Jones et al, 2011b; Cushion & Jones, 2012).

More recently, researchers have begun to recognise the complexities involved in sports coaching, realising that the Coaching Process cannot be easily reduced to a neat set of theoretical principles, and have instead begun to analyse and un-pick some of the many intricacies involved (Mallet et al, 2009; Lyle, et al., 2009; Lyle, et al., 2010). This line of inquiry has begun to shed some light on the multifarious and chaotic nature of the Coach's role (Jones et al., 2012), unearthing an intricate network of 'issues and tensions that underpin the activity, exposing substantial gaps in our knowledge base' (Cushion et al., 2006, p.84). As a consequence, the role of the Coach is now being redefined with a growing acceptance of the social and interpersonal processes involved.

Cushion (2007, p397) ably portrays this point by revealing that the Coaching Process is characterised by complexity, dynamism and uncertainty, with explicit (language, roles, tools, documents) and implicit (relationships, tacit conventions, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, specific perceptions, sensitivities, embodied understandings, underlying assumptions and shared views) characteristics evident within any Coach-Athlete relationship.

2.2.1. Development of Coaching Models

Even with the growing awareness that acknowledges coaching as a complex and contrived affair, researchers are still requesting that attention be given to formulation of a clear conceptual basis for the Coaching Process (Lyle, 2002; Lyle et al., 2010; Cushion & Jones, 2012). They highlight the need for a suitable model that can accurately inform the practice of Coaching Practitioners and Educators towards the uncertain and sometimes harsh realities that await them (Cushion et al., 2006; Vella et al., 2010). This of course raises the initial question as to why coaching models are so important, and why their use has been so prevalent within sport and other professional disciplines. Lyle (2002), providing insight on this, suggests that the models really serve as a *health indices* which helps reflect the condition of conceptual development within the specific field in question.

One might be forgiven therefore for assuming that as 'there are no all-embracing models of the Coaching Process' currently in existence, that it reflects a general conceptual ambiguity and un-healthy state of play within sports settings (Potrac et al., 2000, cited in Lyle, 2002, p. 79). This theory has in some way been confirmed with the current batch of models *for* coaching

(idealistic representation – cf. Franks et al., 1986; Fairs, 1987; Sherman et al., 1997; Lyle, 2002) and of coaching (based on empirical data – cf. d'Arrippue-Longueville et al., 1998; Cote et al., 1995; McClean & Challandrai, 1995), while receiving some support for their usefulness, have in large been criticised for their overly simplistic nature. Generally accused of breaking the 'complex coaching role into simple and causal components,' therefore greatly marginalising the intricacies and dynamics involved (Vella et al., 2010, p. 426). Their production however has reportedly served some positive purpose, in acting as a catalyst for new lines of inquiry that are beginning to offer a more accurate insight into the contextual and elaborate relationship maze that can exist between athlete(s), Coach and their particular sporting environment (Cushion et al., 2003; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Cushion 2007; Potrac et al., 2007).

Horn's (2008) recent investigation into coaching effectiveness serves as one such example, highlighting some of the interpersonal transactions that take place within the coaching environment. Horn highlights how the socio-cultural contexts, organisational factors and individual personality traits of the Coach can act as determining variables in their resultant behaviour and actions. Such actions are further mediated by the Coach's own expectancies, values and goals, all of which serve as contributory factors in determining the type of relationship developed with his/her athletes. Horn's examination therefore adds further support to the argument that the Coaching Process is more than a mere set of measurable or comparable criteria that can be neatly packaged into positivist research paradigms, or that it is something that could be simply *delivered* within a set of organised and generic guidelines (Cushion et al.,

2006; Cushion & Jones 2012). Instead, it should be considered as an organic and dynamic social activity, with corresponding models reflecting such considerations into a *model of critical thinking* (section 8.2) that allows Coaches to develop their own professional toolbox, built from conscious and contextual experiences rather than the traditions, comparisons and perceptions of others (Cassidy et al., 2009). This new thinking could lead us closer to that elusive *Holy Grail* of coaching, providing a clear and concise conceptualisation of the Coaching Process and associated model(s) to remove the current health warning placed on sports coaching, regarding its conceptual well-being (Lyle, 2002 & 2007b).

2.3. Historical Context - Formal Coach Education

The earliest roots of formal Coach Education can be traced back to the 1950s and even though sports such as athletics, soccer and swimming held courses and seminars prior to this period on a fairly sporadic and individualised basis, coaching and Coaches were not considered to be a part of any systematic process for improving performance (Lyle, 2002). However, during the 1950s Coach Education on a national basis began to emerge in England with teachers tending to fill the instructional void because of their obvious links with the educational processes involved in coaching (Olusoga et al., 2009). Over the next decade, and with the assistance of some limited government support, various sporting National Governing Bodies (NGBs) were established with the aim to promote their own particular brand of sport, as well as the education and development of Coaches within that field (Coghlan, 1990). That initial development, Lyle (2002, p.8) suggested, left a lot to be desired throughout

the 1960s, 70s, and 80s with coaching courses offering nothing more than basic 'teaching awards' to Coaches who attended. The quality of material delivered was further questioned as the various NGBs were still working in isolation and lacking the necessary skills and expertise to make any real impact, particularly at the performance and elite levels of sport (Lyle, 2002).

The growing realisation surrounding the ineffectiveness of those early Coach Education programmes eventually prompted the emergence of the National Coaching Foundation (NCF) during 1983, a parent sporting body that was made responsible for the overall development of sport and coaching within the United Kingdom (Coghlan, 1990; Pickup, 1996). The NCF has since had a significant and positive impact on Coach Education, liaising with the various NGBs including the International Rugby Board (IRB), Rugby Union's own international accreditation body, to raise standards in coaching. This has been achieved through the introduction of various initiatives and through the introduction of a clear and progressive Coach Education pathway (Pickup, 1996; Cushion et al., 2003; Taylor & Garratt, 2010).

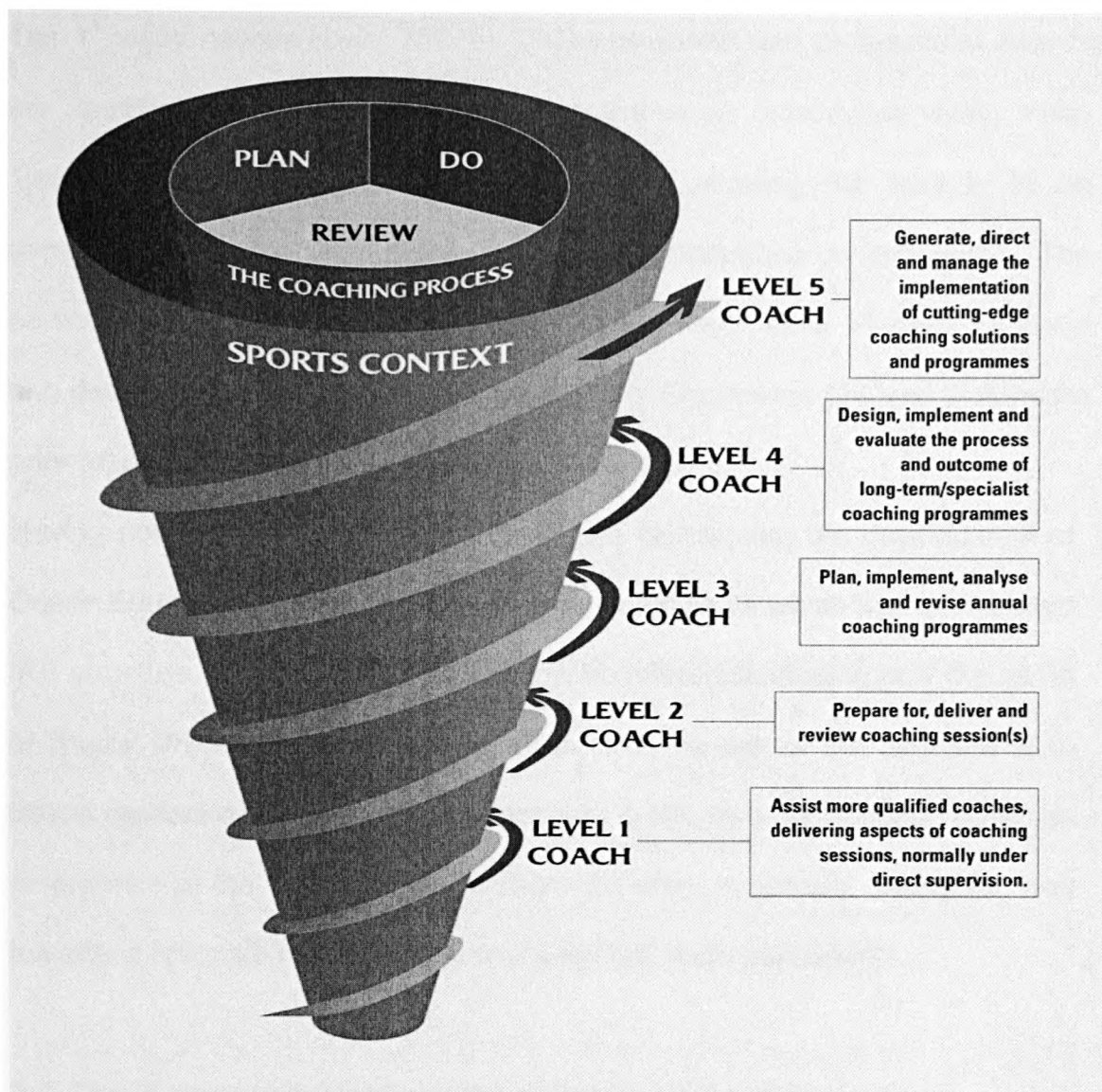
In 2001 the NCF formally changed its name to Sports Coach UK (SCUK) to further improve the standardisation and transferability of skills between the various NGBs and the evaluation of coaching competencies (Taylor & Garratt, 2010). Consequently, coaching became formally recognised as 'a profession acknowledged as central to the development of sport and the fulfilment of individual potential' (UK Sport, 2001, p.5). This was further supported through the introduction of the UK Coaching Certificate (UKCC) in 2002 (Figure 1), an endorsement framework for sport-specific Coach Education programmes that displayed a progressive and structured pathway for Coaches offering

internationally recognised and consistent standards from Levels 1 to 5 within Rugby Union and other sports (Lyle, 2007b). Each level relates directly to the function and ability of the Coach in relation to their chosen sport with the awards also acknowledged as being educational and vocational qualifications that are transferable to the workplace (Nelson & Cushion, 2006; Norman, 2008). Coaches who are successful in gaining each award would be expected to be competent in the following areas:

- Level 1 – To be able to assist more qualified Coaches and deliver training sessions under direct supervision.
- Level 2 - To prepare, deliver (as lead Coach) and evaluate coaching sessions.
- Level 3 - Required to plan, review and execute longitudinal training programmes.
- Level 4 - To be capable of creating, implementing and analysing either long-term or specialist coaching programmes.
- Level 5 - Geared toward Professional Coaches who would be expected to plan and implement 'cutting edge' coaching initiatives (SCUK, 2006).

More recently, National Lottery funding and the hosting of the London 2012 Olympics has generated further interest and momentum in the recruitment of athletes and Coaches, facilitating a larger investment in many facets of sport and particularly performance or elite coaching (SCUK, 2006, 2010). Indeed, UK sport generally has acknowledged that developing Coaches and Coach Education plays a vital role in raising the standards of overall performance (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2010). This will no doubt engender a more structured approach to developing both community based and elite sports, thus building on the recent success of the 2012 Olympics and hopefully allowing coaching and Coach Education to develop a rigorous conceptual legacy (Harris, 2011).

Figure 1 - Generic UKCC Coach Education Pathway



Within the sport of Rugby Union specifically, the IRB Coach Education accreditation policy currently offers training and award schemes running from basic foundation levels, designed primarily for participation/community minded Coaches, through a series of incremental coaching tiers. All training and award schemes are aimed at both informing and testing the competency of each Coach before attaining appropriate accreditation. The IRB accreditation awards range from Level 1 to Level 3, in line with SCUK guidelines, with higher-level

award courses (Level 4 and Level 5) arranged by individual NGB Unions within Tier 1¹ rugby nations (Lyle, 2007b). These specialist and professional awards are usually linked to post-graduate programmes in universities within those Tier 1 countries (Lyle, 2002; 2007b), hence allowing the awards to be transferable to the workplace (www.irb.com/mm/document/aboutirb). The particular Coaches involved within the current study have all been exposed and developed under this Coach Development Framework to Level 3 standard prior to, or during, the study period (section 3.4.3).

Having now provided the historical rationale highlighting the development of Coach Education and the position of study participants within that subsequent IRB structure, a similar overview will now be offered illustrating how the game of Rugby Union has established itself in HK. The aim of the overview is to inform readers of the game's developments in HK, from its inception up to the emergence of the CCO 50-50 Job-share Scheme, eventually paving the way towards a rationale for the inclusion of selected study participants.

2.4. The History and Development of Rugby Union in Hong Kong

The following section will provide insight into the emergence and growth of Rugby Union in HK. It is worth noting the development of the game has been, and still is, inextricably linked with the socio-economic and political development of the region; a point which is reflected throughout this historical representation (Moore, 2003).

¹ The International Rugby Board ranking system rates member countries from Tier 1 to Tier 6, with leading rugby nations given a Tier 1 rating while those lesser or developing nations are provided with a lower grading dependant on their standing (www.irb.com/mm/document/aboutirb)

2.4.1. Emergence of Rugby in HK

The roots of Rugby Union in HK can be traced as far back as the 1880s with the HK Public Records Office reporting on how the new game from England had been transported to local shores by British colonists and employed as a source of relaxation and enjoyment for the expatriate population (www.hkrugby.com/en/history). As a consequence, the roots of the game in the region were firmly embedded within the game in England, a game that had been founded some 60 years earlier by William Webb Ellis during the 1820s after he famously picked up the ball and ran with it during a school football match (Godwin, 1981). Following Webb's unprecedented actions, the new game in England rapidly gathered interest, serving as the eventual catalyst for the formation of the Rugby Football Union (RFU) in 1871. The first international matches between England and Scotland were actually played, during that same year, with the first official Home International Championship, which also included Wales and Ireland, following closely in 1883 (Collins, 2009).

It was during this period that the game first travelled to the shores of HK with its set of formal RFU establishment rules and regulations very much in keeping with the colonial government practice in the vicinity (Collins, 2009). Interestingly, during that same year (1883), the first seven-a-side competition was also recorded in Scotland, heralding the beginnings of a remarkable brand of rugby that was to have a significant impact and bearing on the financial and political fortunes of the game and local business community in HK, nearly a century later (Godwin, 1981).

Those early socio-economic and political links can be traced back to the Opium Wars, which started in 1839 (Munn, 2000), witnessing the development of unique alliances that were forged between the colonial officials and the local Chinese business elite. During this period, both parties were able to conduct their dealings under few constraints, creating the beginning of a remarkable city-state where corruption, mistrust and contra-deals were an everyday part of life (Moore, 2003). Following the end of the Opium War period (1860), the links endured, with sport beginning to feature heavily as part of life in the region. HK became an increasingly attractive destination luring an independent and adventurous sort of person who thrived on the football, cricket, tennis and rowing activities available at the time. There was also of course the legendary horse racing at Happy Valley, which still today offers enjoyment for both locals and expatriates while also providing a valuable source of income and employment for the government and local businesses around the race track areas (Moss, 2002).

Rugby Union's arrival during this period slowly gathered momentum with the first official match reported in March 1885 between a Navy XV and Hong Kong Football Club (HKFC) team; a team which contained several expatriate business leaders of the period (Moore, 2003). This fixture, and the numerous Armed Services versus Civilians fixtures that followed, were to have a significant bearing on HK rugby, providing a focal point for social gatherings over the next several decades. This served to strengthen both new and old links forged between the rugby and local business communities, with many of the early HKFC captains employed within the numerous prestigious financial institutions of the period (Way, 2011). Those alliances are still an important

part of the game today, with elements of the local business community, happy to represent rugby's interests in HK by serving on the various boards and committees that have developed as a consequence of the game's popularity (Blondin, 1995).

Additional links were also established around this period with the race track at Happy Valley becoming the spiritual home for not only rugby, but also for other popular sports of the period such as polo and hockey. These sports joined 'the throng of footballers, golfers, cricketers and riders on horseback competing for their own foothold on the (limited) Valley space' (Way, 2011, p.11). In 1897 the HKFC were fortunate to be granted sole use of one of the grounds by the government, an agreement that unwittingly established the current home for the plethora of HKFC sporting teams that exist there today.

Away from the thriving sporting and leisure activities in those early years, the last decade of the century proved to be one of turmoil and struggle, testing the resilience of locals and expatriates alike. Internal political turmoil in China badly affected trade with perennial piracy and typhoons further adding to their plight. In 1894 HK was also hit by Bubonic Plague, causing some 100,000 inhabitants, approximately half its Chinese population at the time, to flee to China.

The arrival of the 1900s, however, was to mark a change of fortune on all fronts. During the early years of the century, the new found political and financial stability promoted rapid growth in business and a subsequent increase in leisure pursuits and the numbers playing rugby. Local sugar, flour, cotton and cement industries emerged to provide employment for the large influx of immigrant workers from China and other parts of the world. By 1910,

the HK port was reported to be the third largest in the world, with sea traffic monopolised by the large shipping magnets of Jardine and Butterfield in keen competition with the Swire company (Coates, 1980). The industrial growth also saw a large increase in police and armed services numbers brought in to maintain order, many of whom were attracted to the various forms of sport available at that time, with Rugby a firm favourite among many (Sayer, 1980). Expatriate appeasement from the thriving business sector and long working hours also came in the form of sport and leisure activities, with records around the turn of the century displaying over 300 members within the rugby section at the HKFC (Way, 2011). Similar interest was also reported in service records where all branches of the armed forces were making strides toward developing their own divisional teams in HK (Moore, 2003). The expansion in garrison forces was further compounded by the possible transgressions against mainland China from other countries such as Russia, Germany, USA and Japan, each motivated to gain some foothold in, or near, Chinese waters and therefore pose a threat to British supremacy and interests in the locality (Carroll, 2007).

Rugby became a beneficiary of the economic growth and the politics surrounding China. The increasing domestic and armed services population had a positive effect on playing numbers, prompting the emergence of competitions like the Blarney Stone 7s and the historically famous Triangular competition involving Royal Navy, Army, and Football Club teams, which was to be the main focus of rugby interest in the area for the next 30 years (Moore, 2003). Although each of the teams experienced fleeting success throughout the duration of the Triangular tournament, major honours were to rest with the

Royal Navy XV who won 12 of the 25 competitions between 1920 and 1940 (Hung, 2005). This perhaps further reflected Britain's strong military presence throughout the period, on hand to safeguard its interests in, and around, the shores of HK and China.

2.4.2. Cessation of Rugby in HK

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 was to put all rugby developments temporarily on hold, with many expatriates returning to fight in Europe. Those who remained were quick to set up a local HK Volunteers Corps, working hard to provide support for the war effort through some generous and remarkable donations (Bruce, 1991). Although the war in Europe did little to affect life in HK, it did coincide with important political and social changes in China. The steady rise of Chinese Nationalism and subsequent internal unrest brought significant implications for HK during the 1920s, forcing many mainlanders to flee to the region, drawing it into a whirlwind of Chinese politics that was to set the course for future success (Tsang, 2004). The rapid rise in the HK population and post-war recession, brought about by alarmingly high levels of rent and cost of living, attracted with it much civil unrest. The situation was further compounded by poor government management which eventually led to a series of strikes in 1922 in HK, proving a new and embarrassing experience for the incumbent government during that period (Carroll, 2007).

Fortunately Rugby served as a calming and galvanising influence during this turbulent period, with the various sporting factions able to put aside their differences and enjoy the weekly sporting pursuits. This allowed the pre-war rugby tournaments of the early 1900s to re-gather momentum throughout the

period of industrial unrest, with the frequent social interactions promoting support and public sympathy for the militant action on the part of the workers. Over time, support for the workers' plight grew, eventually forcing the government to meet their demands in offering added provision to the workers as a means of winning back some popularity with the people (Tsang, 2004).

This change in attitude marked a significant period in HK's economic development. With its borders initially experiencing a pre-war industrial boom that attracted a more informed and demanding workforce; the post-war government was now compelled to implement social and industrial welfare programmes to regain local support during the period between World War I and World War II (Lethbridge, 1985). The era marked a shift in the power away from the old and traditional business elite to a new generation of Chinese merchants and professionals who continued to arrive in HK as a consequence of the ongoing political upheavals in China (Williams, 2009). As a result, the period was earmarked as one where 'the role of the expatriates began to shrink, a process which led eventually to their displacement from their commanding position in Hong Kong affairs' (Goodstadt, 2005, p.101).

The open borders of the period were to also prove an attraction for sporting visitors, with the HKFC playing host to numerous touring teams of the era, many of whom stopped off in HK while embarking on their travels to other Northern or Southern Hemisphere destinations. Records from that era indicate the visits of Australia Universities in 1934 and the New Zealand Junior All Blacks (en route to Japan in 1936) who played fixtures against a combined Royal Navy and HKFC team. These early tourists were to mark an indelible trail for later visitors to follow, with many of the leading rugby playing

nations since treading the same path. Many teams passed through HK to play games, or to simply experience the delights of the *fragrant harbour* while on their way to other rugby playing destinations (Way, 2011).

However, as the earlier industrial and economic developments had brought with them growing pains in the form of internal unrest and industrial action, so too did the developments in Rugby Union, with the increasing numbers of both civilian and armed services people posing a threat to HK's prestigious Triangular tournament. Besides the added arrival of 250,000 mainland Chinese into HK following Japanese occupation into parts of China during 1937, the further threat of invasion in the British stronghold prompted added growth in local policing and armed services numbers during the late 1930s and early 1940s (Snow, 2003). By 1940, playing numbers and teams had grown so rapidly that the format of the Triangular competition came under serious threat through the emergence of strong Police and Royal Air Force teams whose playing numbers had been bolstered in anticipation of further Japanese transgression (Welsh, 1993). Growing support gathered for an expansion of the Triangular competition to include the new rugby powers, thus challenging traditional and established practices, much as it had within the business community some years earlier. Fortunately, disagreement and opinion surrounding the expansion of the competition was placed on temporary hold due to the larger and more imminent issue of an impending Japanese invasion (Moore, 2003).

It came with little surprise, therefore, that on December 8th 1941, 'Hong Kong awakened to find itself at war,' where following 17 days of resistance, the local garrison was forced to surrender on Christmas Day (Wylie, 1941, p.6), The period signalled a temporary halt to both British dominance and rugby proceedings in HK until after the declaration of peace in August 1945, whereby British rule continued very much as it had previously (Lindsey, 2005).

2.4.3. Resurgence of Rugby in HK

The years following World War II witnessed a significant resurgence in the HK population, growing from around 600,000 immediately after the war to around 2.5 million by 1950. Although reports over the region's future were suggested to be bleak, with its borders closed to the newly-established Republic of China and with little natural resource available, HK illustrated its now world-famous entrepreneurial spirit and resourcefulness in grasping new opportunities toward successful industrial expansion in the post-war decade (Tsang, 2004; Latter, 2007). That industrial growth once again bode well for the rugby community with interest in the game quickly rekindled following the war years. A period of vibrant expansion ensued where the number of players, teams and competitions increased so rapidly that a significant landmark was established in 1952 through the formulation of the Hong Kong Rugby Football Union (HKRFU), formed to bring order and direction to the increasingly popular game (Scott, 1998).

Described as one of the most dynamic sporting associations in Asia, its official mission was to aid the 'interest of Rugby Union Football and the active encouragement and promotion of playing the game' (Moore, 2003, p.11). Affiliated with the English Rugby Football Union (RFU) in order to gain the necessary financial support, the HKRFU's early constitution adopted a similar democratic committee structure that was to remain unchanged for the next forty years (Scott, 1999). The first official game was recorded against the tourists from Oxford University in the same year, producing a 3-28 loss for the Union.

Over the proceeding decades, the HKRFU, its member clubs and local business partners all experienced reciprocal benefits; the Union and the clubs benefitted through the much needed financial support provided by sponsors to assist with the development of the game, while the sponsors themselves received added exposure and kudos through their links with the popular game, further promoting a positive and self-perpetuating cycle for all concerned. Eventually, those relationships developed to a point where the increased revenue gained by the Union allowed them to achieve a level of financial independence from their RFU benefactors. This lessened their reliance and control over the HKRFU, promoting a level of autonomy and independence which eventually paved the way for test match rugby in Hong Kong, along with the creation of the now world-famous HK Sevens Tournament (Blondin, 1995).

Rugby continued to consolidate its position throughout the 1960s and 70s; a situation that was further aided by the onset of commercial and international air travel, making HK a much more accessible venue for both business and tourism. New clubs and teams sprang up, supporting the new Pentangular Tournament which saw the Police and RAF teams finally enter competition ranks (Sinclair, 1985). Playing numbers during this period were reported to be of geometric proportions, with popularity such that for the first time, local radio stations broadcast games over their airwaves (Hung, 2005).

There is no doubt that the successful development of the game in HK and other Asian rugby playing nations was to inspire the eventual formulation of the Asian Rugby Football Union (ARFU) in 1968 (www.a5nrugby.com). The first Asian Rugby Football Tournament quickly followed in 1969, with five countries competing for the title of Asian Champions. Today the ARFU Tournament, which runs on an annual basis, boasts 28 Asian countries competing in men's, women's and junior competition formats including both the 15s and 7s versions of the game (www.a5nrugby.com).

The HKRFU's ongoing contribution towards development of the game, both locally and within the Asian rugby community during the 1970s, was to prove a very rewarding period in the colony's history, placing it firmly in the hearts and minds of world rugby (www.irb.com/irbsevens/index.html). The colony was to host the ARFU Tournament and welcome leading international teams from England, Wales, Scotland and France, all of whom provided valuable experience in respect of organising and hosting major rugby events.

The business expertise and financial support of board members and other local business owners again proved crucial in the successful management and promotion of these high profile fixtures, displaying further potential to running major sporting events in HK.

The unlikely dream was to become a reality in 1976, when following the hard work and support of local businessman Ian Gow, permission was finally granted for HK to host the first official HK 7s tournament, which took place in March 1976 (Moore, 2003). Years on, this world-renowned tournament has become famous for its colourful spectacle, diversity and comradeship, while also being recognised for providing the necessary impetus behind the formulation of the multi-national IRB World 7s event that exists today (www.hksevens.com/index.html). The HK 7s event personifies the link between sport and business in the area, with major advertisement and sponsorship opportunities proving fundamental components to its initial and ongoing success. Profits gained from the event are reinvested wisely to safeguard the future of the game, via the numerous rugby development programmes currently running in HK (Molloy, 2006).

On the domestic XV's rugby front, the 1980s saw a continued dominance of the HKFC within the newly formed league and cup structures, with the theme continuing through to the club's centenary celebrations in 1986. However, the advent of the Rugby World Cup in 1987 was to mark the onset of another important transitional phase in the history of HK rugby. While results in the ARFU Tournament had proved generally inconsistent and below expectation at international levels, steps were taken by the Union to grow the game by attracting playing interest in the local Chinese community through the

introduction of the HKRFU Development Programme in 1988. The guiding philosophy behind the development programme was borne out of real danger that after the 1997 handover of HK back to the Chinese, the game could wither, if not disappear altogether (Way, 2011). Therefore, steps were taken to promote the game within Chinese schools and colleges, and by 1995 there were reportedly around 20,000 students taking an interest in the game. Further advertising campaigns within local Chinese press also aided rugby's cause in the 'blossoming of what seemed like 100 clubs in Hong Kong' (Moore, 2003, p. 106-107). These included some of the first all-Asian clubs such as Gai Wu and DeA (named after the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme), both of which still exist today, with DeA currently forming part of the HKRFU's Premiership Division competition (Gregory, 2013). Development work throughout the local Chinese community has continued to grow since this period, with the HKRFU launching the Club Development Officer Scheme in 2004. The scheme was set up thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Royal Bank of Scotland, enabling the employment of added development officers to support the various local Chinese schools, clubs and tertiary programmes that are currently running today (hkrugby.com/en/node/487).

In more immediate pursuit of ARFU Tournament glory and possible World Cup qualification, the HKRFU undertook another, pivotal step in its development during 1990. Following forty years of constitutional stability under the direction of the democratically elected committee, a comprehensive reorganisation of the Union was undertaken in allowing it to 'keep pace with a more professional and rapidly growing game' in HK (Moore, 2003, p.85). The reorganisation saw the long-standing but tenuous affiliation with the English

RFU finally withdrawn, replacing it with a more streamlined board of directors to direct Union affairs, thus transforming the old amateur establishment into the modern professional organisation that it is today (Agnew, 1991).

A similar transition was also evident on the field and while some of HK's more traditional and well established club teams were fading, relative new boys *Valley RFC*, established in 1975, were going from strength to strength, placing themselves at the forefront of most domestic competitions during the 1990s. The growing economic and political stability in China and HK had removed the need for such a strong police or military presence, particularly following the signing of the Sino-British agreement in 1984. The subsequent weakening of Police and Armed Services teams made way for a new breed of club teams to come through. Valley were amongst those to benefit, combating the attraction of the more traditional and powerful HKFC teams by offering 'incentives like rent subsidies to attract talented players into their ranks' (Way, 2011, p.247).

Outside the sporting arena, the 1997 political handover was to prove quite seamless, with the People's Republic of China (PRC) recognising that HK should be preserved exactly as it was, adopting a *one country, two systems* formula to maintain the ongoing success of HK and mainland China (Han, 1990; Tsang, 2004). While the local Chinese people came to terms with their repatriation to the mainland, the HKRFU was also experiencing a change of equally global proportion within the rugby community, following the advent of professional rugby in 1995 (Moore, 2003).

Not wishing to lose pace, the HKRFU called a special meeting to discuss just how professionalism would affect the game in HK. Although some adjustments to the board structure were made to cope with the extra demands envisaged, it could not adequately prepare for all eventualities. One such outcome was the new International Rugby Board (IRB) Eligibility Rulings² introduced into the international game. The legislation immediately ruled out many of the players within the current domestic league structure because they did not meet the newly imposed criteria, in respect of international representation for HK. The new ruling forced selectors to look more towards home-grown talent, thus reaping the rewards of the 1988 Development Programme to support the international game. So despite professionalism's impact on the international game in HK during the late 1990s, the local game continued to thrive, with Valley maintaining their dominance of domestic competitions. The trend extended into the new millennium and up to the current period with the Valley Club displaying remarkable consistency to be named as either League, Grand Final or Seven's winners during 16 of the 20 years from 1990 to 2009-10 (Way, 2011).

In coming to terms with global professional rugby, a similar level of consistency has since been achieved on the HK international stage in both the 7s and 15s version of the game. Over recent seasons, the National Men's XV team have managed to achieve their, 'highest ever IRB ranking (26th) in consolidating their top tier status in the annual Asian 5 Nations series (Gregory, 2012, p.9). In accordance with this, the Senior Men's 7s team

² The IRB eligibility ruling meant that to qualify for International selection, players either had to be born in Hong Kong (i.e. possess a HK passport), or to have served a 36 months term of continuous residency (www.irb.com/mm/document/lawsregs).

secured Elite Training Grant status within the prestigious Hong Kong Institute of Sport (HKSI) for their 7s success in the 2009 East Asian Games (Silver Medal). More recently, and looking forward to the 2016 Olympic Games, the incumbent Chairman of the HKRFU was able to announce:

I am pleased to inform that on 1st April 2013 the [Chinese] Government announced our full inclusion as a fully supported sport for Sevens. The positive impact cannot be underestimated as the program will provide us with access to the superb facilities at the newly renovated HKSI.....[and] will also fund athletes and Coaches in allowing us to create a professional environment and platform for future success (Gregory 2013, p.18).

Some of the successes achieved on the international field can no doubt be attributed to the initiatives and support systems introduced throughout the domestic game, many implemented to raise the playing standards within the performance game in HK. One such initiative was the introduction of the 50-50 CCO Job-share Scheme, introduced during the 2009-10 season as a means of both clubs and Union jointly funding the employment of Professional Coaches on the 50-50 Job-share basis. This meant the CCO coaching duties were divided between the Union and club, with their main remit to raise (playing and coaching) standards within their Premier League Clubs while also undertaking coaching duties for the National Age-grade and senior international teams within HK (Cooke, 2009/10). The introduction of this scheme has had a significant bearing on the domestic game, raising levels of play to an 'unprecedented standard' since its introduction for the 2009-10 season (Gregory, 2012, p.9).

It is milestones such as the CCO Scheme that mark the continued growth and development of the game in HK; milestones that are largely dependent on the financial success of the annual HK 7s tournament to fund their implementation within the HK rugby community. In turn, the success of the HK 7s is still reliant on much of the commercial support provided by many of the influential businesses linked to the area. A point which continues to highlight how the socio-economic and political influences are still interwoven into the fabric of the game, ensuring rugby in HK truly remains a reflection of the HKRFU's mission statement as *A Game for All* (Scott, 1999).

Having now provided the reader with the background and development of Rugby Union within HK, along with the subsequent emergence of coaching and Coach Education within the global game, the following section brings that context to a point immediately preceding the commencement of the study period, and sets the scene for the selection of an appropriate methodological design and candidate selection, both integral parts of the overall study process.

CHAPTER (3)

GAME PLAN TOWARDS A METHOD

3.1. Setting the Scene – (Let's get Up to Date)

The aim of this section is to build on the early historical development of both rugby and coaching in HK, to a point immediately preceding the commencement of the study period. In doing so, it will provide readers with an appropriate insight into the standing of the game at that period, enabling them to make judgements on the selected methodological design.

3.2. Current Context - Coach Education

The perception of sports coaching and the role of the Coach has shifted significantly over recent years. This is due largely to the growing recognition that coaching is a sophisticated, interpersonal process constructed within different social constraints and involving complex, multivariate human beings who attach different values and meanings to the interactions that take place (Cushion et al., 2003; Jones & Wallace 2005). This perhaps goes some way to explaining why research has failed to produce a clear and consensual set of guidelines or principles (conceptual underpinning) which accurately portray the intricacies, tensions and social dilemmas involved (e.g., Brewer & Jones, 2002; Jones, 2007; Cassidy et al., 2009; Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b). Research has tended to depict the Coach as being *all-powerful* in implementing a sequence of controllable processes over which he or she has total control (Cushion, 2007; Nelson & Cushion, 2006). This ideal is further supported by the many coaching models in existence which promote a cleanly cut hierarchical structure and over-simplistic transfer of theoretical knowledge into practical situations (Lyle, 2002, 2007b; Cote & Gilbert, 2009; Mallet et al., 2009). As a result, practitioners have reportedly become increasingly disillusioned with the development programmes on offer, criticising their overly theoretical approach and

unrealistic representation of the coaching arena (cf. Chellanduri, 2007; Horn, 2008; Cote & Gilbert, 2009; Lyle et al., 2010). Further assertions suggest that programmes are failing to consider the ambiguous, chaotic and dynamic context of the role while overstating the level of control that has traditionally been associated with the Coach (Jones et al., 2011a & 2011b, 2012). Potrac and Jones (2009a, p.558) elaborating this theme, contested that rather than having unfettered capacity, the emerging picture suggested the Coach could only 'exert variable and limited control over both athletes and context,' highlighting a significant shift in the traditional perception of the Coach as a seemingly omnipotent force (Cruickshank et al., 2013a). Jones and Wallace (2005, p.127) perhaps best encapsulate the opinions of researchers on this topic, proposing that the modern Coach functions in a world that is, 'relatively uncontrollable and controllable; partially incomprehensible and partly comprehensible,' while imbued in 'contradictory values, and others that are mutually compatible.'

If true, then these suggestions seriously undermine the traditional image of the *all-powerful* Coach, who it seems is caught up in a contextually bound world of opportunistic improvisation where uncertainty and tension are everyday features in negotiating personal directions and meanings (Purdy et al., 2009; Jones et al, 2012). In dealing within this uncertain sporting context, it has also become apparent that the Coach can be drawn into a world of *micropolitical dealings*, where an understanding of the social geography becomes crucial in the out-manoeuvring and manipulation of *others* towards an intended objective (Cushion & Jones, 2012). This knowledge is also important in allowing the Coach to gain the necessary support, space and time needed to implement their ideas and policies (Potrac & Cassidy, 2006; Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b). This of course raises the questions of *why* the Coach has

to adopt such tactics in achieving their intended aims and *who* exactly it is they feel they must manipulate? Also, it raises the question as to *what* it is they actually do to gain the necessary support for implementations within the coaching environment? Investigation into these aspects of coaching are a key feature of this current study, attempting to understand why and how the Coach cajoles, flatters and manipulates best performance from those around them (Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b). The work supports the call for closer scrutiny into the social and micropolitical complexities of the coaching role, analysing in more detail the everyday function of the Coach in relation to other key stakeholders (i.e. other Coaches, players, support staff, supporters, managers, and owners) and the running of the team towards a set of agreed goals (c.f. Jones & Wallace, 2005; Cassidy et al, 2009; Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b; Stephenson & Jowett, 2009; Jones et al, 2011b & Jones et al., 2012). Such examination, Potrac and Jones (2009a, p. 559) suggest, will assist in illuminating some of the strategic and manipulatory actions of Coaches within their clandestine domain leading to a 'critical knowledge of the disputed connective tissue that comprises coaching.'

3.2.1. Micropolitics - Origins

Far from being confined to the corridors of parliament or public institution, Leftwich (2005) suggested that political interaction occurred whenever two or more people are involved in some form of collective activity. The political concept contains a number of interactive ingredients involving individuals who have different interests, ideas and preferences, and who possess varying forms of resource (e.g. money, land, opportunity), and power (e.g. title, status, position) to draw upon in achieving an intended outcome.

Following this line of thought, *micropolitics* refers to the strategies by which those people, groups and/or organisations seek to use the resource and power at their disposal in influencing or manipulating their own interests (Hoyle, 1986). Blasé (1991, p.11), provides a more formal definition, asserting that:

Micropolitics refers to the formal and informal use of power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals. In large part, political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with a motivation to use power and influence to protect.

Currently the research to date has focused attention mainly within the fields of management and education, with the limited insight into areas such as sports coaching due to a lack of acceptance that political manoeuvres actually exist (Potrac & Jones, 2009b). This stance has stemmed from a reluctance to acknowledge that some level of disharmony and discord may exist, as its very nature hinted toward some level of disharmony and discord within their organisation. This in turn raises further suggestion of a poor working climate and incompetent management on the part of leaders, thus deterring organisations to acknowledge such potential existed (Lindle, 1994; Buchanan & Badham, 2004). However, those institutions brave enough to accept such an existence within the workplace, have highlighted the value of their micropolitical explorations, positing the significant potential in better understanding the fabric and day-to-day life within organisational settings (Blasé & Anderson, 1995). For example, inquiry into the micropolitical, 'goings-on' within education has proved enlightening (cf. Sparkes, 1989, 1990; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, 2002b), providing a behind the scenes look at 'what it really means to be a teacher' (Ball, 1987, p.2). Results have revealed that rather than being a set of cohesive and coherent networks characterised by trust, teamwork and compliance, schools are fraught with the conflicting philosophies of teachers,

students, parents and administrators (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a). Each faction armed with their personal and professional agendas and jockeying for what Ball (1987) described as *situational jurisdiction* in their quest towards improving their own, or others', standing within the workplace. However, rather than being considered a negative or dysfunctional bi-product of the pedagogical process, micropolitical activity has become acknowledged as a natural function and potentially positive aspect of organisational life (Dixon & Sagas, 2007).

The conflicting ideologies and opinions that exist can act as a catalyst and precursor toward positive change, with the outmanoeuvring of one faction over another important in instigating progressive change at many levels (Sparkes, 1990). Indeed, the skilled strategic action that ensues by those involved has subsequently developed what Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002a & 2002b) described as *micropolitical literacy*, identifying an ability in individuals to proactively and reactively navigate a successful course through their own organisational landscape towards a planned objective. Furthermore, while on that journey, individuals manage to gather support and momentum for their ideology through adeptly enlisting the allegiance and coalition of others. In doing so, micropolitical practitioners have been observed adopting specific behaviours so as to present a compelling front in convincing and manipulating others toward supporting their particular agenda (Williams, 1998). These insights have proved critical in getting behind the smoke and mirrors of managerial and educational life, providing an honest appraisal of the professional interests, working conditions and social interactions that contribute toward real-life organisations (Potrac & Jones, 2009a). The analytical frameworks used (Ball, 1987; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, 2002b; Goffman, 1959) in unearthing the contested nature of education are now being promoted by scholars within sport, further

heralding the call for a similar *de-robing* process regarding the overly-simplistic and harmonious portrayal of coaching that currently exists (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Cushion et al., 2006; Potrac et al., 2007; Jones et al, 2011a & 2011b, Jones et al., 2012). This would seem sensible, and perhaps also serve as a means of extending the already well-documented parallels that currently exist between coaching and teaching methods (Lyle, 2002; Cassidy et al., 2009). Hence, the review of micropolitical activity in education may once again serve as a further catalyst and precursor to positive change, but this time within sports settings, providing an equally stimulating portrayal of the Coaching Process (Sparkes, 1990). Potrac and Jones (2009a, p.560) speculating on the value of such work suggested it would:

...contribute much in the quest to dig beneath the unproblematic, functionalist and innocent portrayal of coaching that has been typical of much of the previous writing. Indeed, [the theoretical frameworks] can not only provide useful insights into how Coaches come to develop their knowledge in relation to the struggles of interests and the processes of power in their work, but also the proactive and reactive strategies that Coaches use to achieve desirable working conditions.

3.2.2. Micropolitical Research Within Sports Coaching

If one then accepts that coaching is about influencing individuals and groups towards a perceived greater good within a dynamic and complex environment that is characterised by constant decision making, ambiguity and iterative planning, we begin to understand the need for a greater insight into what really *goes on* (Jones & Wallace, 2005). Although very much in its infancy, the limited study to date in Sports Coaching has displayed how Coaches, as with their educational counterparts, likewise adopt different personas and behaviours in the form of *impression management* to influence proceedings in a certain direction (Cushion & Jones, 2006; d'Arrippe-Longueville et al., 1998). Evidence highlights the use of humorous friendly

personas, white lies and constant face-work on the part of the Coach to make others believe in them and their agendas (Jones, 2006a, 2006b). The relationship behaviours are borne from the belief that Coaches think they have to act in a *Coach appropriate* manner to gain the trust, compliance and support of other contextual stakeholders in taking the team in a preferred direction (Cushion & Jones 2006). Interestingly, these behaviours were not perceived as the Coach acting immorally or unethically in putting up these false fronts, instead it is deemed a necessary precaution in overcoming the self-interest, subterfuge and cunning of others for the greater good of the team collective (Potrac & Jones, 2006).

Similar research has shown how Coaches create the illusion of *false empowerment* and *orchestration* to achieve their ends, kidding and cajoling athletes in a preferred direction (Williams, 1998; Jones et al., 2012). This illusion is achieved by the Coach adopting a form of *role play* in projecting the necessary image and behaviours so as to gain the support and respect of others (cf. Jones & Standage, 2006; Jones et al, 2012). Maintaining that support and respect has also proved crucial to the success of the Coach, ensuring that he/she remains at the epicentre of their contextual landscape to retain the rapport and trust they have worked hard to establish (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, 2002b). This remains a fluid and evolving process with the Coach having to constantly forge and re-forge partnerships in maintaining old and new alliances alike (Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b). Evidence also suggests that these behaviours are not restricted to the Coach alone, with athletes themselves engaging in similar micropolitical interactions as a means of consolidating their own standing with the Coach and significant others within the team environment (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b).

It would seem apparent from the brief insights currently offered within sports settings that other similarities may indeed exist between educational and coaching practice. Further logic would also dictate that more sustained and rigorous investigation will produce other equally stimulating results (Blasé & Anderson, 1995). Therefore, the work to date then serves as an appetiser towards a larger main course that offers the potential 'to dig beneath the unproblematic and innocent portal of coaching that has been typical of much of the previous writing' (Potrac & Jones, 2009a, p.560).

3.2.3. Practical Implications of Micropolitics on Sports Coaching

Analysis in the fields of management and education has provided some insight into why micropolitical behaviours occur when to all intents and purposes each stakeholder's goals would seem to be aligned towards the success of their own organisation. The simple answer to this question lies in *change* and the likely implications of how that change may affect particular individuals within their own organisational environment (Ball, 1999; Jones et al, 2012; Cruickshank et al., 2013). McKenna (2009a, p.131) describes the change process as one of 'redressing the all important psychological contract between employers and employees.' Within sport, redressing this psychological Coach-Athlete contract can prove far from straightforward, with any suggested move away from pre-arranged agreements likely to engender doubt and disagreement on the part of athletes (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a; Jones et al., 2012; Cruickshank et al., 2013a). This of course places the Coach in somewhat of a dilemma when one considers that a key premise of their role is fundamentally that of *change management* (Cruickshank et al., 2013a and 2013b), initiating positive and consensual change in their athletes' *performance*,

learning and development towards improved performance, as highlighted previously within the earlier sections (2.2) of this theses (Parsole & Wray, 2000; Ives, 2008). One must also consider the objectives and implications of this thesis as it too is about eliciting positive and participatory *change* on those involved in the study process (Coghlan & Brannick, 2004). Therefore, it would prove judicious at this point to analyse in more detail the consequences of the *change process*. Not only the micropolitical implications of how *change* impacts on individuals, but also the neurological, biological and psychological effects that can occur in gaining a better understanding of the emotions, decisions, actions and reactions of study participants and others involved in any change process (Rogers, 1959, 1961; Watson, 2011).

3.2.3.1. The Science of 'Change'

Recent investigation into neuroscience has built on the early pioneering work of American psychologist Carl Rogers, the founding forefather of the humanistic approach to psychology. His person-centred approach to understanding personality and human relationships found wide application in various domains such as psychotherapy, counselling education (student-centred learning) and other group settings (Rogers, 1975). In simple terms, Roger's work looked at the role of emotional processing and how, by becoming more aware of our feelings, they could affect and guide human behaviour towards positive change to achieve a more content and happy way of being (Watson, 2011; McKenna, 2013).

While some of the recent work in this area has remained focused on the theory of personality change from a counselling and psychological perspective, other researchers have also begun to investigate the biological and neuroscientific consequences involved within the change process (Damasio, 2000; Rock, 2009;

Watson, 2011; Allan et al., 2012). In relation to sports settings, some interesting theories have been proposed, with Rock's (2009) SCARF Model highlighting a set of five social domains that are proposed to drive and determine human behaviour (i.e. Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness). In brief, Rock proposed that the domains are linked closely to the brain's Limbic System, which is the part of the brain responsible for processing the human reaction to *threat* or *reward* responses. In simple terms, if confronted by a potential threat (e.g. personal danger) or simply becoming overly aroused as a consequence of an emotional reaction, the limbic system fires up in the form of our human defence mechanism. The reaction in turn produces certain chemical responses in the brain (cortisol-steroid), much in line with the fight or flight response theory of behaviour (cf. Cannon, 1932), to better prepare us for confronting any potential dangers that await. The downside of this limbic state, and subsequent chemical reaction, is that it can temporarily impair other parts of the brain function, particularly the prefrontal cortex which is largely responsible for the planning, problem solving and decision making part of the brain (Rock, 2009).

Alternatively, when presented or confronted by a reward state (e.g. money, food, sex), the chemical production changes to that of dopamine which is a substance that can enhance neural pathways, potentially improving the problem solving and decision making capacities of the prefrontal cortex, while also aiding an individual's ability to focus attention in better committing actions to short and long term memory (Schultz, 1999; Allan et al., 2012). Rock (2009) further suggested that any potential threat posed to one, or all, of the five social domains (i.e. personal threats to our status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness and/or fairness) is therefore likely to engender an automatic threat response in the limbic system triggering the onset of a

negative emotional and chemical cycle. He also suggested that when the cycle is triggered in the limbic system, the negative reaction is likely to be much more severe and long lasting than when compared to that of a reward response reaction, making recovery to a natural state much more protracted. This of course holds major implications on the change process, with research now highlighting how suggested changes to normal practice can conjure a threat response to some or all of the social domains because individuals automatically assume their current practices are being criticised and not meeting required standards. When, for example, a Coach suggests possible changes to a performer's technique or training regime, the athlete is more likely to assume their current performance and training results are not meeting the Coach's requirements, perceiving the suggestions therefore as a criticism of their current endeavours. This may threaten one, or all, of the social domains as the athlete may feel their ability (status) as an athlete is being questioned, choices (autonomy) are being removed, therefore generating feelings that he/she is being treated unfairly (fairness), all of which may negatively affect the Coach-Athlete relationship (relatedness). The research to date in neuroscience would now suggest that these types of responses trigger an inappropriate limbic reaction, causing a negative emotional response and subsequent chemical reaction that also impairs their performance and learning capabilities while in this reactive state (Allen et al., 2012; Gorden et al., 2008).

The work by Allen et al. (2012, p.6), and Rock (2009) has therefore highlighted the importance of leaders avoiding threat provocation where possible when dealing in aspects of organisational or personality change. Instead, the importance is focused on attempting to reframe their needs towards more, 'thrive related' activities that stimulate interest and provide autonomy and fairness so as to reinforce, rather than

undermine, the five social domains. By doing so, they are more likely to invoke a positive reward response and the subsequent enhancing chemical biological production. Allan et al. (2012, p.6), explains that this type of reaction will produce 'invigorating stress' that allows access to existing memories, create new memory pathways towards facilitating an 'up-shifting to higher order cognitive skills in the thinking brain which provides for a clearer analysis of problems.'

Moving forward, the recent findings within neuroscience have major implications on how leaders from all walks of life deal with those in their care and how they manage progressive change within their organisations (Allan et al., 2012). Within sports settings it would perhaps signify a potential re-education process for Coaches, alerting them to the potential consequences of how they manage and communicate any suggested change and the subsequent threat to the five social domains. This could prompt a *rethink* on current methods (Jones et al., 2012; Cruickshank et al., 2013b), encouraging Coaches to reconsider how they frame their needs and demands so as to invoke the appropriate reward responses in their athletes to improve both the relationship balance and learning outcomes (Rock, 2009).

3.2.3.2 Further Implications on Sports Coaching

The research into the biological and psychological consequences of the change process has provided valuable insight into why some athletes may meet suggested modifications with uncertainty and resistance through provocation of limbic system and associated *threat responses* (Rock, 2009). This then highlights a fundamental paradox within the Coaching Process, particularly within team sports like Rugby Union, where *change* is an inevitable bi-product of the Coach's role (Ives, 2008; Parsole & Wray, 2000). Change, it seems, that can be met with a degree of

resistance and scepticism in some quarters because of the possible consequences placed on those involved (Ball, 1999; Lyle, 2002). This perhaps goes some way to explaining why the traditional image of the *all-powerful* Coach is being questioned, adding weight to this thesis in meeting the call for further investigation into this, and other, contexts in better understanding the existing realities of the applied coaching world (Jones, 2006b). Research to date has highlighted current areas of potential conflict for the Coach, surrounding aspects of:

(a) Goals

Goal setting has long since been an accepted and vital part of successful sports performance, with Coaches and athletes working together to achieve desired outcomes (Hardy et al., 1996; Aide, 2008). Within team settings however, recent evidence illustrates how problems can occur because of the hierarchical Coach-Athlete imbalance that exists, highlighting how the Coach's aims can often conflict with those of individual team members (Drewe, 2000; Jones et al., 2004; Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b). For example, while the Coach's proclamation for a unified direction and philosophy may well be accepted at some superficial level by the team, it could actually threaten and/or conflict with the personal agendas of certain team members whose primary aim might be that of personal recognition or glory producing an immediate conflict of interest and potential asymmetry in squad unity (Jones et al., 2011a & 2011b; Jones et al., 2012). Evidence of these conflicting agendas and opinions have been offered by the former England World Cup Coach, Martin Johnson following an interview that explained the leaking of confidential Rugby Football Union reports into their disappointing campaign in New Zealand (2011). Johnson highlighted the difficulties he experienced in this area as a Coach, reporting

that "if you have fifty people (there) at a tournament, there's fifty different views on what happened, why it happened, and how it happened." Johnson also offered:

...that's what we deal with every day, that's what we try and manage. When you lose these things [opinions] get magnified under the pressure.....when you win they get papered over and I've been there when you win, everyone's great, everything's fantastic and the whole thing is great and everyone loves each other (podcast, http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/rugby_union/15890983.stm).

Alternatively, even if the Coach were to achieve a deeper level of consensus regarding team goals, the varying pressures exerted throughout the course of a competitive season may well force a shift in his/her own personal perspective, away from the originally agreed objectives. This stance might be typified by a Coach who initially wished to adopt a longer-term approach towards the holistic development of their athletes through an empowering athlete-centred approach (Kidman 2001). However, following a series of poor results, the subsequent pressures from management and owners may force a change in the Coach's emphasis (and goals) toward a *win at all costs* mentality. This would promote a shorter-term viewpoint toward success, forcing the Coach to re-evaluate the originally agreed goals and direction of the team, placing him/her in somewhat of a moral and ethical dilemma. These scenarios perhaps highlight the uncertain terrain confronting Coaches and the difficulties they face in arriving at one set of universally accepted goals due to the fluctuating demands of the team in the constantly changing face of competitive sport (Jones & Wallace, 2006).

(b) Adaptations

The constantly shifting demands, an inherent part of modern coaching, can themselves prove another source of potential conflict and doubt for Coaches, constantly requiring them to adapt their practice (and learning) to meet the

continually shifting terrain that exists within the team environment (Saury & Durand, 1998; Jones et al., 2003). Changes that can occur within the team setting because of the potential injury, unavailability or de-selection problems that arise, complexities that can further promote apathy or disinterest from certain players regarding team affairs. Shifts that may also occur as a result of organisational pressures forcing the Coach to make last minute changes to well established procedures due to situational factors such as weather, resource or finance. All such factors play a part in the rich tapestry of daily coaching life, often undermining the standing of the Coach due either to their apparent lack of organisation and control over events (Jones & Wallace, 2005), or their perceived lack of fairness or autonomy on the part of the athletes (Rock, 2009).

(c) Ambiguity & Guesswork

This constantly shifting terrain and perceived lack of control means that the Coach can never be fully aware of what is happening, and what people are really thinking and saying within the team environment. This could have serious implications on decisions made by the Coach on behalf of the team, with superficial levels of agreement initially offered by athletes lacking in any real commitment or buy-in from some quarters, due to a loss of respect or confidence in the Coach's leadership. However, because the Coach is unaware of the true levels of authentic corroboration, they may push forward with decisions, believing it is the right thing for the team, while assuming he/she has the full support of athletes and other key stakeholders. As a result, the Coach can never be really certain regarding the outcome of their actions because decisions he/she makes can very often be based on limited and sometimes misleading information.

Again, we can look at Johnson and his 2011 World Cup experiences in exemplifying these difficulties when he reported that the “Coaches aren’t there to be liked, it’s not a popularity contest.” He further contests that:

I don’t know everything that happens and every conversation that goes on because no one does.....The decisions you make at that time, you make with the knowledge available at the time. You act in the best interests of the team and the individual at all times (http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/rugby_union/15890983.stm).

Jones and Wallace (2005, p.127) recognising this degree of guess work or ‘novelty,’ suggest that Coaches will never be able to fully guarantee the destination of their actions even if he/she has been confronted with similar experiences in the past, as the same course of action is unlikely to produce the same set of results due to the uncertainty and uniqueness of each situation. If one then begins to appreciate the finely balanced iterative mix of *planning*, *reaction* and *novelty* inherent in modern coaching, and accepts that the perceived image of the Coach as ‘exclusive controller’ is under challenge, it is easier to understand why the Coach is placed at an unenviable intersection of circumstance, personal agendas and individual career aspirations (Jones & Wallace, 2006, p.77). These include the aspirations of players, fellow Coaches, medical staff, administrators, sponsors, managers and owners all attempting to impress the importance of their own micropolitical agenda on the Coach. The Coach must then in turn, succeed in securing a degree of compliance and commitment from all stakeholders if he/she is to make progress and secure longevity in the coaching role (cf. Potrac & Jones, 2009a; Cruickshank, 2013a & 2013b). This means the role of the Coach goes far deeper than the mere development of good *Coach-Athlete* relationship(s), extending outward and involving numerous stakeholders with each having an opinion to share, and some controlling influence over the various factors that come together to make the team function

successfully. The consequence of such interactions can lead to complex interpersonal power struggles within the coaching environment where 'compromise' is very often the order of the day to ensure that some level of team and organisational harmony is attained (Jones et al., 2011a).

If coaching practice is to move forward, researchers must not only gain a better insight into the probable sources of ambiguity, potential conflict and resultant power struggles, but also investigate how Coaches can pick their way through this elaborate technical, tactical, political, ethical, historical and environmental maze in order to move the team and their own practice forward (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Potrac & Jones. 2009a, & 2009b; Jones et al., 2011a; Jones et al., 2012).

3.3. Current Context - Rugby Union in Hong Kong

On returning to the current update of affairs, we now look at developments of Rugby Union in HK, coinciding with my arrival in January 2010. At that time, the ongoing development within the game meant that the HKRFU employed over forty full-time professional staff with three new appointments (i.e. my own as National Coach Development Manager [CDM] along with Media/Communications and Human Resource Managers), taking the total to over fifty full-time employees (<http://www.hkrugby.com/en/node/4>). The various departments contained within the organisation ranged from executive officers, finance and administrative staff, commercial, funding and communication staff, rugby and referee services, a high-performance department (wherein the role of CDM fell), as well as several facilities and services employees. Even though only regarded as a developing Tier 3 rugby-playing nation, the HKRFU were able to sustain the high ratio of professional staff due to the financial success of the HK Sevens tournament.

The Tier 3 recognition was a consequence of the International Rugby Board's (IRB) ranking system which was introduced to aid with the investment and decision making process of all its Rugby Union stakeholders. The IRB categorised each of the rugby members dependent on their playing strength and potential with the requisite identification and support then provided for each. Member unions are graded accordingly from Tier 1 to Tier 6 with leading rugby nations given a Tier 1 rating, while developing nations are provided with a lower grading dependant on their standing (www.irb.com/mm/document/aboutirb). The IRB's 2004 and 2010 Strategic Plan(s) clearly stipulated its intention to invest heavily in Tier 1 and 2 nations so that the 'elite level can flourish and were able to provide a truly competitive global attraction that would, in the long term, benefit everyone in rugby' (<http://www.irb.com/aboutirb/organisation/strategic/index.html>). For other developing nations such as HK, the strategic plan recognised the need to provide a 'sustainable rugby development and investment programme to improve participation, performance, recruitment and retention in Tier 3 to Tier 6 Unions.' This would be achieved through the support of regional competitions, with each union's classification reviewed on a four-year cycle, dependent on its performance level (http://www.irb.com/mm/document/aboutirb/0/041207irbstrategicplan_772.pdf). The IRB were also quick to acknowledge that a more coordinated Tier 2 and Tier 3 programme was needed to assist aspiring unions such as HK, by enabling these nations to play in cross-tier fixtures and competitions to facilitate multilateral exchanges and procure potential growth (www.irb.com/nationscup).

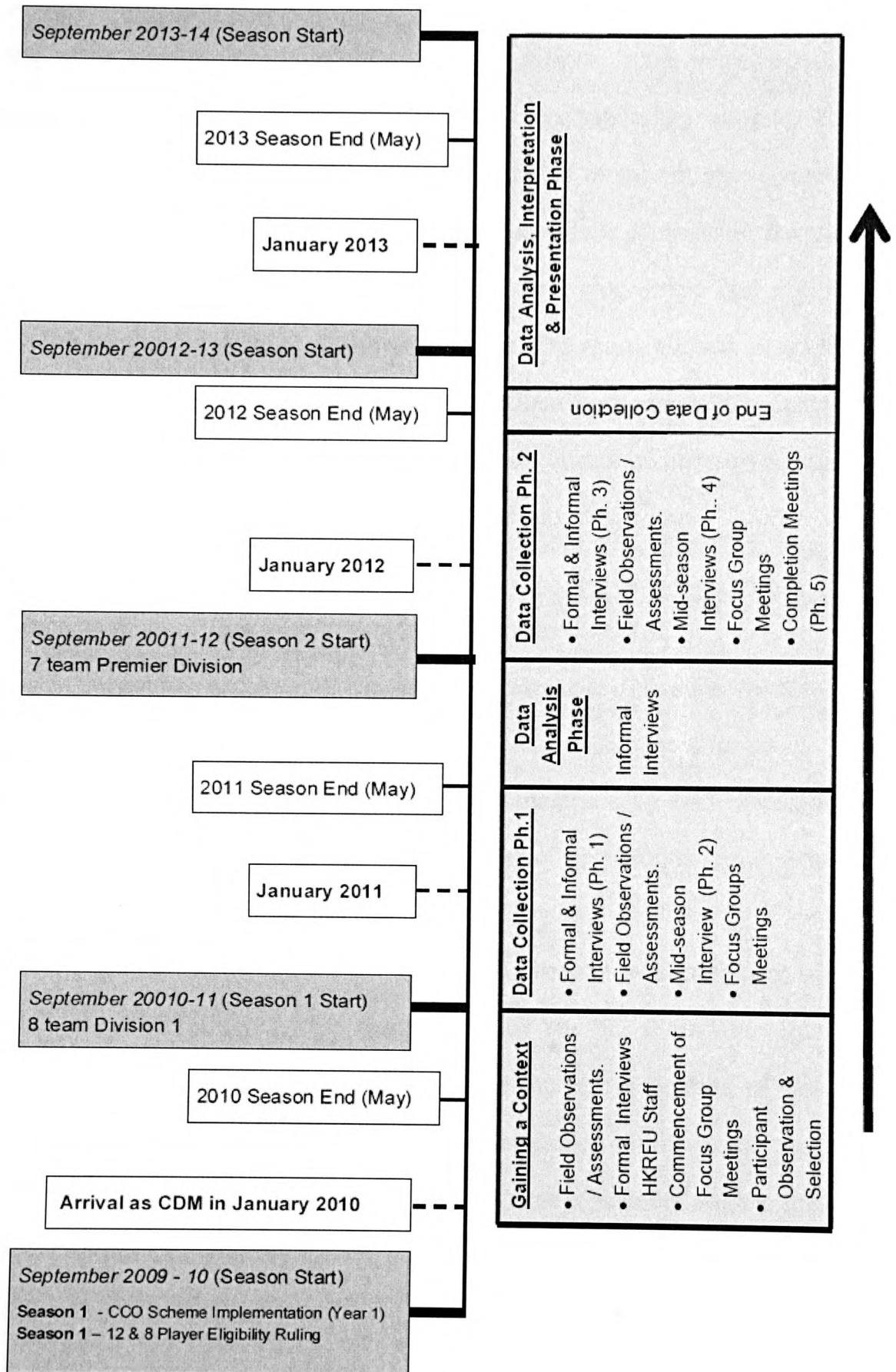
Through prudent management by the HKRFU's board of directors and executive staff, they are able to pursue an ambitious development programme, financing various cross-tier overseas fixtures as promoted in the IRB Strategic Plan

(2004/2010) as well as supporting well established schools and club development programmes which feed the domestic and international game (Gregory, 2010). Currently, figures illustrate a thriving Mini Rugby Union section, boasting over 4,600 registered players with a senior playing base of over 700 players taking part in both competitive and social rugby events (<http://www.hkrugby.com/en/node/4>). This league structure involves 'a record 62 men's teams and 15 women's teams taking part in an eight division competition that stretches across Hong Kong Island and Kowloon from September to March' (Gregory, 2013, p. 24).

However, during some of the early formal semi-structured interviews (section 7.3), undertaken with Senior Managers of the HKRFU to gain the necessary contextual background history, both the Head of Community (HCM) and Head of Performance (HP) - responsible for the running of the Community and Performance sections of the game within HK - confirmed that although the domestic game was generally thriving at community level, changes were required within the Performance ranks if it was going to keep relative pace with other leading Tier 3 rugby nations and the professional game outside of HK. Those changes were important in changing the face of the domestic game in HK, moving attitudes away from the socially based mind-set adopted by many toward the game to a more "Performance-minded outlook," which would ultimately attract and produce better quality players and Coaches to the game (interview extract, HP). Those changes were to have a significant impact on the Performance game in HK and provided a basis for this study environment.

Figure 2 offers a clear time-line of events to illustrate how proceedings unfolded from the start of the 2009-2010 season, which coincided initially with implementation of the CCO Scheme (and eligibility ruling –section 3.3.1), followed by my own arrival at the mid-point of that season in January 2010. As the timeline illustrates, my arrival was followed by a familiarisation period for the remainder of the 2009-10 season, allowing me to gain the necessary background and contextual information to inform the study period which began during the lead up to the following 2010-2011 season (Data collection - Phase 1). Even though data analysis was an on-going process throughout all phases of the study period, the off-season period (May to August, 2010) following the completion of the 2010-2011 season was utilised to begin the initial data coding process (section 7.8). This in turn helped to inform the second phase of data collection (Data collection – Phase 2), which once again began with formal interviews during August and September of that 2011-2012 season. The completion of that second season of data collection (2011-2012) then signalled the commencement of a rigorous analysis and reporting phase (May, 2012).

Figure 2 - STUDY TIME LINE (Sequence of Events)



3. 3. 1. Performance Rugby – Early Steps

In moving more towards the performance minded outlook, initial implementations surrounded changes to the league structure and corresponding eligibility rules relating to the current number of players made available to the HK Men's National Team. Prior to the study period, the top division of domestic competition contained only six club teams, which resulted in a short domestic programme and a lack of sustained top-level competitive rugby within HK. Over the years, various competition formats had been experimented in an attempt to produce more competitive matches, but without any sustained success. As a consequence, meetings between both club and Union directors had taken place with the aim to expand the Division One competition (highest domestic level of competition) to an eight club format, thus extending the number of competitive games throughout the season.

Prior to this suggested implementation, interview evidence (provided by the HP) highlighted how in previous seasons the limited number of Division One teams (six) and subsequent lack of sustained high-pressure domestic rugby had hindered the development of the international game. This was further compounded by a reduced pool of HK eligible players performing in the top divisions of the HK domestic league, a situation brought about through the lax internal qualification legislation adopted by clubs within the HKRFU and further exacerbated by the IRB three-year eligibility ruling (www.irb.com/mm/document/lawsregs). On taking up his post as HP for the HKRFU in the 2008-09 season, the current club legislation pertaining to eligibility meant that first team squads had to only include a total of nine HK eligible players within their Division One starting squads of 22 for domestic league fixtures, with no ruling at all existing in Division Two. This meant that most club teams were able to include a large contingent of expatriate, non-qualified players within their squads.

History suggested that these tended to be the more talented and experienced players, therefore offering clubs a better means of success within the various domestic competitions. The non-eligible players were very often drafted in at the expense of local HK qualified players who were consequently demoted to the second, third and fourth division of the domestic league. This negatively impacted on the HK National Team, with numerous squad members consequentially forced to play in the lower divisions of the domestic league; hardly ideal preparation for the testing Asian 5 Nations (A5N) International Championship, where HK competed in the top division. Following his appointment, the HP managed to introduce a new internal *player eligibility ruling*, which meant that club teams agreed to field twelve and nine HK eligible players (respectively) within their first and second division match-day squads for domestic league and cup competitions for the commencement of the 2009-2010 season. The aim of the initiative was to bolster the number of HK-eligible players playing in the top tier of domestic competition in HK, in principle raising both the numbers and overall playing standards of those eligible players. Upon commencement of this implementation, the HP remarked:

I was lucky enough to be able to influence the eligibility rules in division one and two, introducing a minimum number of HK-eligible players in division one which is twelve, and they had no eligibility ruling in division two. So I was able to get an eligibility ruling of nine in the second division clubs. So that has had a massive influence and impact, not only on bare numbers, but an indirect result was that teams had to look at younger players playing up in the divisions. They had to develop a recruitment policy of local guys, local kids, so it's had a knock-on effect across the board where division three, four and five players were fast-tracked to division one and two. Kids who were identified in the colts [teams] were identified as potential division one, division two players, so immediately, the pool of [international] players grew almost overnight, which allowed me to feed things like our 'A' team and National squads (interview extract).

The new legislation had a significant impact during the lead-in and build up to the 2009-10 season, regarding aspects of coaching and player development as club Coaches were now restricted in the number of expatriate players they could draft in. This meant they would have to invest more time and expertise into home-grown players to ensure their success within Division One competitions, therefore placing a greater burden on each Coach's developmental capabilities.

On taking up the post of CDM during the mid-season of 2009-10, the six teams competing within the existing Division One competition were eventual Grand Final winners, HK Football Club (CBRE), accompanied by: inProjects Kowloon; DeA Tigers; The Hong Kong Cricket Club (Synovate HKCC); Manulife Causeway Bay; and League Championship winners, Tradition Valley. For the forthcoming 2010-11 season (first season of data collection), leading teams Tradition Valley and HK Football Club also promoted their second teams Valley Black and Football Club Dragons to make up the eight team format, with both the first and second teams from those clubs competing under the direction of their first team Coach (Gregory, 2012).

The following 2011-12 season (second season of data collection) witnessed another change in league format with the newly formed Premiership (old Division One) made up from seven teams, which saw Valley Black and Football Club Dragons return to their old Division Two status (newly named Premiership A for 2011-12 season), while newly-formed club, Hong Kong Scottish (previously playing as the Nomads Club) were elevated into the Premier Division competition (Gregory, 2012).

The rationale of elevating both Valley and HK Football Club second teams to Division One was based on providing two of the emerging clubs (HK Scottish and Disciplined Services), who had been earmarked for eventual Premiership elevation, added time to develop their internal infrastructures and playing standards to a

sufficient level. Unfortunately, only the HK Scottish team were elevated for the 2011-12 season, with Disciplined Services requesting more time to develop their structures accordingly. Table 2 clearly illustrates the make-up (and final League positions) of the Division One and revamped Premiership League structures for the duration of the data collection period.

Table 2 – Hong Kong Performance League Structure 2010-2012 (Study Period)

2010–11 Division One League Structure (Season one of data collection)	2011 -12 Premiership League Structure (Season two of data collection)
1. Newedge Club (HK Football Club)	Atlus Kowloon
2. Tradition Valley	Tradition Valley
3. Atlus Kowloon	Newedge Club (HK Football Club)
4. DeA Tigers	Leighton Asia HK Cricket Club
5. Amadeus Causeway Bay	DeA Tigers
6. Newedge Dragons	Verizon Hong Kong Scottish
7. Leighton Asia HK Cricket Club	SCAA Causeway Bay Rams
8. Tradition Valley Black	

3.4. Current Context - Coaching in Hong Kong

In addition to the modifications made to the eligibility ruling and league structure, other initiatives saw significant changes in the selection and employment of club Coaches in HK. Interview evidence provided by the HCM reported that as well as needing to influence the playing numbers available to the international teams, their plan was to “also address standards of coaching at the leading clubs” as a further means of maintaining their international status in Asia’s top flight. Traditionally, the

Head Coach for the leading club teams were usually appointed as a consequence of natural evolution process within their respective club structures without any formal assessment undertaken to test their coaching capabilities. Having experienced life in HK for 18 years as both a player and Coach before taking on his role within the HKRFU, the HCM explained their elevation into coaching within the socially based game was generally a consequence of the person being a “good or respected player.” As a result, some were immediately elevated to the role of Head Coach, following their retirement from playing, while others took on junior coaching roles within their club’s infrastructure before eventually “working their way up to the top job” (interview extracts - HCM). Others however, chose a different route to progress their coaching stature in HK, mainly through the prestigious English Speaking Schools Foundation³ (ESF). Success achieved within either the domestic schools or club systems generally served as a precursor towards prestigious international recognition and promotion with many of the international Coaches (Age-grade and Senior National teams) tending to be those who had been successful at club or schools level and had been “...somewhat misguidedly elevated as a consequence of their success” (interview extract). The HCM was quick to emphasise that success at school or club level had not always been a true indication of their coaching abilities with many fortunate to have evolved into positions at a leading club or school teams where the more talented players congregated as a consequence of the school or club’s strong academic standing and tradition, or because of the excellent sporting facilities at their disposal (Way, 2011).

³ Established by Government Ordinance in 1967, English Schools Foundation (ESF) operates a group of English-medium schools across Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories. There are currently 20 educational institutions, most of which are international schools, all committed to excellent academic achievement while providing an all-round education. (www.esf.edu.hk)

Many of those Coaches who gained elevation to international coaching were also criticised within the HK rugby community for favouring players and support staff from their own club/school structures when selecting national squads. The HCM recalled how “having kinda been sort of involved a bit as a player, selection and that always seemed a little bit, a little bit random,” and “it didn’t seem as though there was a huge amount of structure to the selection process, which caused a degree of ill-feeling” from other clubs and schools within the community (interview extract).

A consequence of this rather insular approach towards the appointment of Coaches was that the domestic and international game in HK had generally remained stagnant throughout the course of the new millennium, lacking any outside exposure from the professional coaching fraternity. This point was highlighted during the early interviews by the HP who had arrived some twelve months prior to the introduction of the CDM post. He recalled:

Ye, one of the biggest problematic areas within HK is the lack of quality and the depth, of quality coaching.....an amateur, social game built upon people that have been in HK, entrenched in HK rugby for twenty or thirty years with very little outside influence in terms of Coach Education and Coach Development (interview extract).

The social outlook and approach adopted by Coaches and the game in general, meant that many of the modern trends and techniques being implemented in other parts of the rugby world were slow to be embraced. National Coaches, although keen to be successful at an international level, had generally been employed on a part-time basis by the HKRFU while holding down other full time careers within HK.

The HP suggested that they looked upon rugby as a social outlet, a release from the pressures of their day-to-day employment, possessing little need or motivation to advance their coaching career or pursue modern advancements in the game:

As a result there was lots of poor delivery going on....lack of planning, lack of progression, continuity....As a result, poor standards of playing and coaching across the board (HP interview extract).

3.4.1 Performance Coaching – Early Steps

To coincide with modifications to the eligibility ruling and league structure, and as a further means of improving coaching and subsequent playing standards, the HCM and HP also introduced the Club Coaching Officers (CCO) Scheme for the commencement of the 2009-10 season. The scheme offered clubs the opportunity of joint partnership initiatives with the HKRFU to employ full-time Coaches on a 50-50 Job-share basis. This meant that the CCO's duties would be split between the Union and their chosen club team, with the overall aim to improve coaching and playing standards (Cooke, 2010). Club duties required the CCOs to play and/or coach their senior men's club team(s), while also developing an effective playing and coaching infrastructure throughout their club setup (i.e. robust age-grade, youth and senior sections to support the performance teams). As previously alluded to, a particularly important part of their role included the improvement of playing and coaching standards within their top teams at each club (Premiership and Premiership A) to aid the international game. Their HKRFU obligations involved them coaching the various Men's and Women's National Age-grade teams while also supporting the various community rugby development programmes (hkrugby.com/en/domesticleague).

The key to this initiative was that the joint funding mechanism generated enough income to attract better quality Coaches than those previously employed. The

attractive financial packages made available were sufficient in luring aspiring Coaches and/or Player-Coaches from the professional game overseas, bringing with them some much needed experience and expertise as a means of raising the coaching and playing standards throughout all levels of the game in HK.

The final initiative saw my own appointment as CDM early in January 2010 (mid-season 2009-10) with the role to improve the standards of coaching throughout HK and particularly within the performance game to ensure the continuation of HK as a major rugby force in Asia. The appointment coincided with the halfway point of the first full season of the CCO Job-share initiative and new eligibility ruling, with both initiatives reportedly having a “positive effect” on the club and international game (interview extract HCM). Prior to taking up the post of CDM, all six Division One club teams had taken advantage of the 50-50 Job-share Scheme in one form or another. Some appointed overseas Player-Coaches with extensive professional playing experience, but limited coaching experience. Other teams preferred to appoint a more experienced overseas non-playing Coach, with the remainder of clubs appointing CCOs primarily in a playing capacity, but who also acted as junior Coaches in assisting the existing Head Coach to develop junior teams within their club structure. In total, two CCOs were employed primarily as players and junior Coaches at their clubs. Four of the CCOs were appointed as Head Player-Coaches of their senior clubs, three in Division One and one Coach in an aspiring Division Two club, with another two as full-time Coaches (one of whom also acted as the HKRFU Academy Manager). This group of six senior Coaches were to prove integral to the thesis, providing a potentially ideal sample group from which to select study participants.

3.4.2. The Coaches & Potential Study Participants

The selection of appropriate participants is a key factor in the success of any study project (Charmaz, 2000), with it being sometimes more appropriate to select a particular sample population to best represent the specific context and purpose of the project (Gray, 2009). The sampling strategy is therefore usually determined by the research question with particular subjects chosen because they can provide information-rich data that is relevant to the research aims (Patton, 1990). Sample size is also an important consideration in ensuring it is large enough to provide sufficient perspectives and depth, but not so large that the Researcher becomes overwhelmed in too much superficial data (Sim & Wright, 2000; Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). In keeping with these aims, the participants for this particular study were selected on the basis of non-probability purposive sampling (Gray, 2009). This meant they were deemed to be representative of the wider (coaching) population and hence able to provide the rich and relevant data pertaining to the particular context in question, which was Rugby Union coaching in a developing rugby nation (Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Patton, 2002).

The CCO Job-share initiative therefore proved advantageous in providing a group of aspiring Coaches who saw their long-term futures in professional game at the highest available level (Tier 1 and/or international), with each viewing the opportunity in HK as a stepping-stone toward fulfilling that goal. In the interests of the study, it was important that potential candidates should not be selected from amateur or semi-professional ranks of the game, as Coaches from those areas were more likely to have another primary source of income and thus, were not solely reliant on their coaching appointment. This meant their coaching role might simply be seen as a hobby and supplementary income source, making it unlikely that they would

experience the same sort of pressures as those Coaches whose livelihood depended on coaching as their only source of income. It was therefore important that the selected sample closely reflected this criteria in experiencing the 'heavy climate of expectancy' so prevalent in the professional coaching world (Cushion & Jones, 2006, p.146).

Personal experience as a Coach highlighted how perceived pressures experienced can somehow seem to be intensified when one's livelihood is dependent on results, or the levels of performance produced by the team. As a result, an inordinate amount of time is taken accruing the relevant knowledge and expertise within the game as a means of *getting ahead* in a rewarding, but often cutthroat and Machiavellian⁴ business. This was a trait Lyle (2002) suggested was communal within performance or elite-minded Coaches who continually strive for improvements in an environment that can never be, 'totally defined or specified in advance' (Saury & Durand, 1998, p.255) because of the ambiguous, chaotic and reactive nature that exists (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Jones et al; 2011 & 2012; Cushion & Jones, 2012). This further confirmed that the CCOs provided an ideal sample as potential study participants, and following their successful re-contracting on completion of that first season (2009-10), which was one of my early responsibilities as CDM, each of the five Head Coaches were formally invited to take part in the study along with the Academy Manager who, as previously stipulated, also acted as Head Coach for one of the Division One teams.

⁴ Niccolo Maachiavelli (1469-1527) was a Florentine statesman who called on rulers to use whatever means available to them to increase their power – fair, unfair, scrupulous, un-scrupulous means, promoting the now infamous ethos of "the ends justifying the means," to achieve one's aims (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 181).

3.4.2.1. The Multiple Role Standpoint

Following each of the participants' agreements to take part in the study, inter-departmental restructuring resulted in the CDM role being extended to include the Line Management duties (LM) for the six Coaches leading into that 2010-11 season. This added a further twist to the Practitioner-Researcher position, further heightening the potential for role-conflict issues to arise and hamper the study process (cf. Jones et al., 2007; Brumbles & Beach, 2008; Pitney et al., 2008). Finally, and immediately prior to the beginning of that same season, my appointment as Head Coach for the Senior Men's National Team was confirmed, providing the final dimension to the multiple-role approach as Researcher, HC and CDM/LM for the commencement of the first season of data collection.

Conscious of the potential perils of role-complexity issues, it was important at the outset to establish an appropriate set of *ground-rules* with the six selected Coaches so as not to hinder or inhibit the natural function of any individuals within each of the respective coaching environments, while also ensuring that study protocols be maintained throughout (Evans et al, 2004; Jones et al., 2007).

3.4.2.2. The Implementation of Ground Rules

As stated above, the potential for role-conflict was of obvious concern to the credibility and validity of the study with particular concerns surrounding the multiple-role standpoint as Researcher, CDM, LM and HC, raising a number of potential complications (cf. Ellickson & Brown, 1990; Burke & Johnson, 1992; Smith, 1992; Buceta, 1993; Cartwright & Limandri, 1997; Ebert, 1997; Waumsley et al., 2010). These involved gaining appropriate access to each of the respective team environments without influencing the function of each Coach or team; maintaining

objectivity within each of the multiple-role functions undertaken to best serve the Coaches and study process, an issue that is comprehensively covered within the methodology section of this thesis (7.5; 7.6; 7.7); while also ensuring throughout that study participants did not feel under any obligation to participate, or continue their participation, for fear of reprisal or incrimination on my part as their CDM, LM and/or National HC (Watson et al, 2006, Watson & Clement, 2008). These concerns were further heightened through the appointment as LM, worried that the Coaches may perhaps feel an extra burden of responsibility to participate as a consequence of the Senior Management position held by me, as Researcher (Watson & Clement, 2008). Previous investigation in sport had highlighted the reluctance of some athletes placed in a similar dual/multiple-role perspective, where their Coach also adopted the role of Sport Psychologist and/or Researcher, to honestly express their thoughts and feelings for fear it may compromise their standing with the Coach/Sport Psychologist (Dale & Wrisberg, 1996; Gould et al., 1999). The research also raised other moral, ethical, social and interpersonal issues, as well as welfare and confidentiality concerns surrounding both the well being of the Researcher/Practitioner and their athletes (Elickson & Brown, 1990; Burke & Johnson, 1992; Buceta, 1993; Jones et al., 2007).

In consideration of these potential concerns a specific set of *ground-rules* were established with participants prior to the commencement of the study to safeguard their welfare of all concerned. Added agreement was also reached in that the ground-rules would be revisited and amended where necessary to avoid unnecessary complications that may arise during the study period. The ground-rules were presented as part of the initial informed consent (Appendix 1 and 2) discussions with participants after finally agreeing to take part in the study, with any

changes made as required to maintain their ongoing welfare and safety. If potential issues or concerns were raised, they were either discussed immediately, or at a time and location that was most convenient for both parties. Any personal reflections made from conversations or meetings pertaining to the ground-rules, or arrived at as a consequence of my own observations, were duly noted in my personal log. The process was further enhanced by the identification of both a 'critical friend and outside agent' (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Titchen & Binnie, 1993) to assist in maintaining a balanced approach to the research and professional practice throughout (Van Raalte & Anderson, 2000; Anderson et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2007). In this respect, it was agreed that both the HP (long standing relationship from previous employment) and study supervisor would be utilised to provide guidance throughout (Carr & Kemmis, 1983; Titchen & Binnie, 1993; Jones et al., 2007). The ground-rules were:

- (a) Coaches would freely express opinion, disagreement or concern regarding their contribution to the study at any time, with the option to withdraw at any period, without affecting the Coach CDM relationship.
- (b) To safeguard each Coach's anonymity no other personnel at their club would be made openly aware of their participation during the study, with appropriate pseudonyms provided to further ensure their confidentiality during the data presentation process. This ground rule was later revisited during the study period to cater for interest generated in the PhD process by members of the HK rugby fraternity (6.2.2). If asked by inquisitive members of the rugby public who were aware of my PhD interests, the stock response was that *all* HK Coaches were under observation, through the mechanism of my IRB Coach Education programme. This generality of response was designed to avoid placing any of the selected Coaches in a compromising position with senior officials at their particular clubs, and to avoid the possible skewing or contamination of data.
- (c) Aspects of the study would not be discussed within any of the team environments.
- (d) The study should assist in all forms of Coach development and not supersede that aim.

- (e) Only with prior consent from concerned individuals could particular coaching topics/issues, that arose during the research based interviews, be included as part of our weekly department focus-group meetings.
- (f) The ground-rules were to be revisited throughout the course of the study project to assess their relevance, with amendments made where necessary to ensure the ongoing welfare and safety of participants as well as avoiding aspects of role-conflict and the subsequent pitfalls of data corruption (Evans et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2007).

The ground-rules served to ensure the smooth running of day-to-day practicalities and events occurring in the field setting (Fifer et al., 2008; Watson & Clement, 2008; Waumsley et al., 2010), while further supporting the more traditional protocols regarding aspects of candidate welfare pertaining to aspects of informed consent and anonymity (Appendix 2).

3.4.2.3. Other Ethical Considerations

Much debate has taken place regarding the ethical principles in social research and the standpoint between researchers and participants (Bryman, 2008). In keeping with University of Wales, Newport research principles, I attempted to display the qualities of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership in meeting my contractual obligations with participants, while also taking care not to deceive, mislead or partake in any covert actions, and also attempting to secure the welfare and confidentiality of participants (Patton, 2002; Fallon, 2007). Following the advice of previous researchers in anticipating that final reports could compromise the identity of participants (Gratton & Jones, 2004; Nelson & Cushion, 2006; Harris, 2011), study candidates were informed that even though every effort would be made to maintain their anonymity throughout, they should be alerted to the potential risks of personal disclosure (Harris, 2011).

Fortunately, even with this stipulation and following agreements to view any final transcripts involving them, all the candidates were happy to take part and provide informed consent for their participation (Appendix 2). In addition, participants were also provided with a full understanding of the aims and nature of the study in line with an explanation regarding how the research would be presented and disseminated (Gray, 2009).

3.4.2.4. Access & Integration

Gaining acceptance and integration within each of the various coaching (study) environments proved to be quite straightforward as a consequence of the numerous contacts made as CDM prior to the commencement of the data collection period. The period from the time of original employment (January, 2010) leading up to the first full season of data collection (August 2010) offered approximately an eight month acclimatisation and familiarisation period to become fully integrated within each of the study environments in the role as CDM. That role naturally entailed supporting periodic visits to each of the club (and National Age-grade) settings as a means of observing, assessing or sometimes delivering practical coaching sessions towards improving the practice of the Coaches. This meant a continuity of contact and rapport had already been firmly established as CDM well before the commencement of the study, greatly reducing the potential for any *new presence* to upset the existing equilibrium within any of the team settings (Patton, 2002). On commencement of the project, entry into any of the team environments was simply assumed to be a continuity of previous work, there to simply advise or observe the actions of the Coach(s) and/or players in the capacities of CDM and/or HC, as had been the case previously.

Although some club officials, other Coaches, medical staff and/or players may have become aware of the PhD interests through word-of-mouth within the rugby community, the level of inquiry was contained at a conversational level. Questions raised by officials, supporters and/or players in relation to the study were greeted with the stock response that the PhD was related to 'Coach Education and the development of young Coaches', with the process hopefully taking 'five or six years to complete.' This level of information proved sufficient in quelling any further inquisitiveness surrounding the topic, with interested parties happy to move on to other areas of conversation. Had people persisted with further inquires, I would have remained general in my responses, re-emphasising that the study involved *all* Coaches, therefore safeguarding the anonymity of those involved (Patton, 2002).

This stance changed somewhat towards the end of the data-collection period as a consequence of formally interviewing influential club officials from four of the Premier Division Clubs. As with the participants themselves, the four club officials were purposively selected because of their heavy involvement at each of the respective clubs and for the professional working relationship established with their particular CCO (Gray, 2009). While each of the bosses held different titles at their respective clubs, ranging from Chairman, to Rugby Convenor or General Manager, their role (irrespective of their tittle) dictated that they were the main liaison point for their club and CCO. The interviews were undertaken to gain an employer's perspective of events regarding their particular Coach's personal development as a means of gathering different layers of collaborative evidence (Cushion & Jones, 2012). As with all other study participants, this meant covering all ethical obligations, gaining informed consent and explaining the associated risks of personal disclosure before undertaking the interviews (Appendix 2[a] – Informed Consent, HKRFU and Club

Officials). Also in appeasing any concerns, the club bosses may have harboured about the Coaches participation in the study, I emphasised that their involvement had not in any way compromised the effectiveness of their role, as I had actually focused more time and attention on their development as a consequence of the PhD project. This approach was adopted as each of the participants understood from the outset that I would be interviewing their employers at some stage, with each preferring that they be carried out late in the data collection process in case their bosses may have felt their participation in the study would in some way compromise their coaching efforts with the club. As a result, the interviews were left until the last phase of the data collection period to minimise any potential contention, in line with their requests.

3.4.3. The Main Actors (Participant Profiles)

The initial participants for the study were six performance Coaches in HK, all employed in a professional capacity by their respective clubs, in partnership with the HKRFU. They ranged in age from 23 to 42 with informed consent (Appendix 2) obtained from each prior to the commencement of the study (Patton, 1990). In keeping with the work of Kahan (1999) a mini-biography of each candidate was compiled, supporting his suggestion for non-random samples to provide descriptions so as to assist the reader in judging the applicability of findings, or replicate the study in different settings, should they choose. In addition, Kahan asserted, that biographies enabled readers to better conceptualise reports, thus allowing them to generate a greater understanding of events. The biographies were ascertained from the Coaches following their agreement to take part in the study with requests made for each to submit self-biographies of their sporting and coaching careers to date.

Following the first season of data collection, one participant was forced to leave the study, deciding to move back to his country of origin. His position as Coach within the 50-50 Job-share Scheme was however replaced by a successor who also agreed to take part within the study process for the second full season of data collection. In respect of the study, this caused little disruption with sufficient information accumulated from the participant to make comparisons and formulate opinions in conjunction with other evidence offered. Indeed, the addition of another study participant for that second season in many ways added to the project, by offering an alternative perspective regarding the role of the CCO at that particular club, hence adding to the overall validity of findings in line with *theoretical* and *environmental* triangulation techniques (sections 4.11.1.2 and 4.11.1.4).

Following a biography of each Coach (CCO study participant), Table 3 highlights both their club and international commitments over the course of the two season data collection period.

3.4.3.1. Introducing Brad

Brad was 42 years old at the start of the study period and had been living in HK for approximately four years. He had played rugby to a high standard before taking up his career in coaching with a local high-school team while employed as a policeman. Brad progressed through to senior coaching ranks over the next four seasons in his home country, gaining his Level 3 Coaching Award, before moving to HK to take up the Head Coach role at one of the prestigious Division One Clubs. Following a season in HK he was offered the post of Assistant Coach to the National Senior Men's team and HKRFU Academy Manager, positions he held on commencement of the study project. Although not formally employed on the 50-50 Job-share Scheme,

his remit, as with the CCOs, was shared between club and Union duties. Boasting fourteen years of coaching experience, Brad's ambitions were simply to progress as far as he could, harbouring desires to coach professionally back in his country of origin. However, aware of the limited opportunities that existed there, he focused his activities on personal development and self-improvement. In doing so, he believed that by continuing to develop his own skills and competencies, further career opportunities would present themselves. Unfortunately, following the completion of the 2010-11 season Brad resigned his post in HK and withdrew from the study following one complete season of data collection.

3.4.3.2. Introducing Ken

Immediately prior to the commencement of the study, Ken was a 30-year-old teacher in HK who was forced to retire early from playing regularly due to a serious and reoccurring knee injury. Currently qualified as a Level 3 Coach in line with the IRB/SCUK framework at the time of the study, his coaching career began at age 24, while he was still playing in his country of origin with one of the local school teams, before moving to Canada and eventually HK where he undertook Player-Coach roles (in both countries). Following his retirement through injury in HK, Ken had gathered considerable coaching experience with HK National Age-grade, Senior National Development, and Senior National Men's teams. For the 2010-11 season Ken became a full-time HKRFU employee on the 50-50 Job-share Scheme, remaining as Head Coach for his Division One Club. His HKRFU duties included those of Head Coach for the National Women's Sevens team, and notational analyst to the Senior Men's team during their particular competition phase, which fortunately did not clash with his club duties. Change was once again evident for the 2011-12 season, where

following internal re-organisation, Ken took up the role of National Player Development Manager for the HKRFU and Head Coach for both National Women's 7s and 15s teams. His ambitions included that of Coaching a Tier 1 team within the professional game, or if unsuccessful in that aim, to become involved with the development of young elite talent in an Academy setup or prestigious rugby school.

3.4.3.3. Introducing Greg

Greg was a 23-year-old Player-Coach who had been working in HK for two seasons prior to the commencement of the study. He was employed as a CCO in a Division Two Club that had been earmarked for elevation to the Premier Division for the 2011-12 season, thus allowing them one more year for development within Division Two of the league structure for the 2010-11 season (first season of data collection). As well as harbouring short-term ambitions to coach in Division One of the HKRFU league structure, Greg's ultimate aim, as with other study participants, was to progress his coaching to Tier 1 professional status. Throughout the two-year duration of the study, Greg completed his Level 3 Coaching Award in a Tier 1 rugby-playing country.

3.4.3.4. Introducing Aiden

Following a professional playing career where he was capped at both National Age-grade and Senior International level, Aiden joined the HKRFU for the 2010-11 season under the 50-50 Job-share Scheme accepting the post as Head Player-Coach for a Division One Club, and National Age-grade team. Prior to his arrival in HK, Aiden had gained coaching experience (while still a player) with an Age-grade team within the region he represented as a professional player. Following the

resignation of Brad, Aiden was elevated to the post of Assistant Coach for the Senior National Men's team for the 2011-12 season (second of data collection). Being a product of the professional game and hence aware of the competitive and cut-throat nature of employment within that sphere, Aiden saw his long-term future more within the elite development of players, either as an Academy Manager or as Rugby Master within a prestigious rugby school. As with the other Coaches involved in the study, Aiden gained his Level 3 Coaching Award during the course of the data-collection period in a Tier 1 rugby-playing nation.

3.4.3.5. Introducing Jim

Jim was a 30-year-old who had been involved within professional rugby as a player for over eleven years at various clubs in his home country and had captained his country at National Age-group levels and with the Senior 7s team (Tier 1). At the commencement of the study, Jim (like Sid and Greg) was commencing his second season of the 50-50 Job-share Scheme, as Head Player-Coach of his club. He had identified early in his playing career that he would one day like to become a Coach and thus began his development while still playing. Prior to the commencement of his role in HK, Jim had managed to amass ten years of coaching experience with local university and senior men's teams while also pursuing his own professional playing career. His duties in HK were divided between work at his chosen Division One Club, while also acting as Assistant Coach for the Senior National Men's team. Jim's short-term ambitions were to win the major league and cup competitions in HK, before becoming a Professional Head Coach within a Tier 1 rugby team/province. He also harboured ambitions to become a senior International Coach. Jim had attained his Level 3 Coaching Award prior to the commencement of the study period.

3.4.3.6. Introducing Sid

Sid was 31 years of age who, due to his family ancestry, had gained Senior International recognition for his adopted country during his long and distinguished professional playing career (Tier 1). Sid had accepted the post of Head Player-Coach for a struggling Division One team in HK following the introduction of the 50-50 Job-share Scheme for the 2009-10 season. His other duties included that of Head-Coach of a National Age-grade team, as well as specialist skills Coach for the Senior Men's team. Like Greg, Sid completed his Level 3 Coaching Award in a Tier 1 country during the course of the study with his coaching ambition to initially develop a competitive Division One team within the HK league, while longer term to become a Professional Coach within a Tier 1 club or regional team.

3.4.3.7 Introducing Pete

Following the resignation of Brad and internal reorganisation within the HKRFU, Pete was appointed onto the 50-50 Job-share Scheme for the second full season of data collection. Attracted to rugby from a young age in his country of origin, Pete represented both his club and regional teams before departing to play rugby overseas and eventually ending up in HK. Pete managed to serve out his three-year eligibility period in HK to represent the Senior Men's National team before accepting the role of Head Player-Coach at one of the Premiership Clubs. His first foray into coaching began while still a player in his home country, gathering experience with schoolboy and colts teams in his local vicinity. This trend continued in HK where Pete was appointed as Assistant-Coach to one of the National Age-grade teams while still playing, before being appointed as full-time Player-Coach for his HK club team.

His ambitions in coaching were to return to his country of origin and become a full-time Professional/International Coach. For reasons of clarity, the table below illustrates the roles and responsibilities of each Coach over the duration of the data collection period.

Table 3 – CCO Roles & Responsibilities (Study Period)

Coach	Club Duties Year 1	International Duties (Y1)	Club Duties Year 2	International Duties (Y2)
Brad	Head Coach (Division 1) & Academy Manager	Assistant Coach Men's Senior National XVs	Left Study	Left Study
Ken	Head Coach (Division 1)	Assistant Coach Men's Senior XVs	National Academy Manager	Head Coach Senior National Women's 7's & 15's
Greg	Head Player-Coach (Division 2)	U14's Assistant Coach	Head Player-Coach (Premiership)	U16's Assistant Coach
Aiden	Head Player-Coach (Division 1)	U18's Assistant Coach	Head Player-Coach (Premiership)	Assistant Coach Senior National Men's VXs
Sid	Head Player-Coach (Division 1)	U18's Head Coach	Head Player-Coach (Premiership)	U20's Head Coach
Jim	Head Player-Coach (Division 1)	U20's Head Coach	Assistant Coach Men's Senior XV	Assistant Coach Senior National Men's VXs
Pete	N/A	N/A	Head Player-Coach (Premiership)	U20's Assistant Coach
IAR	N/A	Head Coach Men's Senior National XVs	N/A	Head Coach Men's Senior National XVs

Having now provided a detailed background and development pertaining to the key aspects of the study to a point immediately preceding the data collection period, the following section will discuss the relevant ontological and epistemological assumptions, which in turn informed the selection of an appropriate methodological design for the information-gathering phase.

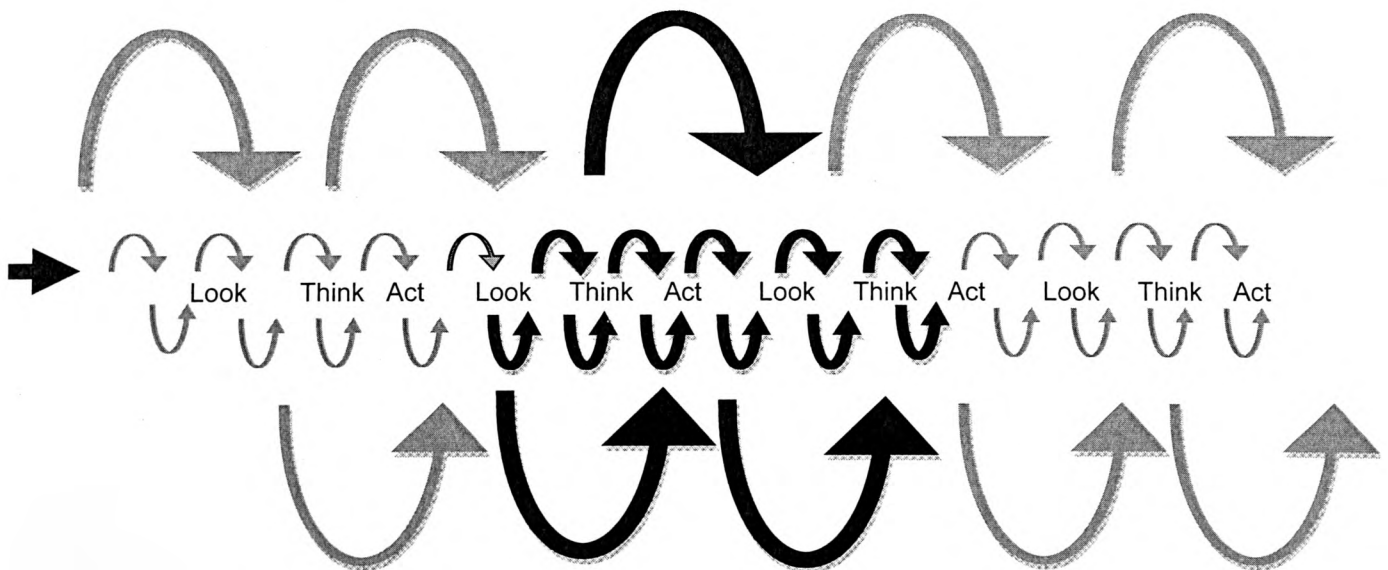
SECTION 2 (THINK PHASE)

METHODS

Section 1
LOOK PHASE
(Gaining a Context)

Section 2
THINK PHASE
(Methods)

Section 3
ACT PHASE, Look, Think, Act....
(Discussion & Analysis)



CHAPTER (4)

METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

To remind interested parties as to the fundamental nature of this project in examining, *what the job of coaching actually entails* and what Coaches *'require to survive in highly competitive environments* (Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b), the previous chapters were designed to provide a background and context to the study immediately prior to its commencement. Following the historical and contextual information, this section considers the methods used in the observation and data gathering process. As a consequence, careful consideration was given to the ontological and epistemological assumptions and to the subsequent methodological selections in producing an accurate insight into the complexities, dilemmas and daily dealings facing each of the CCO study participants from my multiple-role standpoint as IAR, CDM/LM and HC.

4.2. Ontological Considerations & Assumptions

Ontology concerns itself with the *nature of existence* and the subject matter to be investigated (Crumb, 1996; Harris, 2011). Grix (2013, p.298) suggested it asks the question of 'what is out there to know,' and in the context of this particular thesis, that *knowing* is linked to the suggested chaotic, dynamic, pressured and contrived nature of the coaching role (Jones et al., 2012). This discipline reportedly requires the Coach to cultivate and maintain successful partnerships with significant others in the team environment so as to make the necessary progress in being considered an effective practitioner; a factor that is vital in securing some longevity in their coaching role (Jones & Wallace 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b; Jones et al, 2011a, and 2011b; Cushion & Jones, 2012). The ontological standpoint of the study in this respect is quite

straightforward; to find out exactly what is out there, and what it is that aspiring professional Rugby Union Coaches really do? Specifically, the aim is to investigate exactly what issues confront them on a daily basis and how they circumnavigate the complexities to sustain progress. In doing so, it must be acknowledged that a high degree of novelty will exist within each individual coaching context, with certain situations being unique to that Coach in his particular environment. However, it is also expected that a number of commonalities will exist within the various coaching contexts, in that they share similar problems and influencing factors (Harris, 2011). Currently these issues remain largely un-investigated, within current Coach Education provision, still preferring to offer the cleanly cut image of the all-powerful Coach within their coaching realm (Jones & Wallace; 2005; Lyle et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2011a & 2011b). Current Coach Education provision also fails to acknowledge the micropolitical realities that exist within, to further exemplify the difficulties that Coaches face in gaining the necessary support to move their team forward. The aim therefore is to utilise what Sparkes (1992) proposed as *Interprevisitic Ontology* to unearth the social contexts that exist within each of the selected team settings, all of which come together to form the overarching study environment, towards informing interested parties of the realities within.

4.3. Epistemological Considerations and Assumptions

Researchers have been keen to highlight the necessity for ontological assumptions to systematically inform epistemological considerations and the subsequent methodological tools selected for any project. Furthermore, stressing that the interconnectivity from one to the other is important in the production of sound research (Crumb, 1996; Neal, 2009; Culver et al., 2012). Therefore, while ontology concerns itself with *what* exists, epistemology involves interpreting *how* a person understands that world and their existence within it (Sparkes 1992). So, in attempting to understand *what coaching actually entails*, and provide the necessary linkage with the ontological assumptions that certain phenomenon exist within the coaching world, the epistemological perspective adopts a *constructivist* stance (Gray, 2009; Harris, 2011). This is done to facilitate an accurate portrayal of events from a researcher perspective, while also providing scope and encouragement for a fuller engagement from other interested parties. Allowing them to formulate conclusions and 'construct their own meaning in different ways, even in relationship to the same phenomenon' (Gray, 2009, p.18). To achieve this, naturalistic forms of inquiry were incorporated into an overriding qualitative methodology, with an Action Research framework utilised as the most logical means of unearthing the types of data thought to exist.

4.4. Methodological Choices

Qualitative research was deemed appropriate because it facilitated an inquiry process that helped build, 'a complex, holistic picture...conducted in a natural setting,' (Cresswell, 1994, pp.1-2). This approach would permit a degree of flexibility and methodological inventiveness (Locke, 1989; Dadds & Hart, 2001) to allow greater freedom within each team setting as multiple-role Researcher, while still being able to avoid potential issues surrounding role-complexities, bias and validity (Ohman, 2005; Brumbles & Beach, 2008; Pitney et al., 2008). Qualitative research has also proved conducive in positively supporting Action Research methodology, which in the context of this study in my roles as IAR (section 5.1) and CDM (section 5.2), meant one where improvement and change for all Coaches were sought outcomes (Ball, 1999; Lester, 1999; Keichtermans & Ballet, 2002a). This also supported an inclusive approach on my part as Researcher, and allowed me to better understand the internal landscape of the study environment while permitting me to communicate and observe freely, without others necessarily being aware of my Researcher presence (Gray, 2009). Therefore, in conjunction with an underpinning qualitative paradigm, the practical function of the study would be carried out within an AR environment, as this would be crucial to the production of pertinent data (Macdonald, 2006; Brestler, 2011).

4.4.1. Defining the Method – Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry has been defined as a 'set of interpretive activities that seek to understand the situated *meaning* behind actions and behaviours, and rely heavily on the Researcher as a unique interpreter of data' (Sinkovis and Alfoldi, 2012, p. 819).

Whereas some methods seek to follow traditional quantitative approaches to their research, others adopt what Gray (2009, p.164) described as an 'authentic' approach to investigation, providing results that are equally rigorous within a specific context. Such investigation has served to provide more than a mere snap-shot of events, instead offering a real life insight into how and why things happen as well as the motivations, emotions, prejudices and personal agendas of those involved (Charmaz, 1995; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). As a result, research in the fields of sociology and social psychology have tended to look further than the production of mere 'brute data' for results, instead taking on a more qualitative and humanistic approach where the Researcher adopts an active role within the study environment to attain a deeper and more holistic understanding of the context under investigation (Gray, 2009, p.19). Thus, the role of the Researcher becomes pivotal in gaining a *true* perspective of events, through interacting successfully in the everyday lives of individuals, groups, and organisations to unearth the real, rich and deep data that is integral to the design of this and other studies (Reason, 1994; Snape & Spencer, 2003; Culver et al., 2012). Following this theme, Mays (1995) was also quick to point out that when planning any project, researchers should not become overly perturbed about the myriad of techniques recommended by experts, but instead be selective in ensuring that the *particular methods produce particular sorts of evidence* towards best complimenting the topic under investigation.

As Researcher, it was also important that I followed my professional intention and values as well as appropriate and well-established academic principles in embracing the premise that:

....practitioner research methodologies are with us to serve professional practices. So what genuinely matters are the purposes of the practice which the Researcher seeks to serve, and the integrity with which the Practitioner-Researcher makes methodological choices about the ways of achieving those purposes. No methodology is, or should be, cast in stone, if we accept that professional intention should be informing research processes, not pre-set ideas about methods of the techniques (Dadds & Hart, 2001, p169).

Brustad (2009, pp.112-113) further asserted that while validity will always 'stand front and centre' within this and any other qualitative research process, there should be an acceptance that valid data is more strongly associated to the Researcher's role rather than adhering to specified rules and processes. Validity in this context refers to the ability of the Researcher to observe, identify and measure what actually exists within the study environment, while also providing compelling evidence of the strong link that exists between the evidence and the theoretical ideas developed from it (Mason, 2002; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). In achieving this, the Researcher should protect their *objective* self from the *subjective* self through a transparent description of their involvement, therefore negating the need to defend their standpoint through over-reliance on a set of overly stringent criteria or rules (Smith, 2009). Ultimately, Smith (2009) proposed, the quality of the work produced was dependent on who we were, and what we wished to become through undertaking the research process.

This current piece of work heeds the advice of Mays (1995), Smith (2009) and others (cf. Dadds & Hart, 2001; Cresswell, 2007), in meeting its own investigative requirements with various forms of *heuristic* and *interpretivistic* inquiry embraced to produce the particular types of evidence required. Heuristic inquiry as it meets the personal interests of the author who has his own questions to be answered (Gray, 2009), and interpretivistic inquiry because its many branches of inquiry lend themselves to the essence of this particular research project in *unravelling* and *understanding* the underlying intricacies involved to aid and inform future practitioners and educators (Moustakas, 1994).

4.4.2. Interpretivism to Phenomenology

While all the branches of interpretivistic inquiry (i.e., hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism, naturalistic inquiry and phenomenology – Ohman, 2005; Bryman, 2008; Gray, 2009) offer some inextricable commonalities in the outcomes sought within this thesis, when considering other aspects of the study design *phenomenology* was deemed to be a flexible and compatible mode of investigation (Smith & Dunworth, 2003; Gray, 2009). Its approach has proved compatible with investigators on a number of levels, initially because it supports the work of researchers who possess a level of expert knowledge within the particular field of investigation, while also being conducive to the study of a relatively small number of participants over extended periods of time (Cresswell, 1994; Flyvberg, 2011). Phenomenological study concerns itself with gaining a subjective experience of the topic under investigation through living the experience of those under scrutiny along with the issue being investigated (Green, 1997; Maypole &

Davis, 2001; Ohman, 2005; MacDonald, 2006). In doing so, it seeks ways in which human beings gain knowledge of the world around them (Willig, 2002) while also accepting the individuality of those experiences towards the realisation that, 'the human world comprises various provinces of meaning' (Vandenberg, 1997, p.7).

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), the founding father of phenomenology, sought to develop its use as a new philosophical method, which would lend certainty to a disintegrating civilisation (Groenewald, 2004; Nesti, 2004). Husserl argued the subjective meaning of experience to *each* individual, contesting that any attempt to understand social reality had to be grounded in people's lived experience of that reality (Moustakas, 1994). The key, he suggested, was putting oneself in the place of the participants, with value ascribed not only to the interpretations of the Researcher, but also to the subjects themselves (Gray, 2009). This promoted a 'structure of meaning' established through the tacit experiences, objects and perceptions of the study participants, providing a deeper understanding of whatever was brought to the awareness of those involved within their 'lived world' (Moustakas, 1994, p.16). Therefore, phenomenology is about exploration into cultural understanding, via personal experience, and through accurate description of the emerging phenomenon from the numerous viewpoints of those involved (Welman & Kruger, 1999). In doing so, the Researcher has to put aside any preconceived notions they may hold regarding the topic under investigation, instead remaining true to the information and facts at hand (Groenewald, 2004; Smith 2009; Tenenbaum et al., 2009). Here, Moustakas (1994, p.17) points towards the strong phenomenological-heuristic research links, which highlight the need for investigators to declare and suspend any pre-suppositions or bias they might hold. Here, self-

acknowledgement is deemed critical in attaining an objective scientific process, while also substantiating authenticity and trustworthiness in the work produced (Neil et al., 2009; Smith, 2009). In this respect, it would now be justifiable to cleanse my own conscience through the formulation of my own *tabula rasa* or clean slate (Krane et al., 1997). In doing so, I reiterate my heuristic interests and beliefs regarding the complexities thought to exist in coaching life, with the aim of the study to better inform future Coach Education and development programmes of *what the job of coaching actually entails* and what goes on in their dark, clandestine world (cf. Gardiner, 2000; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009a).

Furthermore, I would like to remind readers of my position within the study, acknowledging the multiple-role approach and AR framework promoted an inextricable link to the investigative process rendering my position as being *ground-in* to the research process (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). It seemed equally inescapable therefore that my presence should also be apparent in relevant aspects of the reporting process, through the incorporation of compatible writing genres to best compliment the type of research being undertaken (Jones et al., 2011a; Smith & Sparkes, 2011). This encouraged a more, 'evocative' reporting position (Jones, 2009, p.378) where for some sections of this thesis, a more traditional and academic third person 'author-evacuated' perspective has been adopted (Sparkes, 2002, p.57). At other times, I engage (as here) from a more *confessional* first person standpoint to facilitate my unavoidable presence in proceedings, while also offering the experiences of others from a *realist* perspective in accurately conveying their take on events (Sparkes, 2002). A wider rationale for the use of *realist* and *confessional* writing styles is provided later (section 7.9) with evidence

illustrating how the approach has attained growing acceptance within sports settings because of its ability to provide a more tacit and comprehensive over view of events that occur (Sparkes, 2002; Potrac & Jones, 2009a; Harris, 2011; Smith & Sparkes, 2011; Jones, et al., 2011a & 2011b).

4.5. Action Research (Overview)

While the project situates itself within the heuristic and phenomenological modes of inquiry, to make sense of the events that take place, it will be conducted within an Action-Research (AR) framework. This framework specifically adopts Insider Action-Research (IAR) methodology to best facilitate the type of data thought to exist, while also forging the necessary changes needed in overcoming the day-to-day complexities faced by the Coaches involved in the study process (Cohen & Manion, 1994). That change can operate at many different levels, beginning with the practice of the Researcher, to all those under study, and even the institutions to which they belong. Its concern lies with improvement of practice and the generation of knowledge, and stands apart from other qualitative modes of inquiry because of its pragmatic, practice-orientated emphasis toward research (Carr, 1989). The dual methodologies have been widely utilised within educational and health professions because of AR's ability to add an 'interpretive dimension to phenomenological research, enabling it to be used as the basis for practical theory', in allowing it 'to inform, support or challenge policy and action' (Lester, 2011, p.1).

4.5.1. Action Research Development & Growth

Action research (AR) emerged from America as a form of rational social management and has been employed widely within educational practice and nursing, as a means of examining various social issues (Hart & Bond, 1996). Kurt Lewin, the founding father of AR, described it as a form of experimental social inquiry based upon the study of groups experiencing problems to bring about positive change. His wish was for research to be helpful, applicable and immediate to the problem in hand, and expressed the need for the investigation to be relevant to the reality of the situation. This would not only generate knowledge about a system, but also promote change and improvements through implementation of a general idea towards a general objective or outcome (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000; Dick, 2011). Lewin's (1946) early work focused on the effects of group dynamics, studying behaviour under controlled conditions as a means of identifying how and when a group reached their maximum productivity (Gill & Johnson, 2002). He believed that leaders in government, education and industry were developing an increased awareness toward the need for a scientific understanding of social problems. Lewin's ultimate aim was to mould science and sociability toward change in a democratic and collaborative direction (Hodginson, 1957; Hart & Bond, 1995). The early work illustrated to Lewin the power of the *group* in promoting *change*, and highlighted a common theme throughout in that all problems needed a practical *cycle of action* if solutions were to be found.

Firstly, in analysing the nature of the problem, then seeking possible and/or partial solutions before finally implementing what he termed a 'change experiment' to achieve the desired outcome (Lippett, 1968, p.269). Lewin's (1946) pioneering work within group study was to strongly influence much of his later work in setting the course for modern AR methodology.

Today's Action Researchers promote this mode of investigation because it 'symbolises much of what modern research is about' (Gray, 2009, p.312), and while some research paradigms are happy to store knowledge, AR asks the question, 'What can I do about it?' Seeking to use the newfound knowledge in the formulation of appropriate solutions (Gray, 2009, p.312). This is achieved through a more formalised version of Lewin's (1946) early cycle of action which describes a step-by-step cyclical process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting to identify problems, implement solutions, and then examine their effects (Castle, 1994; Masters, 2011). Dickens and Watkins among others (1999, p.135) were quick to point out however that even though the plan, act, observe and reflect cycle may seem quite orderly and straightforward in its implementation, AR's sometimes have to be prepared to move 'forward, backward and all directions at once' in order to appropriate the necessary solutions (Gummesson, 2005; McGaughhey, 2007). Exponents are also quick to recognise that AR is not a panacea to all ills, or that it does not seek to find universal laws of human behaviour. It does however provide ways in which people can come to terms with their situation to formulate effective remedies while also enhancing the competencies of all respective actors (Hart & Bond, 1995).

As a result, the emphasis is not on obtaining generalisable scientific knowledge, but rather precise knowledge about a given situation for a given purpose (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Carr and Kemmis (1986) perhaps offer the modern embodiment of Action Researchers when they suggest that:

They regard group decision making as important as a matter of principle, not merely as an effective means of facilitating and maintaining social change, but also as essential authentic commitment to social action. Action Research should be seen as an embodiment of democratic principles in research, allowing participants to influence, if not determine, the condition of their own lives and work, and collaboratively to develop critiques of social conditions which sustain dependence, inequality or exploitation (p.164).

The collaborative nature of AR as highlighted by Carr and Kemmis is a key component in its success, with the relationship between researcher and client(s) one of mutual dependence and participation (Masters, 2011). This points to all parties relying on each other's skills, experiences and competencies in analysing problems and seeking potential solutions in pursuit of a successful outcome (Hult & Lennung, 1980; Elliot, 1991; McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead, 1996). To achieve this, the evaluation of any action through a structured reflective process (i.e. in and on action) is critical in offering the Researcher insight into whether improvements or change has actually occurred. Lewin (1946) stressed that:

If we cannot judge whether an action has led forward or backward and if we have no criteria for evaluating the relation between effort and achievement there is nothing to prevent us from making wrong conclusions (p.202).

Thus, both the collaborative and reflective processes within the AR have been purported as key components in its overall success, and should therefore be afforded appropriate standing within this and any other investigative process (Schon, 1987).

4.5.2. What Does AR Actually Entail?

The primary aim of AR, as with other forms of research, is simply to solve a problem (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000; Gummesson, 2005). More specifically, Evans & Light (2008) pick up on the important themes of participation, collaboration and reflection in asserting that interventions (or change programmes) should be centred on and managed by the participants in addressing the immediate and pressing day-to-day problems they face (McKernan, 1996; McNiff et al., 1996; McGaughy, 2007). Furthermore, seeking solutions through the use of 'on-the-spot procedure(s) designed to deal with concrete problems located in an immediate situation' (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.192).

During its formative stages, AR received criticism from various quarters for the lack of clear definition and failure to identify core characteristics (Hart & Bond, 1995). Holter and Schwartz-Barcott (1993, p.299) suggested that the 'variety of approaches, definitions and uses' created much debate and confusion regarding exactly what AR was, and what it did. Others also criticised its ambiguous and anarchistic nature with accusations that AR methodology attempted to be *all things to all men* (Kemmis, 1991). As a result, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, government research initiatives tended to favour *large-scale top down* centrally funded projects, run by experts who were primarily theorists, making them somewhat detached from the investigative process. Over time, a reduction in funding streams and a general dissatisfaction with these large-scale theoretical approaches rekindled the interest in AR, primarily because of its smaller scale *bottom up* approach which placed the expert at the centre of the research process (McNiff, 1988; Jones et al., 2011b). Consequently, leaders within education and nursing during the 1970s began to support the virtues of research that promoted the workplace

expert and Researcher as being both one and the same person, in helping to fill the theory-practice void that existed within other forms of research (Elliot, 1991; McKernan, 1996). This has helped AR re-emerge as a dominant form of self-regulating bottom-up inquiry with practitioners better able to specify the characteristics and particular modes required in meeting the needs of their own particular project (Denny, 2005). Thus, AR has been re-constituted as a vehicle for the successful professionalisation of practice from which new theory can emerge (cf. Eden & Huxhan, 1993; Hart & Bond, 1995; Evans et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2011b; Campo et al., 2012).

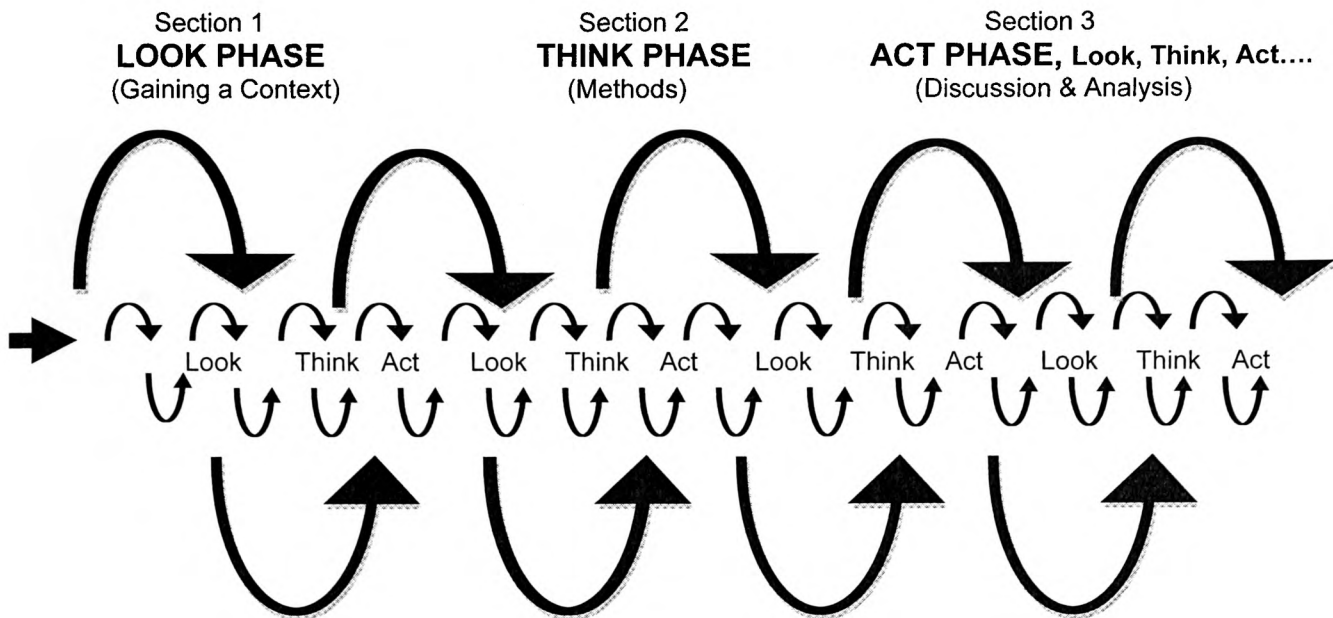
4.5.3. Stringer's Look-Think-Act Model

In meeting the specific demands of this particular project and in keeping with Lewin's (1946) cycle of action, Stringer's (1996, 2007) *Look, Think, Act* model was used for its ability to maintain a clear view on the overall research process through its orderly and logical scheme of action (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). Although deceptively simple in appearance, Stringer's model has been used extensively within educational settings for its ability to produce sustainable adaptation within complex human systems (Sax & Fisher, 2001). This is achieved through encouraging all the actors involved to adopt a *critical* stance (i.e. a critical questioning or analysis on current methods) during the relevant phases of the research process which include:

1. Look - Gather information related to what is most valued. To the goals or the work of your system.
2. Think - After identifying relevant assumptions and expectations, analyse/interpret this information to evaluate possible antecedents, cultural and theoretical assumptions, ideologies, influences, consequences and potential actions.
3. Act - Take action to support or enhance your central values, goals, or expectations. (Patterson et al., 2010, p.147).

In accordance with Lewin's (1946) early pioneering work, researchers have again been quick to point out the deceptive linear representation, reminding practitioners to be flexible in its application, always prepared to move backwards and forwards between each phase to critically review, reflect and react to the data at hand (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000; Sax & Fisher, 2001). Practitioners are also reminded to leapfrog or make complete changes of direction when necessary, within the continuous and recursive Look-Think-Act process, in order to better adapt to the flexible values, beliefs, goals, and expectations of all those involved (Patterson et al., 2010). The critical and adaptive standpoint supports what Eoyang (2010) described as *adaptive action*, encouraging agents to take deliberate action, towards immediate improvement, based on the feedback and relevant data gathered, even if sometimes resistant to existing patterns or rules (Holladay & Quade, 2010). These actions can help reshape organisational/working patterns to better achieve particular goals and potentially enhance the adaptability and sustainability of the overall system. These are factors which echo fundamental AR research principles in refusing to see participants as simply *subjects* or *objects* of study, instead respecting their dignity, integrity, culture and privacy through (a) full participatory involvement; (b) political parity for all involved; (c) consensual, informed, sophisticated construction; and (d) conceptual parity (Lincoln & Guba 1994). Figure 3 illustrates how the Look-Think-Act cycle influenced both the overall direction of the project from a macro perspective, as well as each phase of the project (micro) with observations influencing thoughts, decisions and implementations throughout the whole of the study process.

Figure 3 - Stringer's 2007 Look-Think-Act Model



4.5.4. Why is Action Research Relevant to this Project?

Research into existing Coach Education and development programmes report on their inability to provide the professional development required for aspiring Coaches who require more than a mere catalogue of discreet skills and techniques to ply their trade effectively (Cassidy et al., 2006; Jones; 2006a; Campo et al., 2012). Evans & Light (2008) supporting this theory, highlighting how the intense scrutiny and pressure for results means that many semi-professional and professional Coaches cannot be guaranteed sufficient time to learn their trade through the experiential channels that have, in the past, been a central process in their development (Abraham et al., 2006; Culver & Trudel, 2006). As a consequence, critics have called for a more expeditious and proficient developmental pathway to meet, not only, the diminishing time-frames

made available to Coaches, but also to ensure development courses cover the range of competencies required in combating the increasingly complex, dynamic and demanding issues that confront them (Dickenson, 2001; Cushion, 2007).

Therefore, a key argument in utilising AR within this study was its relevance and potential for improving coaching practice in an environment where *all* actors are involved in the knowledge production process (Harris, 2011). Unlike other modes of inquiry used to analyse sports coaching, AR can provide immediate assistance in the development of the Coaches through reciprocity and mutual learning (Frisby et al., 2005), while also taking into account the complex and dynamic micro-realities of sports coaching (Campo et al., 2012; Harris & Jones, 2012). Therefore proving an ideal arena to identify and deal with the day-to-day real world problems that arise, through AR's dynamic and reflexive process (Evans & Light, 2008; Campo et al., 2012). This means my roles as IAR, HC and CDM/LM will be inextricably linked within the project, to that of a *change agent*, devoted not only to improving the practice of Coaches engaged in the study (HC & CDM), but also in analysing, from an IAR perspective, the complexities and micropolitical issues that confront myself and other Coaches (Lincoln 2001; Lyle, 2002). My aim is to inform future Coach Development initiatives by harnessing the integrated approach of both *action* and *research*, towards a collaboratively constructed description of events, and set of mutually agreed solutions in the production of new knowledge (Stringer, 1996; Hart & Bond, 1995; Coghlan & Brannick, 2004).

Similar approaches in education, nursing, business and more recently sport have illustrated how positive change and new knowledge have been propagated through implementation of AR methodology in challenging many of the traditional perceptions within those professions to influence change in established practices (Titchen & Binnie, 1993; Loveland, 1998; Kidman, 2001; Evans et al., 2004; McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004; Evans 2007). Parallels can be drawn here, as this study is also about challenging established perceptions, namely, those of current NGB Coach Education programmes to find exactly what is missing (cf. Cushion et al., 2003; Jones et al, 2004; Cushion & Jones, 2006; Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b), and in aiding the continuing development of academic knowledge through bridging the gap 'between theory, research and practice' (Holter & Schwartz- Barcott, 1993, p.299).

AR methodology was therefore deemed appropriate because the study was undertaken in a practical coaching environment with the fundamental aim to improve practice of all respective actors, while also producing knowledge (cf. Elliot, 1991; Campo et al., 2012). The study is about involvement through *praxis* rather than practice (McNiff et al., 1996). Praxis is informed committed action that gives rise to knowledge rather than successful outcome. It is informed because other people's views are taken into consideration when dealing with the everyday problems faced by both the practitioner and participants, with the IAR focusing primarily upon the considerations and requirements of the client, as well as his own professional values, rather than becoming overly embroiled in methodological considerations (cf. Hult & Lennung, 1980; Evans et al., 2004).

4.6. The Reflective Process

The importance of the reflective process within AR's cycle of actions has already been established within this section (Castle, 1994; Masters, 1995), however, particular emphasis should be placed on the reflective processes involved, not only because of its aforementioned importance within the AR process, but also for its particular relevance in sports surroundings (Bringer et al., 2006; Lyle 2007b; Jones et al., 2011b; Campo et al., 2012). The reflective process is a fundamental coaching tool, proving a key proponent and precursor towards changes in thinking and new action (King, 2011; Campo et al., 2012). From the outset of the project Lenburg's (2000) advice was heeded in encouraging individuals not to be overly critical of their reflective endeavours, instead encouraging an objective and balanced standpoint towards enhancing self-respect, self-confidence and pride in actions and performances. To aid this reflective process, MacDonald (2006) offers a useful and practical reflective framework containing four key elements that contribute towards an objective reflective position within AR. MacDonald (p.281) further asserts that the reflective process in turn, guides and 'interconnects' with the role and style of the facilitator. The four key elements of the reflective process are:

- Critical thinking.
- Critical reflection
- Critical self-reflection
- Transformation

4.6.1. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking has been described as an:

...intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising, and/or evaluating information gathered from observations, experience, reflection, reasoning and or communication, as a guide toward future belief and action' (Scriven & Paul, 2011, p.1).

Put more simply, it means *thinking about thinking*, and can occur whenever one judges, decides or solves a problem, or when one must figure out what to believe or what to do, while doing so in a reasonable and reflective way (Raiskums, 2008; Ennis, 2009). It encourages open-mindedness as opposed to arrogant and closed-off thinking and the need for self-regulation in recognising egocentrism, prejudice, bias, self-deception, distortion, and misinformation in both the self and others when formulating assumptions (Macdonald, 2006).

4.6.2. Critical Reflection

Hussin (2011) described critical reflection as a natural extension of critical thinking through probing and challenging one's own thoughts about concepts, practices and ideas. While critical thinking is caught in the present, analysing our thoughts, beliefs, behaviours and attitudes; critical reflection is a retrospective process. Analysing the consequences of our ideas and actions to raise our contextual understanding of events, hence prompting us to act at a different level of awareness regarding future occurrences (Macdonald, 2006). King (2011) proposed that those who tread the path of critical reflection begin a perilous metaphorical journey that moves from a position of *naivety and innocence* to one of *wisdom and challenge*. A wisdom that encourages challenge to

traditional modes of thinking (and action) as it demands a level of reflection and innovation in asking how we can do old things in new ways (Brookfield, 2005). For those brave enough to travel the introspective journey, critical reflection can prove beneficial in all facets of life, including the workplace, communities and personal relationships (King, 2011).

4.6.3. Critical Self-Reflection

Critical self-reflection challenges individuals to uncover underlying assumptions in the taken-for-granted and habitual practices that exist (Brookfield, 1995). Questioning the reasons, motivations and values attached to the way we think, and do things, as a means of unearthing new knowledge and therefore enhancing the experiential learning process (O'Neil & Marsick, 1994). Cranton (1994) highlighted the emancipatory powers of critical self-reflection, freeing people from the orthodox and inflexible constraints of current knowledge and empowering them to question with a view to creating positive change on their journey to intellectual self-development. In fact, Cranton (p.141) contended that empowerment was not only a product of critical self-reflection, it was a pre-requisite with individuals coming 'to know themselves by becoming conscious of the direct source of their perspective.'

4.6.4. Transformation

Individuals are said to be undergoing a transformational change when they develop new assumptions about previous patterns of thinking and a subsequent revision of behaviours (Cranton, 1994; Mezirow, 2000). The transformational learning process is

about 'becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others, and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation' (Mezirow, 2000, p.4). A transformation occurs when individuals change their personal frames of reference through critical reflection on their assumptions and beliefs, consciously redefining the events within their world. This is achieved through an increased level of understanding which causes a deep structural shift in the basic perceptions of the individual's thoughts, feelings and actions. Such a shift is often dramatic and irreversible, and involves the understanding of ourselves, our relationships with others, our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender, our bodily awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living, and our sense of possibilities for social justice, peace and personal joy. Their new world is then subjected to the same analysis and scrutiny as the old, in a constantly evolving process that works in harmony with the AR's action cycles (MacDonald, 2006; Campo et al., 2012).

These reflective indicators offer some insight into the personal journey travelled when deliberating on the issues and events that occurred within the study environment. Prompting me to reflect on my own thoughts and actions, while also encouraging a similar reflective standpoint from each of the study participant's towards a deeper analysis of their own and others' practice. This encouraged all parties to critically challenge many of the traditional ways of doing traditional things in search of successful outcomes to problems and issues faced (Lyle, 2002, 2007a; Lyle et al., 2010). At a personal level, this encouraged greater contemplation on aspects of my own practice in the various capacities of IAR, CDM/LM and HC towards distinguishing between each of the roles undertaken in the production of objective research, while also at times

acknowledging the interconnectivity and overlapping nature of the roles within the study environment (MacDonald, 2008). To further support this acknowledgement, the following chapter provides a more explicit breakdown regarding each of the multiple-role functions and their undertakings.

CHAPTER (5)

METHODS & ROLES

5.1. The Role as (Insider) Action Researcher

My role as AR is not to be seen as an expert, but more as a facilitator and co-worker who serves as a catalyst toward change (Gray, 2009). This is achieved through encouraging individuals to address thoughts and beliefs that have remained unquestioned over time (Macdonald, 2006), empowering them to define their problems more clearly, while offering support in the form of a consultant so that they can work towards agreed solutions (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). The ultimate goal as IAR is not to present finalised *answers* to problems, but to reveal the different realities and possibilities that are available, because each individual will interpret, and act on, identical information in a different manner to produce their own results (Stringer 2007).

My aim is not to exploit, but to enhance the quality of the coaching experience through harnessing the energy and enthusiasm of each Coach in pursuit of effective individual player and team management (Tomal, 2003; Evans & Light, 2008;). To attain this aim, a degree of *theoretical sensitivity* is required on my part, demonstrating a capacity to be insightful, reflexive and aware of the needs of study participants (and other actors) and the topic under scrutiny (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Campo et al., 2012; Pain et al., 2012). Consideration therefore needed to be given to the type, nature and quality of relationships involved, ensuring equitable partnerships are developed to enhance participation, inclusion and cooperation as a means of fostering trust and mutual respect.

In order to achieve this ideal environment, a clear and transparent communication process was established with participants from the outset (Gray, 2009), assuring them of their welfare and well-being by explaining my ethical obligations as IAR, which encompassed aspects of informed consent, confidentiality and member-checking with the process further enhanced through the implementation (and monitoring) of study ground-rules (section 3.4.2.2).

By adopting the IAR perspective, it enabled me to draw on and utilise my own experiences and expertise as an applied Coach, thus allowing me to provide my own 'intimate knowledge of the organisation' (Gray, 2009, p.314). This meant I was well placed to immerse myself into the culture, jargon and personal networks formed within each of the respective team environments (Pain et al., 2012), a process that was further supplemented in my role as CDM as it afforded me latitude to roam freely within each of the team settings and the ability to observe and discuss the many and varied interactions that occurred without others necessarily aware of my research interests (Coghlan, 2001 & 2007; Pain et al., 2012). As previously highlighted, this meant my presence was ground into the very research process I was investigating; a key feature of AR and a position that Hellowell (2006) proposed as being one of both privilege and potential danger, regarding the data produced. Expanding on this theme, Hellowell (2006) impressed the obligations of the Researcher-Practitioner in this complex and often delicate insider position towards constantly changing their position within the study environment. This meant attaining full immersion within the investigative process on some occasions, while at other times pulling back in order to gain an objective and distanced perspective of events (Hellowell, 2006).

As will become clear in later chapters, the *delicacy* of my IAR position (in conjunction with other multiple-role applications) often became evident, placing me sometimes in a potentially compromising situation where information gained in my role as IAR could have been used in other multiple-role capacities to affect the welfare and well-being of the participants (Chapter 6). Fortunately, the safeguards implemented throughout (Refer sections: 4.6. Reflective practice; 7.5 – Reflexive standpoint; 7.6 – researcher credibility; & 7.7.1- Triangulation) enabled me to maintain objectivity regarding my obligations as IAR, thus removing any potential danger to participants or possible contamination to the data produced.

5.2. The Role as Coach Educator

My role as Coach Educator is that of expert and mentor, providing formal, informal and non-formal modes (e.g. organised learning opportunities outside the formal educational system) of development to accelerate the learning that takes place from both good and bad experiences (Lyle, 2002; Lyle et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2009). An important facet as both IAR and CDM within this process is ensuring that I encourage each Coach to become a more *reflexive other*, promoting a transformative process (section 4.6.4) whereby they can explore how their instruction is interpreted by athletes in their care towards becoming a more capable practitioner within their constructed learning environment (Potrac & Cassidy 2006, p.39). This is in response to the call for Coaches and Coach Educators to become more self-aware and discerning in analysing their own performance, as well as that of others (Pain et al., 2012; Wagstaff et al., 2012).

This entailed the evaluation of their own effectiveness from the perspective of the athletes, as well as from traditional coaching effectiveness literature. By doing so, they are more likely to provide a collaborative learning environment where the respective actors have more control over their learning, thus avoiding a didactic one directional process (Bullock & Wikeley, 2004). As a means of facilitating this, the recommendations of Lyle's (2007b) UK Coaching Committee (UKCC) report were followed, suggesting that Coach Development Programmes should consider:

- Ethics and philosophy
- Role-related competences
- Usable, integrated skills
- Attention to cognitive organisation
- Process-management skills
- Capacity building
- Clear progression through professional stages
- Attention to interpersonal skills
- Relevant sport specific knowledge
- A practice/experiential base
- Research-based education and training

The reflexive and transformative process was (and is) guided by my own practice in focusing on aspects of each Coach's *learning systems* (as opposed to education systems, cf. Lyle, 2002; Cruickshank et al., 2013a). This means concentrating on the processes, content, and mechanisms through which each Coach's behaviour may be changed, thus allowing them to move forward and adapt, experiment, innovate and reflect at a, 'higher level' of coaching (Lyle, 2002, p.280). In doing so, it was important to provide the Coaches with some clear and systematic guidance through the formulation of a professional model of development that could assist in directing their thoughts, actions and subsequent practice (Harris, 2011). That model and its function is presented and discussed in Chapter eight of this thesis.

5.3. The Role as Line Manager.

My responsibilities as CDM and LM could have been misconstrued by many as being one and the same, as both roles placed me at a high management level, while also necessitating a close working relationship with the Coaches. However, in some respects, each role was quite distinct; LM responsibilities involved a more formal *management* standpoint which directed and coordinated the CCOs' short, medium and long term working programmes. This ensured the CCOs fulfilled their club and HKRFU obligations within the community, while the CDM role encouraged a less formal, *mentoring*-based relationship where I acted more as a trusted adviser and guide. This meant offering experience and insight where necessary to ensure the on-going development of each individual within their club and international environment (Grout & Fisher, 2007). Work by Ogivly et al. (2012, p.39) has also highlighted the compatible nature of the LM and coaching roles, identifying the LM as a 'key stakeholder in the coaching process', through the support and guidance they provide. This process has in turn, the potential to be further enhanced within a multiple-role Researcher environment where the Coach and LM are one and the same person, and thus more likely to produce mutually conducive programmes to maximise the benefits for their client (Jones et al., 2007).

One of my responsibilities as LM necessitated the facilitation of weekly department meetings, which involved staff members from both the Community and Performance departments of the HKRFU. At those meetings, forthcoming weekly initiatives were discussed with the requisite activities allocated to applicable members of each department to ensure local community, school, or sponsorship events ran smoothly. Once staff had been allocated duties for that week, members of the Community department would depart, leaving CCOs and other Performance department staff to

discuss aspects specifically related to the performance game. These meetings proved especially productive with the CCOs, six of whom were study participants involved in this thesis, as the group were able to discuss particular aspects of their club and international duties pertaining to specific issues that might arise that coming week (i.e. pitch availability, kit colours, refereeing appointments, kick-off times, etc.). As I became more familiar in my LM duties, I seized the opportunity to utilise our time together more effectively, using some of the allocated time as another forum for Coach Education and Development. As a result, some of the meetings were allocated to discuss and analyse many facets of the game in the form of practical workshops, focus groups or brainstorming meetings where various topical issues were debated. Occasionally, eminent overseas Coaches also frequented these workshops to offer their advice and expertise to the group, with a view to providing different modes of learning (formal, informal and non-formal) and new knowledge for the group of Performance Coaches (Lyle, 2010).

5.4. The Role as Head Coach

My appointment as Head Coach of the Men's National XV's Team allowed my own experiences to come to life, enabling me to integrate my own personal insights as an applied Coach (Potrac & Jones 2009a & 2009b). This meant that for specific periods within the season, primary responsibility changed from that of CDM/LM to HC, with obligations surrounding the selection and preparation of the Senior National Men's Team for two Senior Asian International competitions held each year. Each competition involved a multi-game league format demanding two short, intense preparation and playing phases during the mid and end of season to avoid clashing directly with domestic competitions within the various countries involved. The HC

role presented a different relationship dynamic as it meant working with three of the CCO study participants: initially Brad, who was replaced by Aiden for the second season of data collection, and Jim who was in post for both seasons of data collection (Refer 3.4.3.7 - Table 3). The Coaches were also employed as Assistant Coaches within the National team setup for the international preparation and competition phases. This provided an opportunity to work closely with the Coaches in the high-pressure environment of international rugby, more from the standpoint of colleagues and fellow Coaches in allowing a different perspective on the data collection process. This once again facilitated a mentoring-based relationship with the Assistant Coaches towards furthering their development (as with the CDM role), while also allowing me to adopt the stance of role model in attempting, where possible, to implement many of the good practice guidelines I advocated as CDM (Lyle, 2007b).

Having gained previous experience in both Head and Assistant Coach capacities in an international coaching environment, the situation was not new to me. This meant I was able to draw on that experience as HC in delegating appropriate responsibilities to the Assistant Coaches as a means of enhancing their own international coaching experience. Also, in keeping with wider study protocols (and ground rules - 3.4.2.2), I was keen to reassure the chosen CCOs of their rights as study participants in being able to express opinion and/or disagreement at any time, while also being free to withdraw from the study completely, should they choose. This approach was fostered to develop similar levels of trust and transparency within the international team setting, to those that existed within the wider study environment.

At a practical level throughout the wider study process, while the role of IAR remained a *constant*, the additional roles as CDM/LM and/or HC were interchanged depending on the environment and nature of the interactions taking place. The various guises offered different perspectives from which to observe and question many of the events that occurred. This meant that interactions and subsequent data gathering took place at different levels and not solely from the position of IAR, thus providing a multiple professional perspective on the evidence produced (Mounteney et al., 2010). It would be naïve however for researchers in such a position not to recognise the potential advantages and disadvantages of blending several roles (Watson & Clement, 2008) and to acknowledge the potential *role-complexity* issues that could arise and the subsequent effect on the data produced. The following chapter therefore focuses on the implications of adopting the multiple-role standpoint within the current study, analysing the various effects that occurred (Jones et al, 2007; Brumbles & Beach, 2008; Pitney et al., 2008).

CHAPTER (6)

MULTIPLE-ROLE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In order to create a more complete picture of events, it would be remiss not to consider and discuss the potential implications and consequences of the multiple-role Researcher approach adopted throughout this study (Mason, 2002; Smith, 2009). In doing so, demands are met for presenting a 'transparency in practice' and 'intellectual honesty' within each of the chosen roles towards a full disclosure of relevant information, a key component in an undertaking of this nature (Sherry & Shilbury, 2009 p.51). As will become evident in this and later chapters (Chapters 9 and 11), that disclosure is provided in many forms, primarily from the perspective of IAR, but also through the voices and experiences of others and through the events that unfolded during the study period. This may sometimes present an element of replication in the events reported, however this repetition occurs from the different perspectives involved and therefore provides a comprehensive, '360-degree' view of occurrences towards the building of a *full and complete picture* (Gilligan, 2011, p. 3). As such, this section will provide a necessary insight into the field of multiple-role research and application, along with the implications of that undertaking on this study. Later, disclosure provided from the perspective of selected Coaches will also serve to add further 'breadth and diversity in what happens,' allowing the reader to make better judgements on the reported actions and outcomes provided (Gilligan 2011, p.3). With this in mind, a brief literature review pertaining to multiple-role research is provided, with that guiding the subsequent events and issues discussed.

6.2. Multiple Role Research – Review

Research in the field of multiple-role practice has highlighted the increased potential for individuals to work in dual and multiple-role relationships when they possess the necessary competencies and training to work as a professional in several fields (Buceta, 1993; Watson et al., 2006). A major focus of the research to date surrounds the viability of combining roles towards a more effective service delivery, along with the consequences that can arise (Watson et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2007; Watson & Clement, 2008). Specifically, early investigations centred mainly on the multiple functions of Teacher-Coach (Staffo, 1992; Figone, 1994a, 1994b & 1994c; Millslagle & Morley, 2004) and (sport-psychology) Practitioner-Coach relationships (Smith, 1992; Buceta, 1993; Evans, et al., 2004; Jones et al, 2007), offering varying opinions regarding both the complementary and conflicting effects of combining those disciplines.

Further and more detailed scrutiny into these relationships has begun to uncover new consequences associated with the moral, ethical and role conflict issues that can arise (Brumbles & Beach, 2008; Pitney et al., 2008; Watson & Clement, 2008; Mallen, 2010). A stance that has been further supplemented by investigation into other dual and multi-role modalities within areas like sports management and business (Dayton, 2007; Sherry & Shilbury, 2009), work-family (Bruening & Dixon, 2007; Pitney et al., 2011) and consultant-work/life surroundings (Waumsley et al., 2010), all in an attempt to further unravel the complexities involved. However, even with this extended investigation, opinion still remains largely divided regarding the merits and disadvantages involved in adopting the multiple-role function (Smith, 1992; Evans et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2007), with some researchers positing the compatible and complementary nature of blending roles (Watson et al., 2008), while

others highlight the potential moral and ethical dimensions that can arise (Jones et al, 2007). Dimensions that can reportedly lead to losses in judgement and objectivity on the part of the multiple-role Researcher, potentially placing them and their client's welfare at risk, while also threatening the overall veracity of their work (Sherry & Shilbury, 2009).

Issues reportedly stem from the varying aspects of role-conflict and role-ambiguity that can arise, along with the high emotional toll placed on investigators (Jones et al., 2007). More detailed investigation (Brumbles & Beach, 2008; Pitney et al., 2008; Sherry & Shilbury, 2009) into these dimensions have unearthed some interesting findings, positing the potential effects on multiple-role practitioners who can experience, *conflict of interests* (competing tensions between personal interest and obligations towards organisations and/or clients), *role-relationships* (insight about how one relationship impacts on another), *role-incongruities* (how personal goals conflicting with organisational/client objectives), *role-clarification* (the need for practitioners to be proactive in clarifying roles to make clear what they are able and qualified to do), *role-strain* (subjective state of social stress that occurs when role obligations are vague, irritating, difficult, conflicting or impossible to meet), and *role-overload* (a component of role-strain whereby practitioners are unable to adequately perform all the professional responsibilities required). Reports also confirmed how the exposure to these states of continual conflict, can potentially lead to reduced levels of motivation, reduced marital and job satisfaction, as well as increases in poor health, psychological stress and potential job/coaching burnout (Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Boles et al., 2001; Anderson et al., 2002; Cutler & Jackson, 2002; Hammer et al, 2003; Wilson, 2003).

More recent investigation by Bruening and Dixon (2007, p. 472) however, has supported a contrary stance in their notion of 'Role Theory,' predicting that multiple-role practitioners can actually adapt behaviours to better cope with the varying pressures placed on them through more effective planning in the use of organisational resources at their disposal. Other researchers have also promoted the use of study safeguards that are put in place to further protect against the various states of conflict and emotional strain (Evans et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2007). Similar safeguards are incorporated within this particular project involving the incorporation of reflective (section 4.6) and reflexive methodology (section 7.5), the formulation of flexible and specific ground rules and the appointment of a critical friend and outside agent (section 3.4.2.2). All such aspects are reported to be vital tools within the multiple-practitioner toolbox in raising an awareness of the potential over-commitment in certain roles. This avoidance is central to maintaining professional accountability, objectivity and ethical credibility in many of the personal issues experienced throughout the course of the study and discussed hereafter within this chapter (Knowles et al., 2007; Evans & Light, 2008; Johns & Harwood, 2009).

6.2.1. Issue - Establishing a Moral Compass

While some aspects of the multiple-role function could be debated further as possible role-conflict issues because of their potential to generate valuable study data, at a personal level they bore no moral or ethical burden as I saw their implementation merely a natural consequence of the CDM role. Hence, upon introducing any new ideas or initiatives in my capacity as CDM, my reflexive standpoint prompted the question, '*would I be doing this anyway?*' constantly serving as an important directional indicator on my own moral and ethical compass. This

questioning ensured that any new implementation was introduced for the benefit of the Coaches and/or betterment of the game in HK, and not for the study process, which allowed me to maintain a *True North* bearing throughout. Such issues included the introduction of weekly reflective performance sheets (Appendix 4) that encouraged the Coaches to reflect on aspects of their teams preparation and performance in the build-up to games. Also, the compilation and application of formal Coach appraisal criteria⁵ (Appendix 5) carried out on a periodic basis at each Coach's club or national training environment. Finally, the compilation and utilisation of a Critical Model of Coaching Synthesis (Chapter 8) that, while serving to satisfy specific requirements of the wider study process, also helped to guide and inform the practice of the selected Coaches throughout the study period (Toma, 2003; Vella et al., 2004).

Other such implementations however, proved more problematic. The first of these included some of the selected topics for debate within our weekly meetings and focus group sessions (section 7.3.1.1). For while many of the topics arose out of conversations or observations made when viewing training sessions, others came from information provided during the formal interview process, where Coaches sometimes highlighted (on an individual basis during the interviews) that they were experiencing common problems surrounding specific aspects of their coaching role. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that while some of the Coaches were working towards an agreeable solution, others remained at a loss in how best to overcome or deal with the particular issue at hand.

⁵ The criteria used for the formal assessment of Coaches were based around revamped versions of recent Coach-effectiveness literature produced by Cote and Gilbert (2009) and Kavussanu et al., (2008).

One such topic included the management of crucial pre-match and half time periods for those in the Player-Coach roles. During their individual interviews, all Coaches highlighted the difficulties experienced when playing games, as they tended to “get too caught up in player mode” (interview extract), and were unable to adequately distance themselves at these crucial periods to provide objective *coaching* feedback and advice. While some of the Coaches had taken measures to address the problem, none were totally happy with their current efforts, and by raising the topic for general discussion within the focus-group environment, I made the educated assumption that it would generate new thinking and ideas amongst the group (Lyle, 2002). This turned out to be the case, with each Coach seemingly happy to share concerns and ideas towards achieving a more effective playing and coaching balance.

Although the initiative proved a great success from a CDM perspective, and while the focus group environment displayed the power and benefits of the AR approach in harnessing group knowledge to find mutually agreeable solutions to shared problems (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Hart & Bond, 1995; Master, 2011), it also raised some personal concerns. Some doubt surrounded my own moral compass and the direction that I was taking as IAR in openly discussing information that had been initially provided during the confidential interview process. Following much deliberation and debate (involving the outside agent – section 3.4.2.2), an objective stance and true north was regained through the self-acknowledgement that originally stipulated study protocols had not been breached (section 3.4.2.2d). However, to help maintain my own moral sanctity during this period of personal consternation, and to ensure that the Coaches were comfortable discussing this information, each was contacted regarding the potential to debate this particular issue in open forum.

All Coaches reported they would be happy for the topic to be included as a discussion point “actually quite keen to throw it around with some of the other Coaches” (interview comment, Ken). Following this initial incident, I was vigilant during any later formal or informal interview scenarios to ensure that participants would be content discussing any potential common themes that arose within our focus group meetings. It should also be noted that any topics discussed were always carefully selected to ensure there was no potential for public exposure of personal or damaging information (Gray, 2009). As a result, all Coaches were happy to comply with the initial ground rules amended accordingly (section 3.4.2.2).

The interview process again came to prominence towards the end of the data collecting period, this time involving the semi-structured interviews held with selected club executives (section 7.3.1.2 - each of whom were either Chairman, Rugby Conveyers or General Managers at their respective clubs) regarding the progress of their particular Coach under the 50-50 Job-share Scheme. Up until this point I had been reasonably content with my interview technique, actually commenting in my diary as to how the interviews during the second season seemed much smoother and more proficient due to the previous experiences gained. However, my self-appreciation was to be short-lived, soon to experience temporary derailment by the club bosses’ unexpected questions and opinions regarding some of the HKRFU policies and 50-50 Job-share Scheme. Throughout the first of this particular batch of interviews, I found myself adopting somewhat of a defensive, rear guard action, wanting to interrupt the flow of the interview to defend or substantiate different Union policies in becoming too embroiled in aspects of my CDM/LM role. On reflection, there can be little doubt that I should have been better prepared in appreciating that each club executive would use this opportunity to air opinions and club agendas that

were not necessarily linked to the Coach or the interview process. Following this initial wake-up call during the first of the interviews, it prompted greater forethought on my part regarding the direction that other club bosses might take, keen to ensure that during future interviews, I did not react to personal slights aimed at aspects of my CDM/LM and HC roles, or to any wider organisational criticisms levelled by the club executives. Instead, I remained impartial and objective in my capacity as *Researcher-Interviewer*, throughout (Culver et al., 2012).

6.2.2. Issue - Enhanced Reflexivity

Besides paying the customary emotional toll in the deliberation of events described to date, the experiences were also in keeping with many of the role complexity issues (role-conflict, role-incongruity, role-strain, role-relationship and conflicts of interest) described within existing research (Watson et al., 2006; Watson & Clement, 2008). On a personal level, the experiences raised further questions pertaining to the broader multiple-role context in exactly how much pre-planning and preparation could actually be done before plunging oneself into the study environment. For while the examples offered might emphasise the need for further detailed preparation in pre-empting all such eventualities, there is perhaps also a need to accept that even with the most meticulous planning process, researchers are unlikely to foresee *every* occurrence or opportunity that is likely to present itself. Therefore, as well as further consideration being given to the planning process, future research should also consider the analysis of those unexpected occurrences that invariably arise within uncontrolled field settings.

This should be done in conjunction with an investigation into what adaptive characteristics and capabilities the multiple-role Researcher needs in dealing with potential complexities that arise, with a view to developing what Knowles et al. (2007) describe as an eclectic toolbox or skill-set that best equips them for the rigours of field study.

This type of analysis, in turn, raises further questions pertaining to the *tightness* of study methodologies selected for those uncontrollable *in-the-field* study environments. From personal experience, researchers spend an inordinate amount of time in the production of airtight methodologies to defend and substantiate their multiple-role function and credibility of their work (Evans et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2007). Current thinking might suggest that any unplanned and adaptive occurrences are simply a consequence of improper planning and/or a flimsy methodological process (Culver et al., 2012). However, a more positive stance towards the likelihood of *unexpected occurrences* could point towards a more flexible approach in the methodological design of studies. This would place a greater emphasis on the multiple-practitioner's eclectic skills, experiences and reflexive processes in turning their adaptive hand to unforeseen study developments in the production of more meaningful multiple-role research data (Bryman, 2008; Drake & Heath, 2011).

One such adaptive example has already been referenced regarding the constant review and refinements to pre-study ground-rules to accommodate the unexpected change (section 3.4.2.2). Another example within the current study surrounded the anonymity of the Coaches and the requirement for a generic *stock response* pertaining to the unexpected interest displayed in the study by some members of the HK rugby community. It became apparent that keeping the study interests confidential within such a tightly knit sporting community was virtually impossible. As

news of my interests circulated, via friends, colleagues or by the Coaches themselves, some members of the rugby public began to inquire as to its nature. Concerned this might place participants in a difficult position (as original study protocols dictated their identities should remain hidden), it was agreed that a simple stock response to any inquisitiveness would be formulated. This entailed directing any overly inquisitive individuals in my direction so I could offer a plausible rationale for the study while maintaining levels of anonymity. Although the issue itself was not a major concern, with no follow-up queries evident, it serves to once again highlight that not all eventualities can be catered for, and that unforeseen adaptations will invariably be needed.

6.2.3. Issue - Personal and Professional Boundaries

Further role complexity issues (role-incongruity, role-relationship, role-conflict and conflict of interests) were also to arise surrounding my personal beliefs and obligations as HC, CDM and LM for the HKRFU (Brumbles & Beach, 2008; Pitney et al, 2008). As an applied Coach from a professional coaching background, I understood and supported the Coaches' ambitions of progressing to Tier 1 coaching positions (section 3.4.3). This however, conflicted with LM duties and to a lesser extent, my obligations as CDM, as both roles were specifically geared toward the development and retention of Coaches within the HKRFU to raise the overall standards of the game.

As the initial interviews unfolded and it became clear that the Coaches did not see their medium to long-term future in HK, it placed me in a difficult position. On the one hand, charged with developing each Coach to the best of my ability, while also aware, because of the trust and rapport built up in my roles as HC and CDM, that

some had already been actively seeking their next employment opportunity in other countries. Although generally uncomfortable in harbouring this knowledge, the situation did not prove problematic until the end of the first season of data collection, which coincided with the re-contracting of specific CCO study participants in my capacity as LM. This meant I was armed with the true intentions of the CCOs who were represented in the negotiation process by their club bosses, each of whom had been coerced into requesting a salary increase on behalf of the Coaches, while remaining largely unaware of their longer term intentions and ambitions. A situation further compounded by the lack of any clear rationale for the 50-50 Job-share Scheme which had never been accurately defined in terms of aims and outcomes. Therefore, I found myself in a situation where I knew that the CCOs were vigilant to new employment opportunities elsewhere, while at the same time, I was charged with having to make recommendations regarding the approval of new contracts and proposed salary increases.

Following lengthy reflection over my position, the most prudent way forward was to actually establish what the overall aim and rationale of the Job-share Scheme were, following the first two years of its existence. To that end, a formal meeting was called with the HKRFU General Manager (GM) and HP to discuss the nature of the scheme moving forward, along with the requested salary rise. At the meeting, my suggestion was accepted for the Job-share Scheme to be formally recognised as a development initiative for aspiring Professional Coaches. Further agreement was also reached that the scheme should be promoted as a two to four year development initiative for Coaches (depending on their ability), whereafter they would be encouraged to seek new employment opportunities. In accordance with the formal rationale and recognition that the scheme was not a long-term employment initiative, an

appropriate salary scale was also introduced to reflect the developmental nature of the role, a scale that in no way met the demands of the club bosses and Coaches. Although neither party were happy with the outcome of the meeting as it failed to meet their personal requests, both bosses and CCOs agreed with the overall rationale for the 50-50 Job-share Scheme moving forward, understanding that the demands made were unrealistic to their current role and the funds available. Even though those particular CCOs were noticeably distant for a period following the refusal, things soon returned back to normal, with my reflections at the time noting that I was:

Happy with how things turned out, and think we've arrived at the right outcome for the scheme. Also, that I didn't have to compromise my position as IAR in sharing interview evidence with Senior Management – something I would not, could not, have done (diary extract).

Moving forward as CDM/LM the clear rationale allowed me to discuss the current and future job opportunities of Coaches openly and honestly, with all relevant partners fully informed to the nature and direction of the 50-50 Job-share Scheme. Another positive outcome of this issue was the agreement to implement joint annual appraisal schemes involving both club bosses and myself (as their LM) to assess the progress of respective CCOs and the scheme in general at the end of each forthcoming season. The joint appraisals facilitated regular and effective communication processes between Union and club representatives, which helped reduce the reliance of the CCOs in the transfer of information, a point that is highlighted later in this thesis (sections 9.1.2 & 11.1.2.1). The appraisals themselves also allowed both Union and club representatives to discuss the progress and performance of their particular CCO in their role as Head-Coach, with appropriate

action plans devised to ensure the continuing development of both Coach and club, hence further enhancing links between both stakeholders.

6.2.4. Issue – Top-Down, Bottom-Up

Having discussed some of the more problematic aspects of the multiple-role application on this study, it would also seem proper to include a more positive insight into the complimentary nature of blending roles (Watson et al., 2008). One such advantage was the ability to influence coaching practice from both a bottom-up standpoint in my capacity as CDM/LM, and from a top-down perspective in my role as HC of the National Team (Cruickshank et al., 2013a). This allowed me to influence playing and coaching styles with the CCOs at the performance end of the game as HC and CDM, to best maximise the potential of what was a rich multi-cultural mix of players and Coaches (top down). Working concurrently with this, I was also able to influence the developmental areas of the game (i.e. mini-junior, colts and community game) in my role as CDM/LM through the implementation of a structured Coach Development programme (bottom-up).

In practical terms, this involved developing a style of playing and training that best complemented the rich mix of cultures and nationalities drawn to the performance game in HK through negotiation with CCOs and other Performance Coaches. Then supporting that ideology through the delivery of Coach Education courses within the community, that while adhering to necessary IRB guidelines and Long-Term Athlete Development principles (Bayli, 2001), also emphasised what I believed were critical building blocks in the development of young players in HK. In terms of the study and placement of my own moral compass for this particular issue, I held no reservations. During all courses and workshops as CDM I was always vigilant in ensuring all IRB guidelines were met while simply pointing out that in my *other* role as a National

Head Coach, we were placing a greater emphasis on selected aspects of the game as they were deemed more suitable to the eclectic range of players and abilities available. The policies and structures implemented seemed to prove well founded (section 2.4.3), with the HK National Men's XV's team achieving their highest ever IRB World ranking (26th) throughout the course of the study period during the 2011-12 season (Gregory, 2012), while the National Men's, Women's and Youth 7s teams also gained significant recognition through their inclusion in the prestigious HK Sports Institute for the 2016 Olympic Games (Gregory, 2013).

The issues and events discussed in this chapter begin to offer readers a realistic portrayal of the events that occurred through the *multiple-role* lens of those involved. Later, exposés from the Coaches themselves (Chapters 9 and 11) will continue to build on the themes unearthed throughout the study period towards competing the full 360-degree view of events and occurrences (Gilligan, 2011). Prior to this, the following section will focus on data collection and presentation techniques in providing a rationale as to how those perspectives are best relayed.

CHAPTER (7)
DATA GATHERING AND PRESENTATION
TECHNIQUES

7.1. Moral and Ethical Assurances

Before delving into the data collection and reporting protocols, it would be wise to remind interested parties of the overriding study aims, ethical implications and subsequent safeguards surrounding the study process. Therefore, in examining *what the job of coaching actually entails*, and what Coaches need to do to *survive in highly competitive environments*, traditional study protocols were initially met. This involved formally inviting and accepting candidates onto the study process (Appendix 1), informing them of the exact nature of the project, probable dissemination outlets for the work, and the possibility that while every precaution would be taken to ensure their anonymity, they were alerted to (and accepted) the potential risks of personal disclosure (Gray, 2009; Harris, 2011). Following the full disclosure of facts, each candidate was asked to provide the necessary formal consent (Appendix 2 and 2a).

To safeguard against the various multiple-role complexities, appropriate measures were taken (Watson & Clement, 2008). These included the utilisation of triangulation (section 7.7.1), reflective (section 4.6) and reflexive methodologies (section 7.5) and the implementation of flexible ground rules in conjunction with the appointment of a critical friend and outside agent (section 3.4.2.2). These measures were put in place to assist with maintaining objectivity and to further protect the welfare of the CCO Coaches, club bosses and HKRFU Senior Executive staff (HP & HC), all of whom agreed to take part in the study process (Patton, 2002).

Furthermore, all interviews and final transcripts were offered up for member checking before being released (Patton, 2002; Evans et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2007) and the University of Wales (section 3.4.2.3) ethical standards were adhered to throughout the study to further protect the welfare of all those involved (Fallon, 2007).

7.2. Gathering Information

The information gathering process was carried out within an ethnographic framework as it supported a range of data collection contexts including formal and informal interviews, participant observations and focus group workshops. The process was complimented through the use of a reflexive log (section 7.5), where my more immediate thoughts, experiences and emotions were documented as the study progressed (Burke et al., 2008; Culver et al., 2012; Cruickshank et al., 2013). The multi-method approach was utilised to 'capture a more complete picture' of events (Culver et al., 2003, p.7), as no single method was likely to provide the *whole truth* (Randell & Phoenix, 2009). The approach was also in keeping with the methodological triangulation principles adopted (section 7.7.1), further adding to the overall internal validity of data produced (section 7.7). While my position as Researcher remained a constant throughout, the additional roles as CDM, LM and/or HC were interchanged, depending on the environment and nature of the interaction taking place. The various guises offered different perspectives from which to observe and probe many of the different behaviours, interactions and responses witnessed in both formal and informal settings. This meant that interactions and subsequent data gathering took place at different levels and not solely from the perspective of the Researcher.

7.3. Interviews

Biddle et al., (2001) proposed that interviews form the cornerstone of any qualitative data collection process. While the technique may be open to criticisms and flaws when used in isolation, and be reliant on the interviewee to provide honest answers, it has still proved to be the most logical and productive mode of data collection (cf. Culver et al., 2003; Culver et al., 2012). As Arskey and Knight (1999, p. 32) comment:

Interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit – to articulate their tacit perception, feelings and understandings.

This can be achieved through skilful and well-coordinated questioning on the part of the interviewer who has the potential to illicit memories, thoughts and emotions that may be deeply buried, thus encouraging the interviewee to relinquish highly personalised data (Gray, 2009). This is particularly true when a multiple interview approach is adopted and combined with various forms of observation to produce a more accurate and complete picture of the human activities (Culver et al, 2003). The overall credibility of any data produced is also greatly enhanced by interviewees validating not only the interview transcripts, but also final manuscripts in the form of member-checking, to confirm the Researcher's interpretation of the events (Lincoln, 1985; Culver et al., 2012). Likewise, the member-checking process greatly reduces any likelihood of the Researcher over-emphasising their own perceptions, interests or agendas within final transcripts, and instead is more likely to 'grasp the natives' point of view, and 'realise their vision of the world' (Malinowski 1961, p.25 as cited in Dunstan-Lewis, 2000).

7.3.1. Interviews – In Practice

In attempting to address the fundamental research question as to *what the job of coaching actually entails*, a suitable interview guide (Appendix 3) was developed to investigate the function of each Coach, and how their role interplayed with other aspects of their working, social and family life (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Callow et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2011a & 2011b). This involved investigating their personal strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes surrounding their team, their CCO role, and the particular organisation in which they worked, always taking care not to lead or bias respondents during interviews when investigating exactly what their role entailed (Gray, 2009; Potrac & Jones, 2009b).

The semi-structured interviews (six) were carried out at the start, mid and end point of each season with each candidate to ensure that specific topics were covered over the course of the rugby season. As well as the series of formal semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews were also conducted on a less formal basis with each Coach following club/international training sessions, department, and/or individual meetings where I would follow-up on personal observations made pertaining to the actions and comments of the Coaches. These forums provided an opportunity to discuss new or unexpected topics related to the more immediate aspects of their training and games, allowing me to gain a reflexive insight into their (and my own) thoughts and feelings at that moment in time (Atkinson, 1998; Patton, 2002; Drake & Heath, 2011). Also, in keeping with environmental triangulation methodology (section 7.7.1.4), the approach allowed me to crosscheck or compare information provided during the formal interview process (Guion, 2002).

Both the semi-structured and unstructured formats were employed because of their flexible non-standardised format, thus offering scope to explore the views and opinions of the respondents in both formal and less formal surroundings (Patton, 2002; Culver et al, 2012; Cushion & Jones, 2012). Gray (2009) suggested that this flexibility was vital in allowing any interviewee the ability to explore personal events enabling them to ascribe subjective meaning to their own lived experiences. The interview guide for the initial semi-structured interview was piloted with the HP (critical friend) to ensure that the sequencing of questions was appropriate and that any form of *bias or leading* were not evident (Gray, 2009). Following the pilot interview, it was agreed that the sequence of questions should remain flexible depending on the course and direction of responses from the interviewee. Also, on completion of the first batch of interviews, questions were sometimes added or removed from the guide depending on the nature and context of the particular interview, with some participants happy to discuss certain issues at length and in great detail. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim with participants invited to member check both interview and final transcripts for accuracy (Patton, 2002; Culver et al, 2012).

An *interpretive interviewing technique* was engaged for its proven ability toward divulging how people construct and understand their own social reality (Andrews et al., 2005; Jones, 2006). The technique has been recommended for capturing the often chaotic, complex and negotiated lives of Coaches and athletes, and represents a mode of inquiry that can successfully investigate areas where relatively little is known (Potrac & Jones, 2009a). Recommended for its ability to tease out or unlock the ambiguous nature of the coaching world, interpretive interviewing places an emphasis on the

interviewer to stay true to the research process, reporting excerpts that *tell it how it is*, by being fair and accurate in representing the thoughts, concerns and opinions of the interviewee (Neil, 2009). Aware of my significance in this process as Researcher-Interviewer in meeting demands for the internal validity and trustworthiness of data, I was fully aware that my skills were integral in nurturing the necessary interaction between both parties (Randall & Phoenix, 2009). Previous interview training, and prior experience gained as a researcher, consultant (BASES accredited sports scientist - psychology), and CDM/LM assisted this process (Gray, 2009), along with the knowledge that trust and rapport had been developed with each of the study participants prior to the first set of formal interviews in my capacity as CDM (section 5.2). The multiple interview approach adopted with study participants also added to aspects of internal validity and trustworthiness regarding the information produced (Culver et al., 2012).

The interviews themselves lasted between 10 minutes to an hour, with the periodic semi-structured interviews held in formal settings at a venue and time of the candidate's choice. The unstructured interviews were carried out in a more informal manner, sometimes at the club headquarters of CCOs' following training sessions, games or at the Performance Department Headquarters where I would seek understanding or elaboration on observations and comments made during meetings by the study participants. Finally, focus group meetings and practical work shops were also served as a valuable source of interview data with selected meetings tape recorded and transcribed in keeping with other forms of interview data (section 7.3.1.1).

7.3.1.1. Focus Group Interviews

In many ways the focus group interviews turned out to be a better than expected source of data production. The unexpected appointment as LM and subsequent control over weekly department meetings meant I could adapt the format to create a largely unstructured reflexive group interview environment. These forums became useful in generating theoretical and craft knowledge that could be integrated to construct effective learning scenarios to assist with many of the real-life problems that occurred (Harris, 2011; Jones et al., 2011). In keeping with the AR methodology adopted, some were therefore specifically designed as discussion forums to talk through particular aspects of their coaching role, but did not follow any particular script or pattern; happy instead to introduce a topic or theme and let each discussion meander along its natural course towards seeking possible solutions (Patton, 2002). The evidence served to produce a 'valuable linking of the focus groups to individual interviewing and participant observations' through the different layers of collaborative evidence, thus further adding to the overall internal validity and trustworthiness of data (Cushion & Jones, 2012, p.5). The reflexive nature of the focus groups also allowed mutual problems to be analysed and discussed in open forum, with evidence positing how these *communities of practice* can lead to the reconciliation of common issues or beliefs while helping the Coaches to 'deepen their knowledge and expertise on an on-going basis' through interaction with peers (Jones et al., 2011b p.3).

The topics debated during meetings and at the specified focus groups were many and varied, generally surrounding aspects of the CCOs' personal coaching development, with initiatives aimed at educating Coaches on important topics surrounding Long Term Athlete Development (Bayli, 2001; Appendix 6), The Brain at Work (Rock, 2009; Appendix 7), reflective practice and team or group dynamics. Role-play work-shops covering interview procedures and conflict management were also held, as well as various brain-storming sessions that addressed technical, tactical, logistical and managerial components of their role. These included complexities surrounding the role as Player-Coaches, facility issues, player contracting and budget management, player agents, managing international teams abroad, seasonal planning and player recruitment. Finally, in attempting to improve aspects of the Coaches' daily practice, a formal CCO/HKRFU Coaching Assessment Criteria (Appendix 5) and Critical Model of Coaching Synthesis were devised and implemented to help guide each CCO's coaching practice (Figure 5). As previously mentioned (section 6.2.1), some of these topics originated from the information provided during the individual interviews, and following consent from each of the candidates to publically discuss specific issues, meetings were held to engender possible solutions for the more common complexities faced by the candidates in their coaching capacities (e.g. Player-Coach complexities).

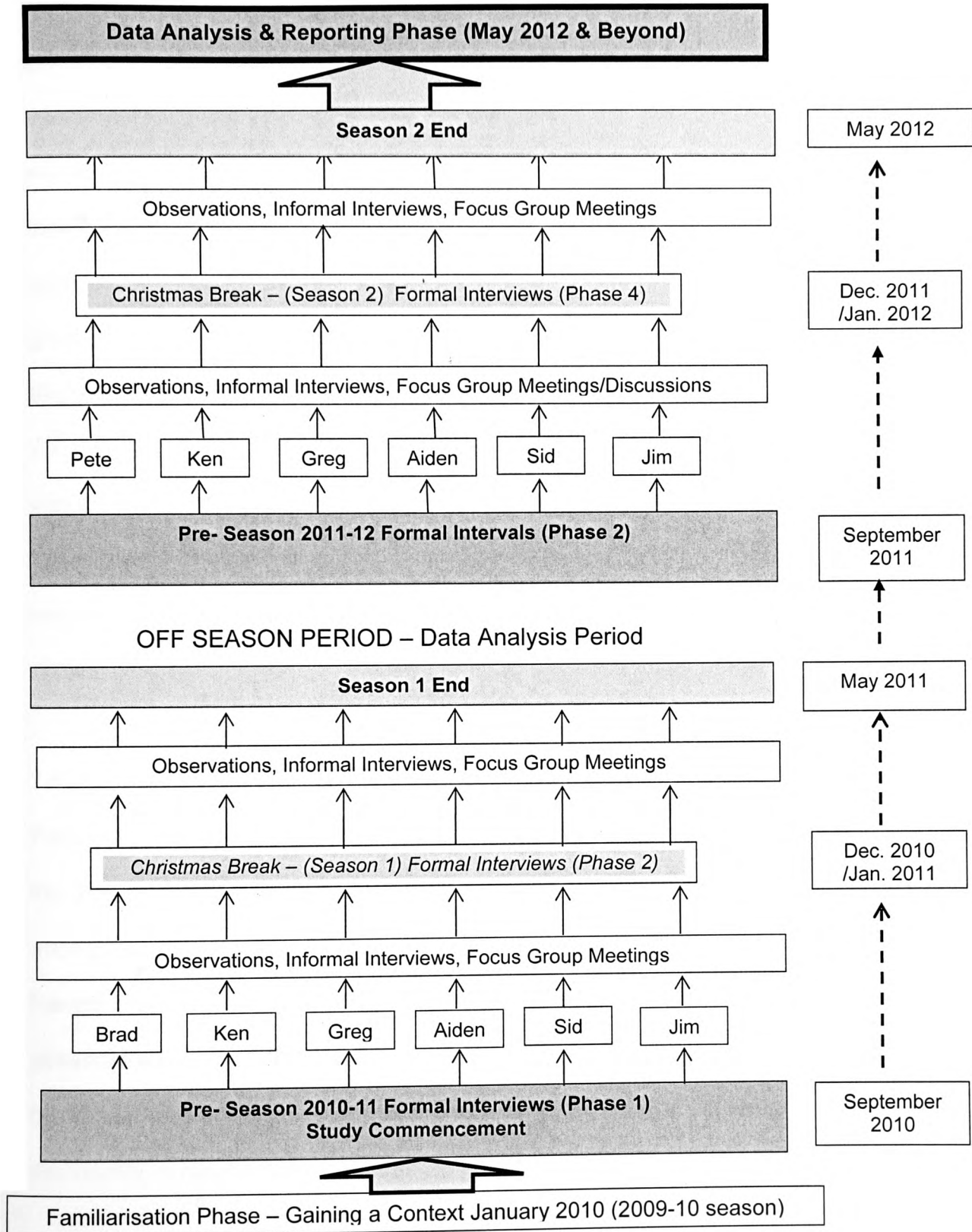
Other topics arose as a consequence of observations made as CDM (e.g. Coach assessment criteria) or from specific requests made by CCOs (e.g. mock interview workshop), or simply as innovations on my part, implemented as a means of improving the practice of the Coaches (e.g. reflective sheets, coaching model). Topics for the scheduled focus groups were usually emailed to the CCOs prior to the meetings as a

means of prompting thought and opinion, with it also noticeable that many of the weekly meetings (ones not scheduled for focus groups) naturally migrated toward unscheduled group debates that were usually triggered by events from the previous weekend's games or training. In line with environmental and theoretical triangulation techniques (sections 7.7.1.2 & 7.7.1.4), all forms of discussion provided valuable and largely unexpected information for the study, offering a valuable cross-reference with information gained from personal observations and/or many of the formal and informal interviews held (Patton, 1990; Gray 2009). As previously mentioned, in line with other interview data, the scheduled focus group discussions were tape-recorded and transcribed accordingly, with personal records also kept for *all* weekly department meetings and focus groups. Figure 4 illustrates the sequence and flow of interviews throughout the data collection period.

7.3.1.2. Executive Management Interviews

As previously mentioned, interviews were also undertaken with Senior Executive staff members within both the HKRFU and some of the respective club teams. Union staff involved the HP and HCM with the interviews undertaken to initially gain the necessary historical context to help inform the study period, and then throughout the course of the study to gain their opinion on events and occurrences involving the Coaches from their senior management perspective. Four interviews were also undertaken with respective executives from each club, each of whom held a particular title within their own team environment (section 3.4.2.4).

Figure 4 - Data Gathering Flow Diagram



For reasons of clarity regarding the interview evidence provided hereafter, the bosses' titles are used interchangeably, sometimes referred to in their club capacities by participants, such as Chairman and/or General Manager or simply as club bosses. The interviews involving each club boss were held towards the end of the data gathering period as another means of gathering different layers of collaborative evidence, this time from a club employer's viewpoint (Cushion & Jones, 2012). The four bosses were purposively selected as their viewpoints offered a different take on events, prompting greater reflection on my part, while again adding to the overall internal validity of data through theoretical and environmental triangulation methodology (sections 7.7.1.2 & 7.7.1.4). As with all formal interviews, these meetings were undertaken at a time and venue of the participant's choice and recorded with each interviewee invited to check the accuracy of interview and final transcripts (Patton, 2002). In total, over 30 hours of interviews were carried out with participants and significant others from the HKRFU and clubs.

7.4. Participant Observation

Participation observation has been described as a form of subjective sociology where the Researcher refrains from imposing his or her beliefs on respondents, instead attempting to understand *their* world and *their* points of view (Jones et al, 2011a). Recent research has illustrated how when linked with other data gathering sources, observations in the field can add to both internal and external validity/trustworthiness because of the triangulated approach, with one method cross-referencing and assuring the validity of others over a number of different sites (Culver et al., 2012). This is further

compounded by the Researcher spending extended amounts of time with participants in both formal and informal settings to observe the behaviours and unique interactions that take place (Sparkes, 2009). The process entails more than merely noting down the *facts* observed, but also ascribing *meaning* through carefully investigating why and how each participant acts in the way they do (Gray, 2009). At times, as Researcher, this will mean attaining a healthy *insider-outsider* professional balance, sometimes becoming part of their world to report the experiences, emotions, concerns and social meanings from their perspective, while at other times stepping back to attain a balanced and objective view of events (Hall, 2000; Harris & Jones 2012).

7.4.1. Participant Observations - in Practice

Observations were undertaken in various venues associated with the participants' working and coaching environments, and from different levels within each of my multiple-role capacities as CDM, LM or HC. However, even though I may have been acting in the capacity of CDM, LM and/or HC, I always remained vigilant to observations and events from my overriding IAR perspective throughout the course of the study period. Primary observation data was gathered in the roles of CDM and HC following visits to club and international coaching sessions or at the corresponding games. During these periods, the participants were directly aware of my presence in assessing their coaching performance, with some sessions specifically allocated for periodic formal assessments in my capacity as CDM (Appendix 5). The formal assessments played an important part in determining each Coach's personal standing within the National coaching setup of the HKRFU and were therefore viewed as being quite significant in

terms of the progress of each Coach. For such assessments, I would attend all club training sessions and meetings in the weekly lead-up to a specific game, with all the Coaches happy to grant me full access throughout their weekly preparation, able to listen to pre, in and post-match team talks. By this time, my presence caused minimal disruption to the team's competition routine (Evans et al., 2004). Other forms of observational data were gathered during the weekly department meetings and focus groups, with participants aware that information from the meetings would contribute to the overall study data. When taken in conjunction with interview evidence (individual and focus group), the observational data, reflexive and reflective notes, proved invaluable to the overall study process, once again serving as a cross-reference in the form of methodological triangulation (section 7.7.1.1) and thus adding to the overall internal validity of data produced (Culver et al, 2012).

7.5. Reflexive Log

Reflexivity forms an integral part when substantiating the methodology and results of any research project and deals with the relationship between the Researcher and the object being researched (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Drake & Heath, 2011; Wagstaff et al., 2012). Bryman (2008, p. 683) suggested that reflexivity has proved a 'notoriously slippery concept' with some researchers, undermining the veracity of their work by attempting to defend a neutral 'observation only standpoint', when in fact, their very presence in the study environment is implicated in the production of knowledge. Researchers therefore should accept the extent of their presence and partiality within the study context and extent to which their beliefs and attitudes might affect what

transpires (Sim & Wright, 2000). In meeting this acknowledgement and the requirements of 'personal reflexivity,' I have previously declared my inevitable subjectivity (section 4.4.2) while also making it clear that my position as IAR cannot render me neutral or invisible within the research process (Gray, 2009, p.498).

Further acknowledging these preconceptions, a reflexive log was maintained throughout the duration of the study period to reflect honestly and openly on how my personal beliefs, values and attitudes shaped the production of knowledge (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). As such, I am fully acknowledging the implications of my subjectivity through critical self-reflection (Lynch, 2000), recording my immediate biases, reactions and emotions to the events that occurred, so as to document an accurate account of events (Ryan, 2005; Wagstaff et al., 2012). In accordance with such action, Mayes and Pope (2000) and Angen, (2000) contend that if this type of subjectivity and intellectual bias is made explicit, it can actually enhance the credibility of the analysis process and overall research findings. The advantages of adopting this reflexive stance proved evident on a number of fronts; initially, in moving more objectively between positions of full involvement to those of analytical distance within the study process (Burke et al., 2008). Also, at times, allowing me to regain/maintain a non-threatening and neutral standpoint as Researcher-Interviewer. This neutral stand point was a necessary consequence that followed comments made by some respondents during interviews relating to various initiatives introduced by the HKRFU, where my initial reaction was to defend or substantiate some of the criticisms levelled by interviewees, many of which I was personally responsible for implementing in one, or other, of my multiple-role capacities.

Personal log extracts highlighted this:

I've got to stop reacting to criticisms aimed at the Union, it's going to make the interviewees feel uneasy and affect what they say, if I continually go on the defensive. Got to remember I'm just a neutral seeking information and not get emotional.

7.6. Researcher Credibility

The success of any project very often depends on the Researcher's ability to capture the realities of their findings and report them with high 'truth value' and neutrality (Ohman, 2005, p.273). This requirement may prove difficult as qualitative inquiry sometimes demands a level of immersion, exploration and interaction within the research environment, potentially heightening the levels of subjectivity on the part of the Researcher (Tenenbaum et al., 2009). However, as has been the case with this particular study, rather than becoming overly embroiled with stringent methodological protocols that promote *truth through method* in evidencing objectivity and credibility (cf. Culver et al., 2003; Smith, 2009), I have instead acknowledged my 'pre-understanding of the research topic and possible biases or personal interests that may influence interpretation of the data' (Ohman, 2005, p.274). In protecting against potential *self-interest*, I heed the advice of Brustad (2009, p.114) in looking upon myself as simply a 'research instrument,' applying *adequate method* while avoiding the methodological straightjacket that can inhibit the reality of any situation (Glense & Peshkin, 1992).

This process still provides detail and depth, but avoids possible skewing or misrepresentation of data through eager self-awareness towards the possibility of distortion which Patton (1990) proposed can emanate through:

1. The reaction of stakeholders to their presence.
2. Their own changes during the course of the study project.
3. Bias and pre-dispositions.
4. Their own incompetence, which may stem from a lack of proper training, preparation and/or sufficient expertise.

7.6.1. Stakeholder Reaction

Patton (1990) suggested that the Researcher should neither under or over-estimate their influence and effect on participants within any study, highlighting their influence as often overrated with more than a touch of self-importance on their part. Instead, the Researcher should simply focus on their obligation to analyse and report accurately on the exact effects of their presence within the study environment. Therefore, while not wishing to overstate the importance of my position within the research process, as one of being *inextricably linked* and *ground-in* to the data production process as multiple-role Researcher (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). Throughout this discourse however, I have gone to great lengths to display how I mitigated the impact of my presence. This was initially achieved through early integration into each of the CCO's club/team settings, which formed part of the overarching study environment, some eight months prior to the commencement of the study (section 3.4.2.4).

This integration allowed me to develop the necessary trust and rapport with study participants through transparent and equitable dealings (Patton, 2002). The establishment of ground rules (section 3.4.2.2) was also a tactic used to minimise the impact of my Researcher presence throughout the data gathering period, while also safeguarding the welfare of all those concerned.

7.6.2. Changes

It is natural to assume that over the course of an extended period, changes will occur within the study environment (Creswell, 1999). A key feature to the success of any project is the Researcher's ability to adapt to that change, and recognise the shift in his/her own perceptions and beliefs (Ohman, 2005; MacDonald, 2006). Researchers must recognise that their values, motivations, prejudices and emotions may have changed over time, and also remain alert to the potential of becoming overly sensitised to aspects within the research environment (Gray, 2009). Studies in anthropological research for example, have highlighted how observers can *go native*, losing perspective of their role and position within the culture or environment they are meant to observe (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000; Harris & Jones 2012; Wagstaff, 2012). Other researchers have also commented on personal change that can occur when submerged in a field setting for extended periods, positing the need for self-awareness in observing and documenting the *changes in self* (cf. Glazer, 1972; Johnson, 1975). Denzin (1978, p.200) supports this theme, suggesting that while it was inevitable that changes would occur to the Researcher throughout the study period, it would be insensitive and naïve on their part not to document these changes accordingly, thus avoiding any potential

dangers to the credibility of their analysis. As previously highlighted, the utilisation of the reflexive log and incorporation of a critical friend (HC) were important components in allowing me to *notice* and *acknowledge* these personal shifts and the potential impact on my emotions and subsequent reactions (Neil et al., 2009).

7.6.3. Predisposition and Biases

Previous research has highlighted the inevitability of researchers bringing preconceptions and personal views into any study project (Brustad, 2009, Smith, 2009; Denzin, 1989). Therefore, as has been done throughout this project, it made sense to acknowledge rather than deny those pre-dispositions and biases when analysing and presenting data to add, rather than hinder, the quality of the research (cf. Scriven, 1972). As such, acknowledging my position in allowing me to embrace the opportunity of experiencing events first hand. This enabled me to then offer personal insight, as well as the views of the study participants. The key as Researcher was to foster impartiality and empathetic neutrality in being seen as:

...caring, as interested, as responsive to the relevant arguments...impartial rather than simply objective. The impartiality of the Researcher must be seen as that of an actor in events, one who is responsive to appropriate arguments but in whom contending forces are balanced rather than non-existent (House, 1977, p.45-46).

In accepting that any research is unlikely to be *value free* (Drake & Heath, 2011), the obligation and responsibility lies in maintaining impartiality through consciously identifying and bracketing the necessary biases (Kluge, 2001) towards making my own peace in the objective-subjective and neutrality-impartiality debate (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). Lincoln and Guba (1994) aptly summarised this point by suggesting that

credibility and transferability are both dimensions of methodological rigour which rely heavily on the extent to which the Researcher can be trusted, and trust themselves, as he\she is ultimately responsible for collecting and analysing data and presenting the views of those under scrutiny, rather than their own.

7.6.4. Incompetence

Incompetence can manifest itself in various forms stemming mainly through the inexperience of the Researcher (Patton, 1990). Competence, on the other hand is demonstrated by using the verification and validation procedures necessary to ensure the quality of analysis and through building a track record of fairness and responsibility (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). Therefore, while the Researcher needs to be flexible and adaptable to change and simultaneously alert to their own predispositions and biases, they also have to *deliver*, being careful not to overstate or understate their case, or the cases of others (Kluge, 2001). Their fundamental aim must be to deliver the realities of the situation, which are time and context bound, to increase knowledge about how groups of people think, act and interact while being sensitive to developing ideas and themes that may exist around them (Ohman, 2005).

This has to be done while also being alert to the perils of *boundary crossing* and being aware that over-burdening participants with my experiences as Coach and Coach Educator may, in fact, be diminishing the uniqueness of *their* situation and experiences (Ryba & Schinke, 2009). Ultimately, the Researcher must attain a state of *epoch*; a suspension (or bracketing out) of all pre-conceived notions to represent the beliefs, opinions and emotions of those under study (Moustakas, 1994).

To assist in attaining this fair and responsible epochal state, certain steps were taken:

- The utilisation of the significant others (Coaches and other key stakeholders) to evaluate the accuracy of accounts and my effectiveness throughout the research process (Gray, 2009).
- Working closely with my PhD supervisor and HP in the form of critical friends (Patton, 2002).
- Through peer assessment and validation via the dissemination of study data to various NGB governing bodies for appraisal, comment and circulation.
- Through self validation as a qualified British Association of Sports and Exercise Scientist (BASES) and accredited sport scientist (psychology) for over ten years thus providing confidence in my abilities to establish professional boundaries, codes of conduct and work within an ethical framework to maintain objectivity and impartiality within a research environment.
- Through drawing on previous experience in multiple-role application (c.f. Jones et al., 2007).

7.7. Validity Assurance

In reminding readers (section 4.4.1) that even though validity is usually linked to quantitative methodology, it should also 'stand front and centre' within this and any other qualitative research process (Brustad 2009, p.112-113). When granted such a status, it places a large obligation on the Researcher to observe, identify and measure what actually exists within the study environment, while also providing strong evidence that links their data to the final theories developed from it (Mason, 2002; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012).

While numerous terminologies have been introduced in attempts to appease quantitative proponents to the comparative veracity of work within qualitative paradigms (cf. Cho & Trent, 2006 - transactional, transformational, holistic validity), this thesis has remained with the more standardised terminology to meet traditional, internal and external validity demands (Gray, 2009).

External validity in this respect refers to the degree to which findings can be generalised to other cases or situations (Gray, 2009). Although acknowledged to be difficult to attain or guarantee in qualitative research, justification for replication can be made more plausible when certain criteria are evident (Mason, 2002). These include a longitudinal study design, careful sample selection, with data gathered over a number of independent (but interlinking) sites (Payne & Williams, 2005). In relation to this thesis, the study design and particular location allows those criteria to be met. Data gathering was carried out over a two-year period, involving an ideal sample population in the form of an aspiring group of Professional Coaches in a developing rugby nation, with the data generated over numerous sites within each of the participants' club and international team settings, all of which come together to form the overarching study environment (Gray, 2009).

Internal validity on the other hand, relates to how far the constructions of the Researcher are grounded in the constructions of those being researched (Flick, 2006). Put more simply, internal validity is attained when there is compelling evidence that the Researcher has achieved a strong link between what exists and what is reported. In meeting this requirement, a number of steps have been implemented throughout. In response to the multiple-role standpoint and potential concerns surrounding aspects of objectivity, various safeguards have been referenced.

These include:

- (section 3.4.2.2) The introduction of ground rules and utilisation of critical friend and outside agent (Evans et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2007).
- (section 7.6.) Corroborating regarding the reflective process undertaken (Lyle 2007b; Jones et al., 2011b; Campo et al., 2012).
- (section 7.6) Aspects of Researcher credibility (Patton, 1990).
- (section 7.5) Through adopting a reflexive standpoint and maintaining a reflexive log to record events and occurrences, while also declaring any predispositions and bias regarding how those personal beliefs, values and attitudes may have affected the study environment throughout the course of the study (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Waumsley et al., 2010).
- (sections 2.2. to 2.4. & 3.2 to 3.4) By undertaking an extensive review of literature towards analysing how previous findings compare and contrast to those of my own (Gray, 2009).
- (section 7.3.) Member-checking: requesting study participants to verify the accuracy of interview transcripts and final reports that occurred in the form of member-checking (Patton, 2002).

All of these steps were taken to strengthen the overall internal validity and link between the evidence provided and the final theories produced (Mason, 2002; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Finally, and to further compound the internal validity process, various triangulation techniques (section 7.7.1) were also incorporated into the study design to overcoming any potential intrinsic bias. The various forms of triangulation allowed data to be cross-referenced from different levels and perspectives to provide further validation for the results produced (Denzin 2003; Guion, 2002).

7.7.1. Triangulation

Triangulation of data involves comparing and cross-referencing the consistency of information derived at different times and by different means within qualitative research projects (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). The term *triangulation* has been borrowed from land

surveying and navigation, where it refers to two landmarks being used in the accurate location of a third point (Angen, 2000). Its utilisation within academic research circles has been in response to criticisms by positivistic researchers regarding the validity of qualitative data collection techniques. The aim of triangulation is to provide an *essential reality* or *fixed point* through directing a range of methods at the same problem and checking whether or not they provide similar results (Hemming, 2008). Thus, triangulation has responded to the validity call as it can produce results that are seen to be true and certain; true in the sense that findings accurately represent the real situation and certain in as much as the results can be backed-up by scientific evidence (Guion, 2002).

Triangulation methodology played an important part in the production of this project with its various branches providing a valid means of both data collection and interpretation (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). The information collected from different sources different individuals, and their different populations, permitted results to be compared and corroborated, therefore reducing the effect of both systematic bias and random error (Hemming, 2008). The different modes of triangulation incorporated into the study included *methodological* triangulation, useful for its multi-method approach toward data collection through the use of interview, observation and reflexive-log, and *theoretical, analytical and environmental* triangulation, used for their authentication and verification qualities, which in turn adds to the credibility and competence of the Researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Guion, 2002).

7.7.1.1. Methodological Triangulation Methods

By combining two or more theories, data sources or methods towards a particular phenomenon, it is assumed that weaknesses or blind spots inherent in one method, will be compensated for by the strengths of others (Mounteney et al., 2010). While each remains autonomous in its own right, the various methods can also operate in combination to enhance the overall quality of resultant data (Hilton, 2005; Mounteney et al., 2010). The three-dimensional approach has also been acknowledged to provide a more accurate insight into the complexities of social life, reducing the potential for presenting *easy* conclusions that *gloss* over many of the hidden difficulties lying just below the surface of research projects (Hemming, 2008).

As previously discussed, the first of the triple methods utilised was *interpretive interviewing* (section 7.3) selected for its potential to encourage participants to reconstruct 'particular accounts from particular points of view,' so as to 'serve particular purposes' (Charmaz, 2006, p.47). To safeguard my own position and ensure that reports were not being misrepresented by being Researcher-dominant or overly sanitised, a reflexive log (7.5) was kept to accurately capture each moment as well as their particular context in time (Potrac & Jones's, 2009a). Finally, *observation* formed the third triangulation technique, with the various actions and interactions of study participants documented, offering a thick and descriptive *visual* text that was later pursued through conversation or interview to complement and further clarify the meanings and events that occurred (Neil, et al, 2009).

7.7.1.2. Theoretical Triangulation

Theory triangulation involves the use of multiple professional perspectives to interpret a single set of data/information to try and better understand how findings are affected by the different viewpoints considered (Mounteney et al., 2010). An established approach is to bring together people from different disciplines, or individuals involved within the particular area of investigation who may hold different status positions. In theory, it is believed that the various positions offer different perspectives on events that occur, sometimes casting new light on proceedings (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). If each evaluator then interprets the events in the same way (i.e. draws the same conclusions), then increased validity is attained (Guion, 2002). From a practical perspective, this involved seeking the thoughts, opinions and observations of other key stakeholders from within both the HKRFU Performance and Community Departments, and from selected club officials who offered their take on events that occurred. This allowed my own interpretation of events as IAR, to be compared against observations and opinions of significant others within each of the club and HKRFU environments involved.

7.7.1.3. Analytical Triangulation

Analytical triangulation requires those being studied to review findings, with researchers then being able to assess the accuracy and fairness of their interpretations, which if verified, add to the validity and credibility of their data. Alkin et al., (1979) suggested that the ultimate test of investigative study was the level to which participants in the study could relate to the description of events provided by the Researcher. This depended largely on the interactions, understandings and mutuality that develops between the

Researcher and participants throughout the study programme, ultimately leading to a point where the authenticity of the Researcher's feedback is dependent on both the person who makes the report and on those who receive it (Lincoln, 2001). Analytical triangulation was attained through inviting candidates to review and authenticate interview and final transcripts in the form of member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Culver et al., 2012).

7.7.1.4. Environmental Triangulation

This type of triangulation involves the use of different locations, settings and other key factors related to the environment in which the study takes place. Researchers suggest that by changing the environmental stimuli, some factors or results may vary (Guion, 2002). The key is identifying which environmental factors, if any, influence the information received during the study, with the data that remains constant under varying environmental conditions said to therefore possess increased validity (Gray, 2009). Unlike the other types of triangulation, environmental triangulation cannot be used in every case. It is only used when it is likely that the findings may be influenced by some environmental factors (Guion, 2002). This form of triangulation was deemed relevant because of the unique environmental conditions that existed, whereby interaction with participants occurred on a frequent basis within varied contexts and at different levels, all of which came together to create the overarching study environment.

In a practical sense this meant interactions took place with each Coach across a range of environments including their own club and international training venues (as CDM/HC), during visits to the HKRFU headquarters when attending meetings, analysis sessions and various workshops (LM/CDM), and finally on numerous social occasions following club games and/or at various company events that were organised by the HKRFU.

7.8. Data Analysis

7.8.1. Data Management - Thematic Analysis

Following the transcription of data from interviews and focus group meetings, I adopted a period of what Maykut and Morehouse (1994) described as *indwelling*, which involved immersion into the data to better understand the participants' viewpoints from an empathetic perspective (Potrac & Jones, 2009a). Thematic Analysis was the chosen mode of data analysis within this process because of its conducive matrix-based approach towards ordering and synthesising data, with the fundamental premise that of constructing a central index of themes and sub-themes from which broader conclusions and theories can be generated (Ritchie et al., 2003; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This form of data analysis has proved one of the most popular, offering a flexible framework that incorporates many discernible techniques common in other forms of qualitative inquiry, including content analysis, narrative analysis, grounded theory and critical discourse analysis (Bryman, 2008). The themes and sub-themes produced are a result of the rigorous scrutiny undertaken with the various transcripts and field notes produced through interview, conversation and observation. The finalised themes are then identified by bringing together components of information offered by the

respondents, linking ideas and experiences, that when viewed alone may well prove meaningless, but when pieced together can emerge to form a comprehensive picture of events (Leininger, 1985; Richards , 2005).

At every phase of the data analysis process, the Researcher will alter and modify findings in the light of new evidence that has been gathered, adjusting their thoughts towards the compilation of a fuller picture of events, built through the new sources of information (Howitt & Cramer, 2008). The idea is to get as close a fit as possible when reporting on the collective experiences of those being studied. The procedure involves an element of trial-and-error in a world where changes, tweaks and adjustments are a regular feature when attempting to piece together an accurate account of events (Howitt & Cramer, 2008). When patterns and themes begin to emerge, the Researcher is encouraged to probe for added information, which may or may not, help to substantiate their interpretations. Aronson (1995) asserted that it was only through adopting such an insightful and industrious outlook that the Researcher could best hope to link the valuable sources of information in their possession. Ryan and Bernard (2003) further commented on the Researcher's responsibilities, proposing that even though a specified series of procedures did not exist, thematic investigators would do well to follow their framework in how to best analyse and present their findings.

The suggested process should consider:

- *Repetitions* – Topics that recur again and again.
- *Indigenous typologies or categories* – Local expressions/terminology that is used.
- *Metaphors and analogies* – The way participants represent their thoughts in terms of metaphors or analogies.
- *Transitions* – The way topics shift in transcripts and other materials.
- *Similarities and differences* – How interviewees may discuss the same topic in different ways, or how they differ from each other, or how they explore texts and transcripts in asking how they differ.
- *Linguistic connectors* – Examining the use of words such as 'because' or 'since', because such words point to causal connections in the minds of participants.
- *Missing data* – Reflecting on what is not in the data, considering what interviewees omit from their answers, and why.
- *Theory related material* – Using social science as a springboard for themes.

Ryan and Bernard's (2003) research therefore served as a guiding reference in the identification and production of final themes and theories, providing me with a systematic framework or road map to follow in analysing and re-analysing data for the various themes and trends eventually documented.

7.8.2. Data Management - NVivo

In keeping with the other aims, objectives and epistemological assumptions of this research project, researchers have posited the need for investigators to establish a *working system* that effectively manages the storage and retrieval of large quantities of qualitative data to restrict the likelihood of information being miscoded, mislabelled and/or mislinked (Bringer et al, 2006; Davis & Meyer, 2009). To assist in this process and minimise the possible risk of human error or misrepresentation of data, the NVivo

9.0 data management software was utilised for its considerable potential in offering unprecedented levels of *transparency* within the qualitative research process (Johnson, 2004; Richards, 2005; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012) and for its ability to retrieve, link and conceptualise large amounts of unstructured data (Ozkan, 2004, p. 590).

The advice of Johnson (2006) and Richards (2005) was heeded in integrating and uploading the necessary data at an appropriate point in study proceedings, with NVivo serving as a central executive point or conceptual launch pad that could potentially link reflections and emergent ideas to the evidence produced. While not engaging all of the available tools in the data management process, an appropriate selection were utilised to ensure that 'expectations are realistic and appropriate' to meet my initially neophyte understanding of the processes involved (Sinkovics, & Alfoldi, 2012, p.832).

Although by no means guaranteeing theory development or rigour regarding the data gathered, which lies largely with the skills of the Researcher, the integration of pertinent study data would assist in the consistency and completeness of coding (Richards, 2005). This was further enhanced through embarking on the personal technical learning curve in the appropriate use of NVivo tools towards the automation of clerical tasks, thus allowing me to spend more time on the analysis of *meaningful* data (Richards, 2005). By acknowledging my initially neophyte standpoint, regarding the use of the NVivo 9.0 software, manual data analysis methods were also employed with researchers supporting the dual application of strategies in achieving best results (Welsh, 2002; Davis & Meyer, 2009).

In keeping with AR methodology and the cycle of actions (Stringer, 2007), NVivo also acknowledges and supports a reflexive, non-linear and fluid research process, through its ability to legitimise and acknowledge the 'complexity and messiness' of any research process (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012, p. 828).

7.8.3. Inductive or Deductive Reasoning

Much thought and consideration was given to whether an inductive or deductive data analysis standpoint should be adopted. While the *deductive* approach to analysis involves the comparison of a predetermined theory or hypothesis with any associated identified themes produced, *inductive* analysis allows the themes to emerge out of the data which is usually derived from a combination of conversation and observation (Elo & Kyngas, 2007; Neil et al., 2009; Zhang & Widemuth, 2011).

From the outset of this venture, I have professed deductive and heuristic interests in what can best be described as a *belief* rather than a theory or hypothesis, that some or all of the Coaches will experience situations where they will feel inadequately prepared or ill-equipped in dealing with what they face. This belief has stemmed from personal experiences faced as an applied Coach and through the observations of others who struggle to maintain the trust and direction of their team for varying reasons. At a personal level therefore, I believe this highlights the knowledge gaps in my own and others' development, which stem from a current lack of provision within Coach Education and training (Potrac & Jones, 2009b). Some of those experiences may be common and transferable across many of the coaching environments, while others prove unique to the Coach within his particular setting.

From a deductive standpoint, there exists little theory or hypothesis to substantiate my personal beliefs; beliefs that nevertheless underpin the nature of this project in examining exactly what trials and tribulations confront the developing Coaches and how we can better prepare them for those daily complexities. Therefore, initial thoughts guided me towards adopting both a deductive and inductive stance regarding the analysis process. However, upon further deliberation, reality dawned that I was unable to operationalise my beliefs, incapable of producing adequate measures or indicators that would substantiate any theory or hypothesis I held regarding the difficulties each Coach would face (Gray, 2009). This eliminated any substantive deductive standpoint, with these views being further compounded by Lauri and Kyngas (2005, cited in Elo & Kyngas, 2007, p.109) in their proposal that 'if there is not enough former knowledge about the phenomenon or if this knowledge is fragmented, the inductive approach is recommended.'

7.9. Narrative Representation of Data.

The multiple-role approach and ground-in position within study proceedings posed a dilemma in how best to portray the experiences of the participant Coaches, while also sharing my own inextricably linked contribution (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000). In supporting such dilemmas, Sparkes (2002, p.39) was quick to highlight that the reporting of qualitative data was a very 'fertile field,' with 'no fixed formats' as to how researchers best convey their facts to readers so that accurate assessments could be made. In accordance with these sentiments, other authors have called for the use of compatible genres of writing styles to be utilised in best complimenting the type of research they

undertake and the story to be told (Smith & Sparkes, 2011; Jones et al., 2011a and 2011b). In supporting that ideology, Potrac and Jones (2009a) posit the need to move away from previous representations of sporting contexts because they have only offered limited expression regarding the complexities inherent within. They further contest that the reports produced to date are too cleanly cut and academically bound, thus stifling the true essence of the performance arena. These comments have raised calls for texts to be more explicit and *evocative* in describing coaching's contested, moral and micropolitical nature, hence bringing the 'somatic to the semantic' in better articulating 'what it means to Coach, and what coaching means to others' (Jones 2009, p.379).

Therefore in attempting to accurately embody the experiences of all those involved, a number of reporting genres were engaged for their ability to meet the somewhat unique demands of this study and report events in their true essence (Potrac & Jones, 2009a). Firstly, incorporating *Realist tales* to grant participants their own voice when reporting the events that occurred from their perspective (Van Maanen, 1988), while at other times engaging the *Confessional* discourse as a means of providing my own highly personalised reflective and reflexive insights from the various multiple-role capacities adopted (Sparkes, 2002; Purdey et al., 2009; Harris, 2010). Also at times, blending the two in an *impressionistic* format to accurately facilitate accounts of both the participants and IAR as central characters in the story to be told (Frey et al., 1999).

Protocols would normally dictate that within realist writings, the Author-Researcher's voice would be absent, heard only in early prefaces and/or method sections to substantiate their privileged and confirmatory position as an *author evacuated, ever-present* in the story they tell (Markula & Denison, 2005). Other researchers however

have supported the idea of the Author-Researcher also writing themselves into the text as a means of conveying their interpretation of events that occurred (Frey et al., 1999; Sparkes, 2002; Purdey et al., 2009; Potrac & Jones, 2009a; Harris, 2010). With my inevitable *ground-in* multiple-role link to events, this approach seemed most prudent in best conveying the embodiment of this project and my own inextricable and inescapable link to the proceedings that occurred (Burke et al., 2008; Harris, 2010).

In adopting such a standpoint, awareness was once again heightened to the large obligation placed on the Researcher in being seen as a credible and trustworthy other, by reporting the facts as they actually occurred (Sparkes, 2002, 2009). To that end, I have gone to great pains throughout this section, and earlier sections, to adequately provide evidence that I hold the necessary awareness and acknowledgement regarding my potential subjective biases (Brustad, 2009, Smith, 2009). Also evidencing that I possess the requisite skills, competencies and experience (section 7.6.) in dealing with such issues to promote the necessary trust and credibility in combining writing styles to achieve the most effective, accurate and true representation of events (Jones, 2009; Jones et al., 2012).

7.9.1 Realist Tales

Realist tales are characterised by extensive, closely edited quotes that convey the remarks and viewpoints of the participants, rather than those of the author-investigator (Van Maaen, 1988). This allows the participants' voices to be heard, thus providing the reader with important insight and detail into how they decipher their own world. The Researcher is seemingly an 'absent presence,' a point which Sparkes (2002, p.52)

points out is merely a 'textual illusion,' as his/her presence is actually a constant in the shaping of the story to be told (Purdy et al., 2009). The way that story is told depends largely on the *fancy footwork* of the Researcher who in a state of studied neutrality is able to sequence quotes (sometimes out of order) to construct an accurate and insightful portrayal of events (Sparkes, 2002).

7.9.2. Confessional Tales

Whereas in realist tales the author's voice is seldom heard (author-evacuated), *confessional* reporting allows the Author-Researcher to provide a highly personalised and self-absorbed account of their experiences (Sparkes, 2002). The recounting of events involves details regarding 'the fieldwork, stories of infiltration, fables of fieldwork rapport, mini dramas of hardships endured, and accounts of what the fieldwork did to the fieldworker' (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 73). This enables the reader to interpret the same story from a different perspective, thus broadening their insight and understanding (Harris, 2010). The confessional discourse will therefore serve to inform my *ground-in* position, character flaws and personal biases as multiple-role IAR, substituting and complimenting the omnipotent *realist tone* to one where disorder, doubt and difficulty prevail, and consequently highlight a genuineness on the study proceedings that support and verify the realist tales (Sparkes, 2002). As such, the confessional approach does not intend to replace or supersede the realist approach, rather it stands side-by-side to elaborate on aspects where realist writings do not venture (Smith & Sparkes, 2011; Jones, et al., 2011a & 2011b).

In providing the necessary contextual background and methodological insights underpinning this thesis, the following section will begin the reporting process. The aim is to provide a comprehensive picture of events from many of the various perspectives and individuals involved within the study process, and encourage a *fuller engagement* on the part of the reader by allowing them to compare and contrast their own opinions to those conclusions reported (Atkinson, 1992; Burke et al., 2008). The process will begin by offering a *from-the-field, insider insight* into the daily dealings of selected Coaches as a means of bringing *their world and their* experiences to life. The thesis will examine many of the trials and tribulations, the joys and disappointments, and the worries and concerns and investigate the most tangible of insights from which to draw conclusions and make judgements on the results provided (Jones, 2009; Jones et al., 2012).

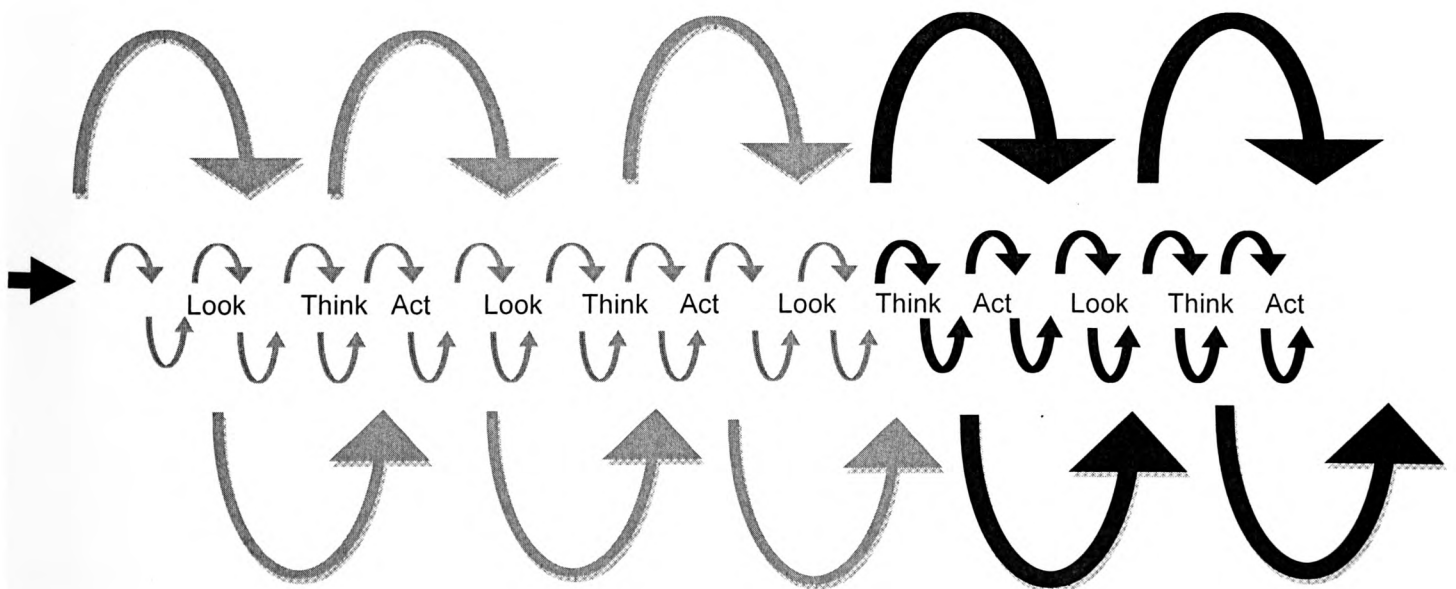
SECTION 3 (ACT PHASE)

(ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION)

Section 1
LOOK PHASE
(Gaining a Context)

Section 2
THINK PHASE
(Methods)

Section 3
ACT PHASE, Look, Think, Act....
(Discussion & Analysis)

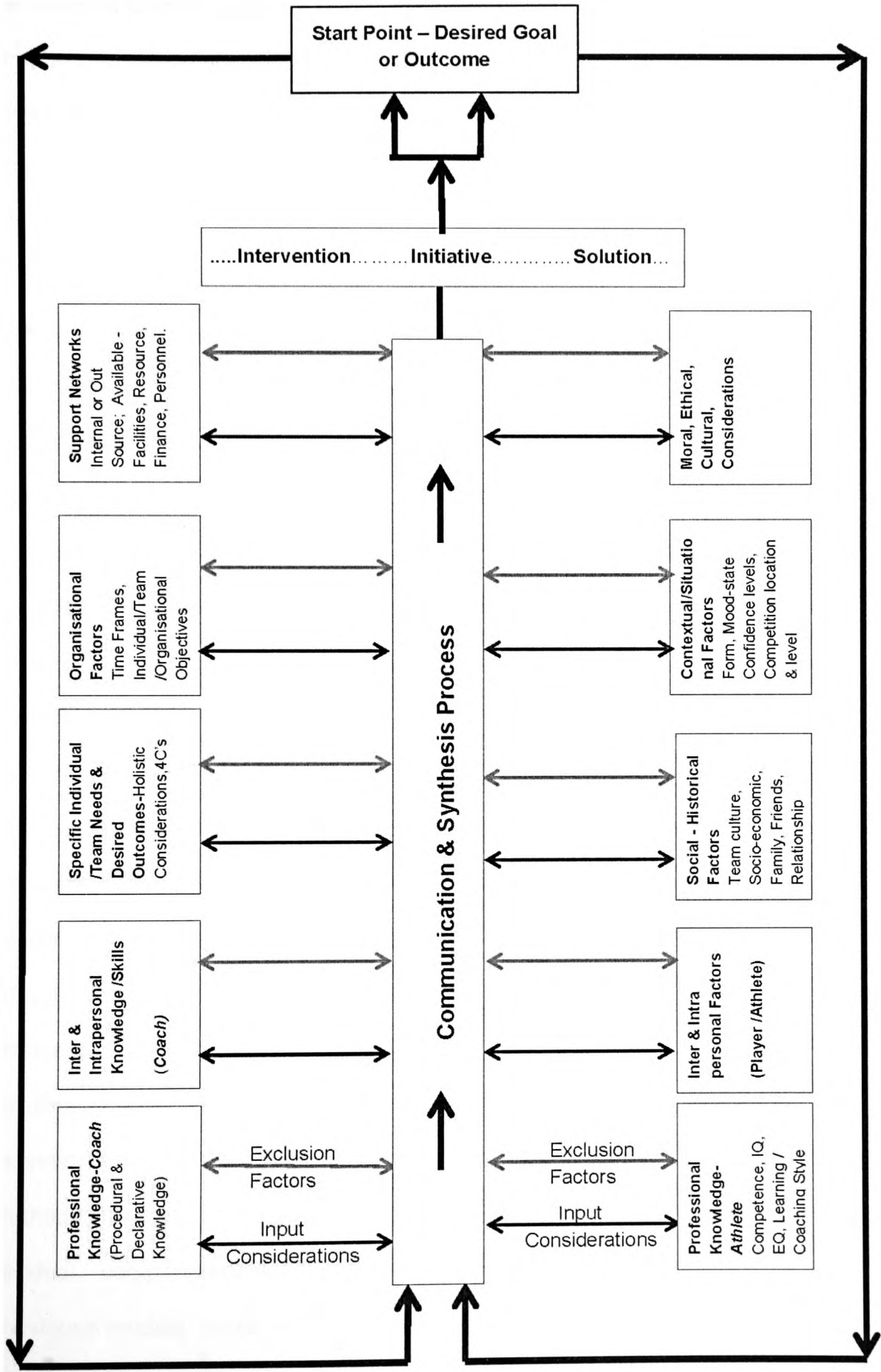


CHAPTER (8)
A CRITICAL MODEL OF COACHING
SYNTHESIS

8.1. Model Aims

In an attempt to build on the work of Cote & Gilbert (2004 & 2009) and Cassidy et al., (2009) in developing an integrated definition for Coaching effectiveness, and in response to the call for a clear conceptual basis that offers a definitive set of principles and concepts to guide Coaching practice (Lyle, 2002, 2007b; Cushion et al., 2006; Cushion, 2007; Cassidy et al., 2009; Vella et al., 2010), I offer a *Critical Model of Coaching Synthesis* (Figure 5). The model is designed to maintain the essence of the coaching role (Lyle et al, 2010) and was developed to assist and guide the decision-making process of Coaches by offering direction and guidance throughout the course of their daily practice. It attempts to overcome current limitations on the existing batch of reportedly nebulous and dysfunctional models, which have proved to be 'neither informative nor influential' (Vella, et al., 2010, p. 426). Instead, the *Critical Model of Coaching Synthesis* directly addresses the call to better illustrate the coaching process through a model that has at its heart, sound theoretical and research foundations (Abraham et al., 2006; Cushion, 2006; Lyle et al., 2010), while also aiding practitioners and educators to, 'better understand how and why contextually-relevant real world decisions are made' (Vella et al., 2010, p.426). In the production of the model I have heeded the advice of Cassidy et al. (2009) in utilising it as a guiding framework for the Coaches, assisting them to navigate their way through the complex and contextually relevant range of issues they faced within their particular Coaching environment(s), so as to direct them towards a *best fit* solution(s). Following the compilation of the model, each Coach was encouraged to engage in its use when confronted with the various complexities that arose as a means of better defining and analysing each scenario before arriving at a solution or action.

Figure 5 - Critical Model of Coaching Synthesis



The model is derived from a modified version of Lyle's (2002) work, which included the sport-specific criteria associated within most of the previous coaching models as well as considering external characteristics within its design as a means of providing a more realistic conceptual basis from which Coaches could base their decisions and subsequent actions. Lyle's (2002) model included situational, organisational and historical factors that should be considered, along with the interpersonal characteristics of both the Coach and athlete; factors that influence the decisions made by the Coach when mapping out any course of action and direction for the team/athlete. Lyle was also quick to highlight limitations of his own work which he suggested it provided more of a theoretical insight, than applied function (Lyle, 2002). In contrast, my own model attempts to overcome those self-professed shortcomings by leaning more towards an applied and functional representation that guides Coaches through the myriad of variables that they have to consider before arriving at an intended outcome.

Provision has been made within the model design for the accepted 'common variables that affect Coaches' work,' thus identifying and acknowledging key components of coaching effectiveness for adult Performance Coaching contexts, as identified by researchers (cf. Cote & Gilbert 2009, p.309). Although not exhaustive and quite broad in its design, the model could serve as a basis for a more accurate portrayal of the Coach's journey, with its functionally simplistic design able to inform a practical and conceptual foundation for coaching. It could be further contested that this overriding *critical model of thinking* is able to support, or supplement, existing sub-models that accurately portray the function and detail involved within each of the individual compartmentalised areas illustrated (i.e. professional knowledge, behavioural models, social interaction model, etc.).

Finally, in terms of its exhaustive context, the model could be extended to incorporate as yet unconsidered components and/or areas that may be unique to particular sporting environments.

8.2. Model Function and Implementation

In terms of the model's function, it proposes that all journeys begin with a *destination* in mind, while all solutions start with a *problem*, and it is indeed the problem and the intended destination that define the starting point for the Coach's *filtration journey*. Before arriving at any final solution, decision or course of action, the Coach must travel through and consider the numerous sub-components displayed within each of the various compartments highlighted (i.e. interpersonal, situational, historical, etc.). They then begin to filter in and out the various influencing factors towards informing their final decision and overall course of action.

All too often, previous coaching models have been isolated or caught up in the esoteric sport-specific component specified within this and other models, thus failing to consciously recognise other significant contextual factors when guiding Coaches towards outcomes in perceived good practice (Lyle, 2002, 2007b). It could be argued that all Coaches, on some subconscious level, already filter in/out many of the variables included within this model, ultimately influencing their overall decisions and subsequent actions. That process can be either spontaneous and immediate or methodical and deliberate, depending on the situational constraints that exist at any given time. Nevertheless, no matter how spontaneous or methodical each journey may be, the route travelled will be the same.

The Coach either spends extensive periods of time deliberating over pertinent criteria within the applicable compartments highlighted, or instead, he/she relies heavily on an iterative mix of intuition, coaching instinct and the limited information at their disposal, in order to arrive at a final decision (Gladwell, 2005).

This model therefore, attempts to recognise the coaching *subconscious* by raising it to a conscious level, inviting Coaches to work systematically through the variables that ultimately influence their decisions and actions. Although seemingly linear in its design, this is not necessarily my intention; I simply wish to illustrate that all thoughts and actions derive from the need to provide solutions to problems in enabling the Coach and the athlete/team to maintain their overall direction. Whether large (macro) or small (micro), team-specific or athlete-specific, organisational or resource-based, the Coach has to consider the type and particular context of the problem that he/she is confronted with and the goal they wish to attain before beginning the filtration journey /process. They then factor in and out the significant or insignificant variables from each of the applicable compartments highlighted in the model to aid their decision in finding the best possible solution for *that* problem at *that* moment in time.

Once a decision has been made and acted upon by the Coach, he/she then turns their attention to the next problem or journey in hand, while also monitoring the progress and effect of previous decisions and implementations. The Coach then begins the filtration process again, this time with a new set of variables to deliberate over. It is important to consider that for each Coach, every filtration journey is uniquely different with variables exclusive to them, their athletes, their particular sporting situation and their personal history. One must also consider that when progressing through the filtration-communication funnel, some of the compartments displayed in the model may not come under consideration, depending on the nature

of the problem (or journey) that the Coach is embarking upon. Finally, it is important to note that whenever feasible, each Coach was encouraged to communicate with their players/athletes and significant others to complement and supplement their knowledge throughout the filtration process, further informing their ultimate action or decision.

A simple example of the model's function, and indeed one of the inspirations for its initial development, surrounded a particular player recruitment issue where Jim had misguidedly enlisted an inappropriate player to join his club. While player recruitment is dealt with on a more comprehensive basis later in this thesis (section 11.1.2.1), this particular example helps to adequately illustrate the practical function of the model. Problems initially originated from the fact that even though Jim had been cautioned by various committee members and senior players that the targeted player would not be conducive with the culture he was attempting to create at the club, he ignored their protestations and proceeded with the recruitment, recalling:

I really felt I left myself down. I looked at a player who everybody told me to stay away from. Everybody told me he was a bad apple and as much as I accepted it, I think I got carried away with myself in the fact that I saw what talent he could bring to this club, and the environment we have here, and thought personally I would be able to have an influence on him. Which, you know, I like to think I have done with a lot of the youngsters. But, I got burnt, I was wrong.

After a few moments of further reflection on the event, Jim continued:

...it's all about the person! Forget how talented he is. If he's good enough to play then brilliant, but it's the person you bring in and he has to fit in with everything. It's about being a good bloke, and I knew that, but still let myself down.

When inquiring as to what rationale or criteria he had in place for his identification and recruitment policy at the club, he offered, “None really, I just go on what I see and gut feeling.” On further probing as to how the error in judgement had affected him and his standing at the club, he reflected:

Ye, it’s affected me a bit, but the guys are ok……I realise as a young Coach that you have to make mistakes, but I really thought I was better than that when it came to *people*. I think I’ve got a good eye for, you know, what’s a good person and what’s a bad person. And this person was a bad person, down to his core for what he’s done over the last four or five years of his career. I should have known better.

In an attempt to avoid similar occurrences with this and other aspects of his role, the model was presented for discussion, re-enacting the recruitment journey and utilising the pertinent compartments to substantiate or refute the decisions made. Even though it was a reactive exercise in this particular case, the filtration journey undertaken served to highlight the value of the model to Jim, bringing stark realisation that even though the player possessed good playing abilities and professional knowledge, he fell short in other components such as intra/interpersonal skills, team needs, historical factors, and moral/ethical considerations. The filtration journey highlights how his final decision was flawed, and how he may have arrived at a different outcome had the model been in place to aid his decision-making.

Another example of the model’s use arose when Sid was asked by an influential club executive to consider giving additional coaching sessions to his own son, who was a member of Sid’s club team. Initially feeling uneasy about the request, Sid came to me for some advice and guidance. Sid recalled:

Ye, I had a bit of a bombshell on the weekend, [Executive’s name] asked me to do some one-on-one with his son, telling me that he’d give me some extra cash for my time.

When inquiring into his response to the request, he added:

I didn't really know what to say, just didn't get a great feeling about it, even though there was a bit of cash in it. Told him I'd talk to you and [name of HP], and get back to him.

Feeling it important for Sid to arrive at his own decision, we utilised the services of the model to guide his decision-making. Discussion revealed that while he was probably best placed to devise a personal development plan based on his previous knowledge of the player's ability (i.e. professional knowledge), he may not be the best person to deliver the extra training as some of the requests were outside of his personal area of expertise (e.g. kicking). Also, when looking at other pertinent compartments, it was probably best that he himself did not work with the player as previous dealings at the club involving the same player and the previous Coach, had resulted in accusations of favouritism from other members at the club. Such accusations ultimately undermined that Coach's position and disrupted the overall team harmony (i.e. historical factors, organisational factors). Finally, there would also be moral and ethical concerns about receiving added payment for the work, something that could be argued was part of his core club duties, and something that Sid felt reluctant to accept as "he (the club Executive) would have some sort of hold on me for taking the money, and I'm not comfortable with that" (interview extract). Following our conversation, Sid decided that it was best if the additional coaching sessions were deferred to one of the senior players at the club who possessed the requisite skill-set and coaching knowledge (kicking skills), hence avoiding any potential issues arising in the future.

These examples go some way to highlight the practical function of the model and provide some insight into the thought process of each Coach in arriving at their final decisions, which were always geared toward achieving a *best fit solution* for the players and the team at that particular moment in time (Jones & Wallace, 2006). During its application throughout the study, the model was used primarily for guiding the thoughts and actions of the Coaches, however it also encouraged a more accurate reflective standpoint with participants able to isolate specific decisions and actions to relevant points within the synthesis process. Jim adequately explained this when reflecting on his recruitment decision in relation to the model:

Looking at it [model], it was a bit of a no brainer really [laughs]. The only box he ticked was being a good player. His history, his personality and the morals of the guy were all shit, and I should have seen it before signing him. And if I'm honest, looking at this, I over-estimated my own interpersonal abilities too.

Throughout the remainder of the study, the model served as a guiding framework in assisting and informing each Coach's practice and proved influential in informing some of the coaching contexts described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER (9)
THEIR STORIES: AN INSIGHT INTO THE
COACH'S PLIGHT

9.1. Overview

As discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, current analysis into the daily function of Coaches is falling short in attempts to grasp the real essence of the chaotic, dynamic and manipulative environment in which they function (Potrac & Jones, 2009a; Harris & Jones 2012). Therefore, in the continuing process of providing a comprehensive 360-degree viewpoint of proceedings, this section offers the *Coach's story*; an insider perspective regarding the everyday emotional, ethical, and micropolitical issues faced by the CCO study participants in presenting the most tacit and palpable of insights into the, 'knotty reality' of coaching practice. This will allow readers to *live* each Coach's journey (Jones et al., 2012, p.1), to savour the sometimes shapeless, ambiguous and often worrying nature of their role, while also becoming more enlightened to the muddy and murkier depths of the coaching art (e.g., Lyle, 2007, 2009; Jones, 2009; Cushion & Jones 2012).

As previously discussed (7.9), both realist and confessional writing styles have been utilised in describing events. The realist (i.e. author-evacuated) approach is used to *create space* for each Coach to tell their own story through the many interviews and conversations held (Sparkes, 2002). At other times, I adopt the confessional standpoint to take advantage of the privileged insider position to present *my own take* on events from the IAR, CDM/LM and HC perspectives in building on and developing a well-crafted and coherent interpretation of events (Burke et al., 2008; Sparkes, 2002).

While all the Coaches' contributions are incorporated within the reporting section of this thesis (Chapter 11), space does not allow for each of their stories to be told here. Instead, as with the previous chapter (Chapter 8), I offer a representation of those stories that are deemed, 'best illustrative' of the events that occurred (Burke et al.,

2008, p. 344), presenting selected reflections, observations and comments that allow the reader to reconstruct many of the events experienced by Coaches involved in the study. Although, there can be little doubt that at certain times each Coach was faced with uniquely different problems with which they had to deal, there were also times where the Coaches trod similar paths. While a degree of *novelty* was always evident in exactly what, and how, the Coaches dealt with the particular issues at hand, there was nevertheless some degree of similarity or sameness (Jones & Wallace, 2005). It is therefore my contention that by reporting *all* of the narratives, there would be an element of crossover or repetition that could prove mundane or detract the reader from the pertinent points, thus prompting the decision to provide a *best representation* of what occurred (Burke et al., 2008).

Following on, I have tried to convey the stories that I believe to best represent the *essence of coaching* from both the specific and broader context of proceedings (Jones et al., 2012). Following a specific context, I recapture the uniquely individual incidents and occurrences that pertain to each Coach, and in a broader context, I attempt to illustrate wider themes or trends that were common among many of the Coaches within this study, and from rugby Coaches in general (Burke et al., 2008).

In an attempt to avoid possible intrusion or fragmentation regarding the personal accounts conveyed, each of the Coach's stories will be presented without being 'framed in theory' (Jones, 2009, p.381). To date, all previous (and future) sections of this submission have been embedded with the necessary theoretical underpinning to substantiate ideas, thoughts and opinions offered (Denison & Rhineheart, 2000). However, in an attempt to not dilute the coaching experiences, and to allow the reader at this point to make adequate engagements and inferences on the stories told, validation will be absent in this section (Atkinson, 1992). This will prevent

meaning or construct from being forced on the reader, and will instead evoke a 'shared emotional experience and understanding' with the participants, while also providing a reflective base from which to make their own conclusions (Denzin, 2003, p.13). Following these insights into the lived experiences of the Coaches, a more detailed and scientific analysis will be presented regarding the pertinent themes that were uncovered, along with further discussion in how best we can move forward with the knowledge gained (Chapters 11 and 12).

9.1.1. Greg's Story

Greg's elevation to the Performance Coaching arena was in many ways, quite remarkable. At 23 years of age, he found himself as Head Player-Coach (H-PC) at one of the up and coming community based clubs in HK, containing a rich mix of local Chinese players along with a more socially-minded group of expatriate players, who's primary objective was geared more towards enjoyment rather than achieving higher standards of performance. Within that development environment, Greg had done a great job, gelling the rich cultural mix of Chinese, American, Scottish, English, Australian, New Zealand and French players into a successful team and elevating them from Division Four to Division Two of the HK league structure in successive seasons. Following an executive decision by the HKRFU Board, it was agreed that after a two-year consolidation period in Division Two, the team should be earmarked for elevation to the newly formed Premier Division (old Division One) of the HK league. Greg was to maintain his H-PC status as a reward for his loyal and relatively successful service at the club. Reflecting on this period,

Greg offered:

I think we had a really good season last year. That first year in Division Two from Division Four, the gulf was huge and the players weren't really ready, so it was sort of an icebreaker of a season, getting our things in place. For our second season, which was last season, we came third, which was our goal.

As CDM, I was very aware that Greg would face a difficult transition period during that first season in the newly formed Premiership. Initially because of his relative inexperience as a H-PC, but primarily because he had developed his coaching in the community based leagues in HK and possessed little insight into the demands required for the Performance game. Therefore, during the club's second consolidation year in Division Two (my first season of data collection), I worked closely with Greg to develop all aspects of his coaching, organisation and management skills in the hopes of him coping with the demands that lay ahead. His position was also further enhanced by participation on the IRB Level 3 Coaching course held that year in one of the Tier 1 rugby-playing nations.

His journey is shared with you firstly because his lack of exposure and fast-track elevation to the Performance game best personifies many of the complexities and emotions experienced by Greg and other similarly situated Coaches. In doing so, it exemplifies the types of demands and pressures placed upon Greg and other aspiring Coaches who are potentially elevated beyond their particular levels of competence and expertise too early in their career. My personal experience has taught me that such an occurrence is not uncommon in the Performance game, where Coaches often experience similar premature elevation because of previous high profile playing exploits and the relationships developed with significant others within their organisation, or perhaps because of the success they have attained with junior and/or lesser teams.

On reflection of that last season in Division Two, Greg recalled how comfortable he felt with the demands placed on him and how he “rocked up to training,” content that his level of knowledge and coaching ability was more than adequate for the team during that period. Throughout early interviews and conversations that year, Greg talked about his desire to “be a respected Coach,” and although relating some of the difficulties he faced in managing and bonding the varied cultural mix within his team, he generally displayed high levels of confidence in particular aspects of his coaching. These included his technical coaching and motivational capabilities, as well as his ability to communicate well with the wide array of nationalities within the team environment as a means of getting “my message across to spur people on and really motivate them.” At this period in his H-PC development, he was also seemingly unconcerned about the pressures of his employment, commenting that:

I’m not one of these guys who gets obsessed with the game. I love it to bits, always involved with it but I don’t let it dictate my life. So say we have had a bad session, I wouldn’t sit there and [let it] kind of ruin my night worrying about it.

While further commenting on his work-life balance at home:

...the game doesn’t really bog me down at all. So I don’t necessarily have to think, right now this is down time away from rugby because it doesn’t necessarily dictate my life.....fully anyway. So I don’t really have an issue with sitting down and going, ‘right, this is a rugby-free zone’ because then I feel it’s forced. I can just actually drift for a few days in the summer, a few weeks in fact and not even think about rugby. So yes, I don’t think it’s a big issue.

Finally, in terms of his specific duties and working relationships with others at the club during this period in Division Two, Greg recalled of the Chairman and Treasurer at that time, “They’ve given me a lot of trust,” and “in terms of support from the club, they are really, really helping me. I’m really indebted to them.”

However, these comments and reflections regarding life in Division Two were to be in stark contrast to his first full season as a Premiership Head PC with early warning signs evident as he began to plan and prepare for that first season. Greg reflected on aspects of recruitment and recalled:

I went out there and targeted players I knew who were looking to come over and got into final discussions with them. They had to be employable in HK because the league rules dictate that every player must have a visa. This makes things incredibly difficult because when you're trying to recruit the best part of a brand new team, and trying to get everyone a job and look after each one individually, it becomes a bit of a nightmare. So that's why it was important that we had players who we could go forward with in terms of employability.

Regarding the broader coaching role, he offered:

It's a lot more complex than I thought, not as cut and dry as being a good Coach or a bad Coach. There's a lot of things you have to think about, especially in managing the whole club. You've got man-management, you've got the financial side, the recruitment side. So I really didn't think it was going to be as complex, and how little I actually knew.

Fortunately, the recent rebranding and on-going development of the club in striving to become a competitive Premiership entity meant that Greg was forced to handover some of these duties to the newly appointed General Manager (GM), an appointment which in itself was to prove problematic. Although describing their early relationship as, "professional and progressive," Greg soon felt "out of the loop," having moved from a position where the previous Chairman and Treasurer included Greg in most club affairs, to a point where the new GM took over all responsibility for player recruitment and other aspects of club development. During the same interview in the build-up to that first Premiership season, Greg commented:

...he's pretty much taken over that side of the Club, so over the last three months, I've been completely out of the loop. I've heard when it's coming to a final deal or when we're getting there in terms of signing the contract, but in terms of negotiations I am completely out of the loop.

This highlighted one of the many adjustments that Greg had to contend with during that coming season, signalling the start of a difficult transitional phase for him personally. Other occurrences involving the GM included members of Greg's own coaching staff. The first involved his Assistant Coach at the club, whose relationship with the new GM began somewhat acrimoniously because of their failure to agree on contractual terms. Greg recalled how difficult he found it having to act as an intermediary between the two, in an attempt to maintain a level of harmony within this leadership group. On the one hand, he had to manage a disgruntled Assistant Coach, while on the other, he also had to contend with negative comments from the GM regarding the Assistant Coach's inabilities during that pre-season build-up. The comments were based from reports made to the GM by some of the newly recruited players and from personal observations made by him when attending training sessions as a player himself, when time permitted. Greg recalled how these issues had "caused a few problems," reporting:

....when he's on the pitch, when he comes to me and he sees something he doesn't like, and I've had it a few occasions when my coaching partner's been coaching and he's come to me and saying like, 'is this good enough?'....and I think that it's the wrong time and place.

He remembered at the time feeling very uncomfortable, unsure how best to deal with the situation having never experienced anything like it previously. Feeling pressured by the GM who he thought was "laying seeds in my head," and attempting to sour Greg's longstanding relationship with his Assistant Coach, being aware that:

...the GM and the Assistant Coach have had a few on-going issues in terms of payment and the contract. And at the time [during training].....I didn't know whether he was getting at that, or he genuinely believes the criticisms he gives, and that's when I became a little, more than a little confused, really.

A similar pre-season problem surrounding the GM appointment occurred with the recruitment of a new and third member of the coaching staff. Keen to add some experience to his coaching team, Greg rushed the appointment through during the early transitional phase of the GM taking up his new post, to avoid any potential resistance from him. Displaying his micropolitical cunning, Greg worked closely with the old Chairman and Treasurer over this transitional period to consolidate the appointment as he had concerns that the GM would not approve. The GM was one of the four club bosses to be interviewed. His take at the time was:

.... Well, to a degree they made the decision without consultation. It was done by the Coach [himself], he made the decision to go and I wasn't involved in it, I was sent an email to tell me this had happened and I was limited as to what I could do (GM interview extract).

Following the appointment, it soon became apparent that the new Coach did not possess the necessary skills for the job, leaving Greg in a difficult and self-confessed "stressful period," explaining to the new GM how, after only four or five weeks, he now wanted to release the Coach from his duties. Recalling this situation, the GM revealed:

I was then asked to mediate in a meeting whereby Greg and Steff [pseudonym-assistant Coach] gave me their opinion of what was going on, also with [the 3rd Coach], who was present at the meeting too, and I basically sat back and said 'look I will listen to all sides of things and see how we can move forward with the situation.'

The GM also recalled that it was he who had to make the final call on relieving the Coach of his duties, causing some ill feeling and frustration on how the whole situation had been managed. On a personal level as CDM, I also felt somehow responsible for this situation, as I had initially suggested to Greg the importance of recruiting someone with suitable coaching or rugby management expertise into his Coaching team to reduce the burden placed on him and his Assistant Coach. Both Greg and the Assistant Coach could be considered relatively young and

inexperienced to take on such an important role, particularly during that first season within the Premiership, hence my suggestion to look for a suitable candidate as my own time as CDM would be limited. Unfortunately, for the reasons previously mentioned, Greg was too keen to push the appointment through, and not meticulous enough in researching the skills and competencies of the Coach whose experience lay more in rugby management than in applied coaching. As a consequence, I had little input or awareness of the appointment, with personal reflections at the time illustrating my frustration regarding Greg's management of the affair:

Really pissed off with Greg for not consulting me about the appointment, particularly as I was the one suggesting that he needed someone around him with experience to take some pressure off him and Steff. Not a great way to begin with his new GM, Greg's putting himself under immediate pressure with the guy. Could all have been avoided if he sought more advice and not tried to be too clever in forcing the appointment through under the radar.

Further doubts over Greg's ability to manage potential conflict again came to the foreground in his dealings with some of the newly recruited players. Over that summer, the club had made some important signings to bolster their chances within the top division. Initially, Greg was quite upbeat upon confirming that, "yes, we've got eight quality players in, again who are employable, and who seem to be buying into what we've got (at the club)." However, this buoyant mood was short-lived, with Greg finding the management of his new Performance level players quite different to others he had previously worked with. Later during the pre-season period, Greg recalled his position as:

I've got to be honest, bloody difficult because there's lots of opinion....They have an opinion on everything, on every single thing you do. There always seems to be an opinion. Shall we do this, shall we do that....I've found that incredibly difficult, dealing with the egos, for the want of a better word.

These opinions and egos manifest themselves in various guises with Greg's confidence noticeably eroded during the mid-season interview that year, as a consequence of his technical coaching being openly criticised during training by some of his players. Greg took this particularly badly, as in previous seasons he had considered this to be one of his stronger attributes. He recalled:

Ye there's been a few occasions where my defence policy was openly questioned in front of the group. Then on the training pitch when I thought we'd got something sorted out, another player piped up saying it was completely wrong and that we shouldn't be doing it that way. I could just see doubt in the other players' faces....and that was a very difficult situation to be in, to be openly criticised in front of the group.

Greg remarked on how he found this and similar instances difficult to manage, often now finding himself in disagreement with his new players and not having the relevant coaching knowledge or experience to adequately deal with such situations effectively. Interview evidence at that time further revealed his slump in confidence, which eventuated in a small cry for help during this difficult period:

I feel now, as we've mentioned, I'm an up and coming Coach. I know what I know, and where I'm at. At the minute I don't feel like I'm learning from anyone on a regular basis. It's all very well I got given this role but I'm not necessarily developing or learning off an experienced guy on a regular basis, and at the speed I need. And I wouldn't say it was a worry for me but, I feel I could be coming along a lot quicker and managing these mistakes better if I had more experience around me, instead of having to bring it back to my mentor. You know what I mean, there's no one there necessarily *hands on* to nurse me through and I think...there's still a bloody lot to still learn.

Greg also shared how this period was affecting other aspects of his life and how he looked to his partner for support:

She understands what environment I'm into now, in terms of the off field, and on field. I've had to go up a level in my coaching and she can also see that, to be honest, she can see that I'm out of my depth....I always seem to be making mistakes, you know. There never seems to be a moment where someone says you actually did that well, and she can see that. She looks after me that way because she's quite an articulate, educated girl who's kind of been there, in a different field, and she can kind of help me to relax and support me.

Feeling that I had somehow let Greg down in not identifying the extent of his current situation, I inquired why he had not talked about his situation earlier. "Pride, I suppose! It's not easy admitting to yourself that it's not going well, or asking for help, even from you." Fortunately I was able to offer added support, attending sessions on a more frequent basis to help devise a more agreeable training and playing regime that also facilitated some senior player input to take pressure off Greg and his coaching team. Also ensuring I was more proactive in making contact to offer a friendly ear or some advice with my efforts geared towards enhancing Greg's understanding of Performance coaching and how best to manage the players that he was dealing with. Recalling one such session, Greg highlighted how:

...what really helped was when you came in and reinforced the system I had brought in. It was interesting to see that there was not even one bit of challenge from the players. Maybe that comes with more of an authoritative figure. He may have felt that....he [problematic player who had raised previous issue] could get away with it a little bit more because of where I am as a Coach.

Greg had obviously found the going tough, exemplifying the tribulations and subsequent emotions that he and other Coaches, placed in a similar *fast-track* scenario, were no doubt experiencing with their respective teams. Making comparisons to his previous coaching experiences he reported significant changes in his thoughts and attitudes:

This year I've completely turned the corner in terms of taking my work home. Whereas I sat down last year and it was a doddle, things were going well, it was easy and nothing really was going wrong. Now I would say it's difficult. The coaching, the managing of egos, the trying to play, the implementing of decent sessions, managing the GM. These things are all really difficult and I'm coming home and I go to bed, well when I'm in bed, that's the when I do most of my thinking. It takes me a good hour or two to get to sleep....I don't really know where to go with it right now.

When commenting further on how it was affecting other aspects of his life, Greg recalled:

Now my life seems to be dictated around rugby even when I'm watching a schools or local game, I'm studying. I'm not just looking at the game with a beer, I'm looking at what teams are doing, and how they do it. So in terms of that, I think that my development and my understanding has increased, but it has still got a way to go. You know, whereas last season I still looked upon it as a hobby, and it was good to get paid. Now it's become a job and that's been a big change, and as I mentioned to you earlier, it's trying to remain positive when you're not necessarily getting the best of feedback from players or from your GM and it's trying to take that and use that to become better....But sometimes it's difficult when you keep making the mistakes, you think, 'bloody hell am I in the right place here, why am I doing all this?'

Fortunately, thanks to on-going support over the course of the season, the situation improved and Greg managed to adjust relatively well to his new demands. After securing some unexpected wins for the team, he finally reached a point towards the end of the season (2011-12), where he felt he had finally gained the respect of people at the club (Potrac et al., 2002). In terms of his relationship with the GM, he felt he had reached a point where:

I'm very happy with it, we're open and I know [GM-name] is a very honest character and that's good. We bounce ideas around and sometimes they get talked about and sometimes we disagree, but it's all toward moving the club forward. He's there to support me, I do feel that, and he understands the situation I'm in. I also understand the situation he's in, so the relationship's developing quite fine.

Similarly, Greg felt he had reached a point with the players where:

I feel as if I am respected among the players. I've also learnt to give a certain amount of senior player input that I feel at first I wasn't particularly open to. Maybe I thought they [the players] were undermining me, but now I understand these guys are bringing in very valuable thoughts because they are very enthusiastic guys and they know the game.

Even though results exceeded expectation during their first season within the Premiership league and Greg felt that he had developed his coaching skills quite extensively over the course of the season, the GM still felt it necessary to employ a more experienced Head Coach to further facilitate the club's progress. Whilst still accepting and agreeing with the decision, Greg aired some disappointment at the news as he felt somewhat undervalued by the GM, regarding his efforts and the progress made by the team. During an informal meeting over a coffee to discuss the matter following the completion of the data collection period, Greg voiced concerns regarding the direction and image of the club and his own future. He was worried that by progressing the team too quickly, they would lose the "old club identity and its links to the local Chinese community," something that Greg felt very passionate about. On a more personal level, Greg was also worried about how the new appointment would affect him and his new standing in the team as Assistant Coach. His main concern that he would be pushed aside by the new Head Coach who would obviously want to establish himself with the team and club in general. Even though I attempted to allay Greg's fears, they were well founded and perhaps serve to highlight the Machiavellian and cutthroat nature of professional sport. This point was not lost on Greg, who upon reflecting on his chosen career path, inquired, "is it always like this, is it always such an emotional roller-coaster or what?"

9.1.2 Jim's Story

Jim was an effervescent character possessing great interpersonal skills, enthusiasm and confidence in his daily dealings as a Coach and in life in general. Behind that affable personality however, lay a single-minded attitude that had been developed as a Tier 1 International standard player and from a professional playing background

which provided him with a good knowledge of the Performance game. He had begun his coaching career quite early on, while still a young player, amassing quite a substantial coaching resume before being attracted to HK by one of the leading club teams as a H-PC. He felt his progression into coaching was quite natural, having come from a strong sporting family background where he remembered that:

....basically my father was a Coach in football and was a competent sportsman when he was growing up. So I was always around that sporting arena, ever since I could walk. And then as I got older it was becoming more and more apparent that I was a leader, I suppose, in most of the teams that I played in. Then I went into professional sport and the progression was to get into coaching as early as possible. So I thrived on working in the community with schools, kids, people my own age from when I was young....It's just become a part of my day-to-day life.

Remarking on his coaching progress to that date, he added, "I'm very lucky now, I'm 30, been coaching since I was 19, so I've always had teams twice a week, always put those hard yards." This experience allowed him to reach a point where he felt he was ready for the challenges awaiting in HK. However, his early experiences of the game in HK were to come as quite a shock, with Jim recalling:

....when I turned up here it was the most amateur environment I've ever been in. It was a real shock to the system, [in] how it was initially sold to me, and what I actually came into.....it was just completely worlds apart. And whilst there was a little bit of talent here, the organisational side of things, the values, the way people lived their lives was just completely different to what I was used to. My particular team were renowned for drinking more than anything else. You know, they were quite happy to lose to a team, buy the opposition a beer and let that team have a good weekend. That's never been a part of me, well not since I've started playing anyway. So that was a huge shock.

The challenge however did not deter Jim, who set about his new job with the enthusiasm so apparent in his character. During the first of our formal interviews, which coincided with the build-up to his second season as CCO, Jim had been reasonably pleased with the progress, spending a lot of time changing the image and perception of the club along with the attitude of its players.

He reflected on the season, "I've just spent the past 12 months, a whole year, and wrote it off almost. As long as we didn't come last I didn't really mind." Jim arrived at a point towards the end of that season where:

...what I'm seeing now are the benefits. We won the last six games of the season on the trot. We're attracting players from other clubs now, which was never an option before, people wouldn't come to us because of our image. So that's a huge step for me going forward.

As the initial interview unfolded, Jim's passion for coaching became quite evident, along with the high levels of personal confidence in his own ability:

I think I'm in a better position than a lot of the other Coaches I have come across, simply because I'm going back home now and doing coaching courses to see where I am as compared to people at my level. And again, not trying to sound arrogant but I'm ahead of them, and I think the fact that I did it all; girls, when I was 19 for two years; then I went to young kids; and then when I got to 22, I took on a University team; then from there I went onto men's rugby, all to get to this point. It's given me more of an idea how to react in different situations.

During later conversations he revealed:

I want to be the best Coach I can possibly be. I want to coach one of the top clubs in England specifically, but also in Europe. I want to crack at the international thing, should that ever come up, and I think I'm doing the right thing about it. Coming to HK and learning my trade here, you know, as an apprentice.

Throughout these and later interviews, Jim constantly referred to *his* players, *his* Coaches and *his* Club, backing his own ability in achieving success for the team through a clear vision of what he thought needed to be done in respect of the club's on-going development. The vision started with the creation of a "family environment at the club," an experience he himself enjoyed as a player:

I'll be honest, I've always been part of a family club...I played for [club name], you know, which were all for the drinking culture. We were all out together, all the time. I then played for [second club]....Then I went to [third club], and that's all we were, was a family club.... We drank together, we ate together, our girlfriends got on well.

On trying to establish that family ethos at his club he described the barriers he faced:

When I got out here with my club, we haven't got great financial resources, or club memberships. We haven't got these big sporting facilities, but what we have got is each other... So what I've done is try to get a balance and actually show the boys what a special bond it is. You don't get it in many places. You certainly don't get it in any other of these clubs in Hong Kong.

To achieve greater success, Jim knew that he had to change the existing perception and image of the club along with the attitudes of both players and Coaches towards "getting them to be the best they can be." He recalled changes in the players' attitudes at the end of first season and suggesting that "they now have a different outlook because they are mentally tougher." Later he added:

When I talk about being mentally tough, it's everything; being at the right place, at the right time. Don't be late; if you're supposed to be at training 7.30, be there 7 o'clock. If you're not there at 7 o'clock, then you're out. You know, when we come, we work hard. If you don't work hard then you're out, you're gone! Talking to people straight, doing things to the best of your ability. Like in other aspects of your life really, it's about being there for other people. Understanding the criticism and taking it; from any other team member as well, not always having to come back with an answer. And these lads, they've turned [the corner] now in understanding the difference between, actually understanding the pain of losing, instead of just writing it off as if it's nothing.

This change of mind-set and attitude in the players had been achieved through Jim initially taking an unorthodox stance during the early months of his H-PC tenure, from an initial position where:

Well what I did in pre-season, was I made a point of going drinking with them all the time. So I arrived here and we had two and a half months, I just laid down the law straight away, drink yourselves to death for the next month, but then it's all going to change and we're going to change. And I'll lead, you know, I'll be the one out drinking later than anyone else, I'll be the one that's leading the charge, but when we come down to it, we change our issues. We drink at the right time... it's not a paying environment out here, it's all on trust. So what they could trust from me was, if they were out on a Thursday night after training, with a game on Saturday, they could trust that they wouldn't get picked.

Jim later elaborated that this unorthodox hard line eventually started to reap rewards, convincing his players that by making sacrifices and adopting a more disciplined and professional attitude, they would be rewarded: "I told them, I'll then reward you with a winning side." He further suggested that "obviously some of that was a little bit tongue in cheek to begin with because I didn't know very much about the league. But straight away we got results." Jim recalled his elation at winning the initial trust of some players, remembering that over time "I could get three or four (players) to follow me, then four or five would follow them.....so it's kind of evolved." He also stressed the importance of a sound recruitment policy in drafting in some senior players for his forthcoming second season (my first in data collection). These newly recruited senior players had decided to follow him out to HK after being coached by Jim and playing alongside him in his home country. These served as able deputies in further spreading Jim's message and vision towards developing a professional attitude where *team spirit* and a close *family* bond were bi-products of the trust and personal values that he promoted. By the time the data collection period began, he had been able to develop a team environment where:

....having the girlfriends and the wives involved is a massive part of us doing well. I'd say there's only one other team that are near us in this family kind of bond, which is so powerful. We do everything together. We go out socialising as a team while the girls are down the other end having a BBQ. We have a social every third week, every fourth week it's almost like a compulsory get together thing, but it's not compulsory because everyone comes anyway. You know, that's a big attraction in coming into our team. If the atmosphere is right, then there's a good chance you're going to get a player with the right mind-set on the pitch.

Jim also took steps to ensure his local Chinese players were not left out of this evolving family unit by also catering for their enjoyment needs:

...the social doesn't involve going out and getting pissed, the Western boys do that enough anyway because that's part of the way we've been brought up....We kinda do dinners, and make sure that we have awards nights; Chinese awards nights, that fit in with their processes. We'll also have pool parties out here in HK. The Western guys tend to make more money than the Chinese guys, so it opens up more options for them to be able to go out on a Sunday, Saturday, Friday night, whatever. So you have to get that right with the Chinese guys and go to the right environment after training on a Thursday. Probably every other week, six or seven of the boys will go over to the local Chinese restaurant and try stuff like chicken's feet and pig's ears, you know because that's a buy-in. You're buying their trust by going in their environment, and it's worked for us. Whether it's right or wrong, it's worked for us and I'm not going to stop doing that kinda stuff.

As that first season of data collection progressed Jim was equally happy with the team's progress on the field, content to share some of the workload with the trusted senior players who had travelled to HK:

I think what does help is if you've got two or three generals underneath you who have the same ideals, or who want the same things as you do. So, it's not necessarily coming from that same voice [me] all the time. So you know, you go out at training, but you don't have to be that voice all the time, and [over time] they then take that responsibility into their own hands.

However, the progress came at a cost and Jim recalls how he had to put a "few noses out of place" on his journey, by having to release both players and Coaches who refused to buy-in to his particular regime. Extracts from interviews during that first season revealed how for some of his coaching staff, "It wasn't important to them," and that "they were coaching for a bit of fun." As a result, Jim was "not sure those Coaches were the right Coaches to be there in the first place, so they've been changed." A similar approach was taken with some of the players, and they too were removed from the squad because "they caused a bit of friction." Jim felt the need to "get rid of a couple of people out of the squad.....because you don't need

those kinds of poisons in your team.” During this early period, Jim even recalled asking parents and their children to leave the junior, community based section of the club because they had been openly criticising some of his younger Coaches. Jim thought it was important at that time to display trust and loyalty to those Coaches within his *family* environment because they were committed and hard working, while also possessing the potential to develop effectively as young Chinese Coaches.

Recalling the incident, he remembered:

...I told my Chairman because it had to be nipped in the bud, and you know at the end of the day, there's only one person that's going to leave, and that isn't going to be me and it isn't going to be my Coaches. If I lose a son and the parent then, you know, that's something I'm prepared to do. I think it's a shame for the son as we're putting in place the best structure in HK, with potentially the best Coaches...So he's almost cutting his son's nose off to spite his own face. But that's the standpoint, I'll always back my Coaches, right or wrong...and in this instance from where I was looking at it, this parent needs to put-up or shut-up.

On the face of this early interview evidence, Jim seemed to be making great strides at his club, painting a picture that heralded him as a real guiding light in shaping his new vision of the club. However, as time passed and I became more familiar with Jim's personality and style of coaching, it became apparent that sometimes the image he painted was quite different to the actual reality of situations. Although I believed that he never set out to mislead or embellish the facts, his over zealous outlook and passion for the club could sometimes prove misleading. At times, what I had initially considered to be his key personal strengths (i.e. his organisational understanding and management of the environment he was trying to create, along with his single mindedness and exceptionally confident approach), actually turned out to be character flaws in his personality, often landing him into trouble with key stakeholders at his club or within the HKRFU.

An early example regarding his lack of organisation came after Jim had been appointed as Head Coach of a National Age-grade team who were touring another local Asian country for a two game International series. As an International Head Coach, his responsibilities in preparing the team included the formulation of daily tour itineraries geared towards *best preparation* for his players and management staff. Protocols dictated that both players and coaching staff were expected to wear the correct apparel at specified periods throughout the day, acting as representatives and ambassadors for the HKRFU, with appropriate behaviour also expected in accordance with international protocols laid out by the HP (Head of Performance). However, a surprise visit by the HP to the team hotel in the build-up to their second game evidenced serious flaws in Jim's management skills and the organisation of his players and Coaches. When interviewed about events on that tour the HP recalled:

I suppose there's a number of different elements to what I witnessed. First of all, I observed the training group at an early morning pool recovery session, and the environment lacked an international approach. They were all in their own casual gear, not training kit, including the conditioning Coach. There were no senior management present at the session, so I felt that was a poor start to creating an international environment. The other element would have been the support of the management to the players at that time. And as I said, it lacked senior management presence, meaning the Head Coach, Assistant Coach and attached Coach had decided to remain in bed for that session.....I administered a reprimand to the under 20 players at the pool for their dress code and told them it should never happen again. I then went to inform the management team and found that unfortunately, the Head Coach was still in bed, having had a fairly big night out the evening before with the management team.

When probed further, the HP offered that:

....the other element to it would have been that on the technical side, it became evident very quickly that the coaching team had not prepared for any video analysis....No feedback had been given to the players running into the second game of the tournament, so the players didn't get to see any of the previous game. So, the whole system lacked video analysis.

Finally, in how best to deal with the matter, he added:

I think the bottom line here is that they lack experience; I think it's a case of up-skilling and appropriate training required. I think that it's really down to lack of experience of managing an international environment, particularly within an elite competition. There needs to be an education here, there needs to be perhaps protocols put in place, perhaps for acceptable management of these areas, over an eight or 10 day tour.

When challenged about these and other issues pertaining to the tour on his return, it became apparent that Jim indeed seemed to have little idea as to how a team should be properly organised and managed when on an International tour. This was perhaps an oversight on our part as senior management, in incorrectly assuming that Jim's prior experience as a Performance/Professional rugby player, which involved extensive travel and many hotel visits, would stand him in good stead for preparing an International team on tour for a major competition. It also raised concerns as to what might have been reported, had the HP not paid his surprise visit to the hotel, as early feedback from Jim regarding the team's preparation suggested things were 'going really well' (e-mail correspondence to me in the lead up to the first game), therefore heightening concerns that Jim's perception of events and the actual reality were sometimes very different. In general, the incident eventually heralded a positive outcome, with the HKRFU organising workshops to educate Jim and other CCOs as to the behaviours and protocols expected when on our National tours, so as to avoid a repeat of the poor practice witnessed by the HP.

Another instance arose towards the end of the first season of data collection, when Jim had to be pulled aside and rebuked for inadvertently, or otherwise, creating potential conflict between his club staff and members of the Union. It had come to my attention over time that Jim could be quite manipulative at weekly meetings trying to change established policies because it suited his own Club agenda.

One such issue surrounded the existing eligibility ruling (section 3.3.1) leading into the final competition phase of that season, which meant that each team needed to field at least twelve HK eligible players within their match-day squad of 22. During one particular meeting, Jim suggested and sought support for a relaxation on eligibility criteria, with his agenda being to enrol non-qualified players for the critical Grand Final period at the end of the domestic club season in order to bolster his chances of winning some silver-ware. However, while allowing more non-qualified players might add to his and others club efforts, it would undermine Union legislation regarding eligibility, a stance we were unable to accept. Jim was able to gather support for his suggestion, as it obviously helped other club Coaches too, and as such, placed myself and other senior staff in a potentially difficult position. Finally, following lengthy discussion, it was decided that we would retain our original stance and refuse any potential changes to the existing ruling.

Following this particular weekly meeting, I pulled Jim aside and reminded him that his duties and loyalties should be representative of both his club and the Union. I also informed him that over recent weeks he seemed to be working against Union policies in favour of his club needs and that this was something he could not continue to do if he wished to maintain his current status as a CCO and Coach to the National Age-grade team. I reminded Jim that his position was that of a H-PC and not of an Executive Board member attempting to set or change policy decisions. Although he seemed to be suitably contrite in his reply, he was quick to fall back on what was to become the well-worn monologue of being pressured by his club bosses and feeling the need to loyally represent his club cause at the meeting (see later extracts, Chapter 11),

His overly keen pursuit of success came to a head during the second season of data collection, where once again Jim seemed to be at the centre of conflict created between his club and the Union. This time, the incident involved and implicated me in my role as CDM/LM of the CCOs and finally led to a formal reprimand for Jim from the HP. The issue began following another of our weekly meetings where he had inaccurately relayed information back to his club bosses regarding payment and schedules involving the 50-50 Job-share Scheme. The particular boss was quick to phone me, feeling aggrieved at some of the skewed comments I had allegedly made. Following a lengthy phone conversation and a follow-up meeting with the club official the next day, the issues were settled. Nevertheless, the situation left me annoyed and with a significant decrease in trust and respect for Jim and his manipulative management behaviours. Personal (CDM) diary notes revealed my thoughts following the formal reprimand:

Jim was very humbled and apologetic and I really went after him. Unsure whether it's a lack of organisation and/or concentration or if he enjoys causing problems between the Union and clubs. Although pissed off and annoyed with him, I will give him the benefit of doubt as he was genuinely shocked when I told him he had lost my trust and respect. However his lapses and general poor organisation has to be addressed at a personal level. He suggested he had just taken brief notes and handed them to [name of Chairman] who reacted badly to my comments. Jim, realising the trouble he has caused, also admitting that this isn't an isolated instance and that he needs to change.

Following the disciplinary meeting, Jim wrote a letter airing his reflections to both the HP and me as his CDM/LM:

Guys, yesterday's meeting has really kicked me in the teeth, more so because I didn't see it coming. Now my focus has to be on rebuilding the trust with you guys and I'll make every effort to redeem myself in your eyes as I respect you both. Below are a few areas, that from our meeting, I need to focus on.

1. *Relaying information from Club to Union*

The 'manipulating' remark is the bit that has got to me the most. I understand that by learning how to filter and package information more effectively and taking the time to re-clarify if I do not fully understand, it will prevent me from repeating the miscommunication errors that I have made.

2. *Manipulating situations*

Three different incidents have come to light during the last three weeks. First in approaching [name of HP] a couple of weeks ago to talk about why other Directors are talking about me. Then the incident with the [name of HC] and then the email with [names of Club Chairman] all show that it's not an isolated incident and there is a pattern emerging. I do understand that by going and speaking to [name of HP] on the player issue and then involving others, I caused a situation that never needed to happen. If I had just gone back directly to [name of HP], another solution could have perhaps been considered. All this did was confuse the situation, by bringing others into the frame, making it appear that I was manipulating the situation further. Please understand, this is me being naive, and trying to fight for my club and I now understand it is perceived as being manipulative. It won't happen again, period! I'd appreciate if you guys clarify any other issues in the past, so as I know exactly where I have gone wrong. It is not my intention, and never has been, to undermine you guys.

As a means of trying to understand and confirm that Jim's intentions were based simply from an over zealous ambition to succeed, I met with his club boss to seek his opinion on Jim's progress. After confirming that Jim had indeed been manipulating both parties to achieve his ends he elaborated that:

*....his biggest failure is to recognise his own weaknesses that I point out to him, you know, regularly....and by the second year, I had a long chat with Jim about his weaknesses. A major weakness is his lack of discipline in a reporting environment. He's very much a 'stream of consciousness' type of guy. I asked him to do me a report at the end of the second season and I got about 1500 words of rambling stuff. I sent it back to him and told him to give it back with 500 words. He actually couldn't do it, I got about 800 words back. He doesn't seem to have the ability to isolate the strengths, he just wants to throw everything into the melting pot...He has to separate the wheat from the chaff, and he's not capable of that yet...I just think that the only way he'll get there is through some sort of business training, some sort of small six-week course that teaches you about the benefit of *less is more*.*

At a personal level, the comments of his club boss helped removed doubts I had that Jim was harbouring some sort of malicious or clandestine agenda in his dealings as CCO for the club. Instead, his comments confirmed that his poor errors in judgment were indeed based around his ambition, in conjunction with a lack of organisational skills and important lapses in concentration. As CDM, the experience also proved invaluable as at times I over-estimated Jim's capabilities as a consequence of his extensive professional/international playing background, infectious enthusiasm and engaging coaching patten, which meant I credited him with more knowledge and experience than was actually the case. Fortunately, our relationship endured and while Jim probably proved the most problematic of the Coaches in my charge, he was, in my opinion, also among the most gifted and generally displayed unwavering leadership skills for his team, as well as possessing a sound understanding regarding technical and tactical components of the game. These qualities were soon to be recognised elsewhere, and nearing the completion of the data collection period (2011-12 season), Jim accepted an employment opportunity back in his home country with one of the leading professional teams, taking another major step towards achieving his longer-term career ambition of becoming a Head Coach in a Tier 1 rugby-playing nation.

9.1.3. Sid's Story

Soon after meeting Sid, I became very aware of his sound organisational skills and prodigious work ethic towards developing himself and his team. From early in our relationship he was keen to seek my own, and other senior management's, opinion on many matters, and was always happy to challenge my views in healthy and thought-provoking debate. Like Jim, he had come from a high quality professional

playing background, gaining top international playing honours. As such, he also possessed a good understanding of the Performance game, a feature that added to many of our rugby discussions. During the initial period of my tenure and throughout the early phases of data collection, Sid was always keen to promote and support various practical coaching workshops and group discussions involving the CCOs at our weekly department meetings. He was also very proactive in visiting other professional teams overseas and externally run seminars and/or management courses to further enhance his personal knowledge and coaching skills. As a consequence of this willingness to improve, Sid was generally receptive to trying out any new ideas or concepts suggested by me as CDM/LM to enhance his own development as a Coach. The introduction of weekly reflective performance sheets (Appendix 4) was one such example where it was apparent that Sid responded well to, and benefited from, requests for him (and other CCOs) to structure his reflection towards more objective and productive ends (section 11.2.1). While some of the Coaches found the process mundane and non-productive, he reported immediate benefits, and was more able to channel his previously sporadic reflective episodes into a more structured and constructive process that informed both his short and long-term practice as a Coach. Likewise, he was always proactive in inviting me to his club and National Age-grade training sessions to monitor his progress, with all his efforts geared towards self-improvement as an applied Coach.

His Coaching career had begun somewhat prematurely towards the end of his professional playing career, where he had assisted the Coaches at his club following a lengthy series of injuries. The long layoffs caused by his injuries prompted him to consider his future career aspirations following the end of his playing career, which he believed was not too far away.

Sid remembered:

And even though it wasn't formally recognised, I took all the backs' training sessions. I also took all the analysis side of things, but was really frustrated with it all because I didn't get any recognition for the work I was doing. I felt that what I was doing wasn't really being acknowledged by the Head Coach. So there would always be, not a senior players meeting, but like game-play meeting during that last year when I was out injured, and while I had been taking the backline sessions, I was never invited into those meetings.

Sid's comments at the time alluded to a testing relationship with his then Head Coach who did not seem to value his contribution to the team effort and excluded him from important pre-match meetings despite his close work with the team during the build-up to the games. His relationship with the Coach, his injuries and his veteran status pushed Sid to the realisation that his days as a professional player were numbered and prompted him to start exploring other employment opportunities in the game:

I had floated around the idea of getting into the video analysis side of things, but after experiencing that for a couple of months I realised you didn't get outside, and didn't see much of the sunlight [laughs]. So I preferred to be outdoors and enjoy, you know, getting into the rugby side of things, and so that's why I got involved in it.

His break into coaching came as somewhat of a surprise at the end of that season, while still a professional player, with fate having a large hand in his arrival to HK:

.....well I was in tough spot, I had organised a H-PC role down in the UK, but they went belly-up as they had financial problems. So that contract got pulled after it had been put on the table, so to speak. I hadn't played much during that last season because I had three injuries that kept me out, so I only played like five or six games. That meant I didn't have much [video] footage either or much momentum to go and get contracts with other clubs. So, like, I was always going to go into coaching, but perhaps two or three years earlier than I'd hoped too. I had a friend who was in the team who was born in HK. He'd recently come out here for a visit and I then received an email from [name of HCM] telling me they were looking for Coaches. Then, two weeks later after a Skype interview, I was on the plane. So, I didn't really have too much thought about what I was getting into until I got here.

Sid, like Jim, reflected on those early days and recalled his shock as to the standard of the game in HK, and to the challenges that he faced at his particular club, one which had been struggling to stay in the top flight of the HK league system since its inception some five years previously. He recalled that it was initially:

....difficult, very difficult, a massive rugby changing experience. I didn't think that I really understood what I was getting myself into to be fair. Got to HK with a six week training programme, then got to the first training session and realised that basically I had to start from scratch. We were very much behind any other team in the First Division in terms of player strength, player depth and that was evident in the first three games that we played, where we lost by 86-nil, 56-nil and 98-nil. I had to rethink my strategy....we had small improvements over the year but didn't win a championship game.

The statement offers some insight into the challenges faced by Sid as H-PC during his first season, with much deliberation also given to how he was going to change the perception and image of the club to attract new recruits. His early endeavours were met with frustration and resentment due to poor previous management of the club. Sid's view was that:

...the club's had money given them and other dispensations given them, but year after year they've squandered them. They've never really got any better and now people on the Board and at other clubs are like 'oh [club name], again, we're not giving them anything else.' And unfortunately it's something that's been hard for me to change because the club has always been given too much in the past, and squandered it.

This meant that attracting new players proved almost impossible:

I've gone around and tried to get players to come to [club name], to play for us. As you know there's a transfer window in May, I offered 27 players, assorted packages; match payment, getting them jobs, improving their businesses, and all I got back was one of three reasons why they did not want to join us. Number one, the club was shit, and we are never ever going to win a game so why would I want to come and play for them? Two, their mates were at their current club and they are not willing to move...Then the third one was that guys are pretty loyal to the club that they'd been brought over by, or who had developed them, which is fair enough, I kind of respect that....So no, that's been the most challenging part of [club name], is their negative reputation and how that affects things like recruitment.

Unperturbed by his perceived lack of success during that first season, Sid worked on, only to be met by further hardship and annoyance in preparation for his second season (my first season of data collection). During a formal interview leading into that season, he aired further frustrations regarding his plight as Head Coach:

What frustrates me is that the club does need help and I've been trying to get help from the Union. But I'm getting turned down because, 'Oh you've had that before,' or 'no, we can't give you that because we'd have to give it to other clubs.' It's the same sort of stuff as well. In reality, we are so far behind other teams in Division One that we do need help.

However, because of his relentless and methodical work ethic, he made some progress in changing the perception of the club while also trying to put in place some sustainable systems and development structures. In respect of his senior team's development, he recalled:

I initially went out to get ten overseas players to come in of first division quality. At this stage, I've got six, so I'm still looking for an extra four. I'm still hoping for a bit of help to get a couple of National Academy boys to come along as well, that's going to benefit them too. I'm still somewhat behind where I want to be in terms of player strength, but hopefully in the next couple of weeks that tide will turn.

On broader club policies, he recalled:

I've made big changes. I've sorted out the colts section, I've allocated Coaches to each individual team because I found they had like one Coach for sixty kids for each of our U18's 16's and 14's age groups. They weren't getting any coaching, just playing a game of touch with one ball between sixty players. I thought that was ridiculous so I've brought in some structures to sort the colts out. I've forged links with schools and other clubs to provide a feeder system, and we've established two new teams at senior level, which is going to provide a pathway from 14's right up to the senior level. Off the field, sponsorship has improved. We've changed sponsors, and that's the part of the club that I've not really had to deal with, which I'm thankful for. I don't want to have to deal with that side of things, I just want to deal with very much the rugby side. Yes, so a massive difference.

Even though Sid intimated his reluctance to take on club matters outside his CCO remit, already seemingly overburdened with his Performance coaching duties and player recruitment issues, he nevertheless accepted additional club responsibilities in an attempt to pull all factions of the club closer:

....I found the club to have been very segregated, the committee has come mainly from the social part of the club which is the Fourth and Fifth Division, with everything aligned towards that part of the club. So, that's one of my big things next year is bringing everything together. We had a woman's section that was very successful, but you wouldn't even know that they were part of this club, to be honest. Then we have our First Division team [now Premier] and we also seem to be left on our own, So, this year I'm trying to bring a bit more of a *club* feel to it, getting some interaction between all these teams, and the support of guys to really get behind these teams, including the colts section as well....So I'm implementing some structures and then there's hopefully a base to launch a revolution, so to speak.

When prompting him about the extent of his remit, Sid revealed:

Look and I'm not saying that I'm doing everything...I've been quite lucky that the committee have given me the responsibility of the playing side of things, well the first and the second teams, and setting up the coaching roles throughout the whole club. And they've left me to it, they are not halting me in any way and they fully support any decision I make, so they are absolutely brilliant, and that's really good.

As the interview unfolded however, I began to get a better grasp of his situation regarding the support he was receiving from significant others at the club. When asked about any assistance he received, Sid commented:

No not really.....I've had one committee member say we could use his apartment for accommodation, for the important guys, and [that] he would also give us a visa through one of his companies, and both times he didn't come through with either. So, effectively I planned the budget on this guy's apartment and the job and how much that was going to save us. Then I had to go back to the drawing board when he came up with nothing. No job, no apartment!

Sid also aired his frustrations at on-going player visa issues, highlighting the great difficulties in finding his newly recruited players employment, which granted them the all important HK work visa. He highlighted that most of the other Premiership clubs

had contacts on their club committees who were very influential in finding employment for new players. Sid however, had no such luxury, having to go it alone in making improvements and advancements with little assistance or direction offered from senior club executives. Over time it became apparent that while some of the other Coaches received strong support and direction from senior management at their particular clubs, Sid and some of the other CCOs were left largely to their own devices in developing their own ideas and initiatives to move the club forward. As the data collection period progressed into the second season, and following further discussions with those Coaches who lacked real support and direction from their club bosses, it became evident that it was not due to a lack of effort or interest on the part of the bosses. Instead, it was simply the case that officials at these certain clubs lacked the knowledge or expertise in how to make the necessary progress in what was a dynamic and increasingly professional game. Personal diary extracts from this period resolved that:

This whole situation has come about as a consequence of the CCO scheme itself, reaching a point where particularly the pro-CCOs [guys with professional playing background], actually seem to have more idea about moving the clubs forward than their bosses do. However, it's a dangerous game, as some of the guys seem to be left totally to their own designs as to what exactly the best means of progress are. Personal concerns surround the fact that while we discuss things and generally try and move the game forward at our weekly meetings, some of the guys are reluctant to let me, or others, into what goes on at their club. I understand their reluctance with the other Coaches around, as they don't want to be washing their dirty washing in public, and/or highlight that certain staff/Coaches may be unhappy and therefore ripe for poaching. But I get annoyed also because I suspect they collude more with their club bosses about any ideas they might have, as they are less likely to meet any resistance, either because their bosses don't understand and/or as it might conflict with things like the Union eligibility or recruitment protocols.

From the perspective of the club officials during this period, informal conversations confirmed that they were both pleased and shocked at the transition of the club game over the two seasons since introducing the CCO scheme. The situation moved from a position where recruitment involved enlisting players who were already domicile in HK primarily as a consequence of their professional working expertise, to a point in the second season of data collection (the third for the CCO scheme itself) whereby clubs were recruiting players from overseas, primarily for their playing prowess on a semi-professional and even professional basis. Consequently, this meant having to overcome HK employment legislation in order to find them appropriate employment and the all important work visa in order to retain their services. Personal (CDM) reflections during the second season of data collection recalled:

We have developed a real 'chicken and egg' situation, as the guys [CCO's] have been given the go ahead to recruit players from overseas by their club bosses, but it would seem they have given little thought into how they are going to get the work visas [employment]. Talking to club bosses, they didn't think the CCOs would be as successful as they have been in attracting quality players, hence assuming the problem would not materialise to the extent it has. So here we are immediately prior to start of the second full season of data collection with numerous high-quality players arriving/arrived in HK, after being promised jobs and work-permits so they can develop playing and long-term work and careers. This highlights the naivety of CCOs in not coming to chat about these potential problems sooner, preferring instead to forge ahead in the hope that jobs would simply appear. Another factor in them not talking to me, no doubt, is their reluctance for me/us to see what type of players they are recruiting, getting older guys in for a quick fix, but players who realistically offer nothing in the long-term for our international game, and hoping to get them in under the radar. Need to table the whole recruitment thing at our next meeting and make the CCOs aware that there will be no relaxation on the eligibility rules, as I suspect that will be the next request from club bosses – Can't happen!

The whole issue of allowing some CCOs a free hand in the development of their club's top teams rarely produced effective results. Observations and discussions revealed how they often fluctuated between initiatives without providing any sustained effort or follow through, instead substituting one new idea for another in pursuit of more immediate results. This was the case with Sid who, on the one hand, was being commended by club officials for his often tireless efforts on various initiatives implemented, but on the other hand, he could not be accurately assessed because they lacked the necessary insight and expertise to objectively gauge their impact or effectiveness. My personal reflections at the time highlighted my thoughts:

Sid is becoming increasingly bogged down with club initiatives that are detracting from his Head Coach role, he's paying lip-service to what's important and kidding himself that because he's working hard, he's doing a good job. He needs to understand that working hard, and working smart, are two different things.

Over time, Sid's overall club remit seemed to reach a point where his core function as Head Coach became lost in a myriad of other responsibilities involving many of the social elements of the club and thus, diluting his focus on what should have been his main area of concern. Following several informal chats and one formal meeting, where it became quite noticeable that Sid's motivation and energy levels were less than normal when moving into the new season (season two of data collection), we met for a coffee and a chat regarding the progress at his club. From our meeting, it became apparent that Sid himself was beginning to realise that his self-procured remit had perhaps become too large, pushing him to a point where he was struggling to cope effectively with the work-load and subsequent on-goings at the club, while seemingly unable to make progress on any front. The first thing he discussed surrounded the long-standing recruitment difficulties, a position that had been relieved in one aspect through the enlisting of several new players.

However, with solutions found to one problem, others arise with Sid recalling issues that had arisen around selection leading into the season:

We've had a couple of guys who've had the shits because they weren't in the first couple of warm-up games. As I've tried to explain to the whole squad, no one's jersey is guaranteed if we want to move forward, and everyone needs to get on board and understand that.

When delving deeper into the current employment situation for the new players and the all important visa applications that would enable them to stay and work in HK, he elaborated:

...we've also got problems with the whole visa side of things, we've got two guys whose visas haven't come through, and it'll be debatable whether they'll come through for the start of the competition. We've also got three guys on holiday working visas, and only two can play in any one match.

Unable to find appropriate employment for them, Sid eventually lost some of the newly recruited players, adding further to his problems. As well as the selection, recruitment, and visa issues at the club during this important phase, I had also become worried about Sid's tactical and technical preparation for his team. Having spent some time over the previous summer with a world-renowned Coach in another country, Sid was keen to implement many of his teachings and philosophies, completely changing the approach adopted with his club over the previous season, which had begun to display improvements on the field. The new approach, which had been implemented by the overseas Coach with full-time professional players, was in my opinion too complicated for what was still largely a semi-professional game in HK. After challenging Sid's rationale for the changes in his coaching approach, he was still keen to move forward with the implementation. On attending a training session shortly following our conversation to witness his new approach in action, my fears were justified. It was evident that some players were becoming confused and frustrated because they did not fully understand what Sid required

from them. As a result, they were unable to accurately comply with his technical and tactical requests. After pointing out my observations, Sid became quite defensive, challenging my own understanding of the concepts he was attempting to implement. Unlike many of our previous discussions, this conversation became quite fractious as I tried to convince Sid that he may wish to reflect on his chosen direction with this particular group of players. Although making some amendments to his training and the team environment based on my observations, Sid largely chose to stay on his current course. Personal (CDM) diary records from the period highlight my thoughts:

Explained my concerns to Sid regarding the complexity of his new policy or philosophy but he seems confident it was the right approach. He also mentioned during interview that there had been some arguments at training. I explained this could just be healthy competition but had deeper concerns it was stemming from a lack of clarity/understanding regarding his new approach, which was causing frustration among his team members.

Following that meeting and after attending the team session, my diary revealed:

I took a practical session where my concerns were confirmed; Sid seems to have lost his way following his coaching visits abroad. Before taking the latter part of the session at his club, I watched him for the first 30-40 minutes or so. Concentrating too much on 'micro' detail that his players don't understand rather than broad policies and sensed this is causing frustration amongst the group. A sure case of paralysis by analysis!

Surprisingly, the team started the season well, gaining some good results, which prompted great reflection on my own part regarding my judgments about Sid's approach and the abilities of his players to apply such detail during games. However, by the Christmas period (the half-way point) of that second season, Sid was showing obvious concerns about the position of his Performance team within the new Premiership league structure and the overall level of performances.

During the mid-season formal interview, he revealed for me what were manifestations of the pressure he was experiencing:

I had a clash with Pete [pseudonym], my forwards Coach on Thursday night...He said that he wanted to do more scrums, it ended up eight minutes over time. By that time, the backs had just lost concentration. We went into a team run and everything went to shit. He was also calling the wrong set play moves, so I blew up again. I didn't know he had been calling them at that stage obviously, I wasn't aware it was him, so we ended up arguing again.

When inquiring as to how the situation had unfolded during training, Sid added:

Well, I just said, 'get it fucking right,' something like that. Saturday we had a chat about it and he agreed that there were no hard feelings. Then again this Thursday I was trying to get the intensity up and there were arguments going on between players and I think everyone's just itching to do things right, but things were starting to get...get a bit, shitty.

Although from personal experience, these incidents are not uncommon during occasional training sessions within Rugby Union, repeated occurrences sometimes highlight deeper underlying issues. This I believed was the case at the time with the confusion and frustrations arising from a lack of clear understanding on the part of the players as to exactly what Sid wanted from them. As if these on-field coaching issues were not causing enough concerns at this time, Sid was also experiencing wider player disciplinary issues at the club. This was a role and situation that he had created for himself in trying to change the overall perception and image of the club.

He recalled:

Last Saturday was our club day, so we invited sponsors to come down. We had five club teams playing back to back and it was a pretty good day in terms of how it went. Then in the [name - Senior Women's Performance team] there were two sending's off. The first during the game, and the second after the game had finished. The final whistle went and the second girl went up in front of the referee and demanded an explanation as to why her friend had been red carded. The referee didn't explain, instead she told her two or three times to move away before red carding her too. Eventually, she had to be escorted away by other players...it just sort of snowballed into a big emotional affair.

As a result, Sid found himself at the centre of a disciplinary management meeting during the week to deal with this and another sending off that had occurred over the same weekend within the men's game. Recalling his obligations that week, he remembered:

....and the result of it all was that last Tuesday the referee's society put in a code of conduct and discipline procedure on both the girls involved. Ever since then I've been trying to sort it out.....I've still got to Coach and sort out two other teams to get on the field for Saturday, but I've also had to take reports from the girls, reports from a senior members of the team, get hold of the DVD, review all of the reports and compare it to the DVD, and then write my own report on the actual incident.

When asked who was helping him at the club, he commented, "me, completely one hundred per cent, me." Sid dealt with this issue and other issues as well as he could, while his team once again finished the season on a disappointing note. Even though I had initially disagreed and tried to dissuade him from his initial approach to the Premiership team's playing philosophy, I supported his cause with club officials, explaining that as a developing Coach he would learn valuable lessons from his experiences. I reflected that his chosen philosophy did not necessarily make him a bad Coach, but probably a wiser one from an experience where he eventually saw the error of his ways.

At his end of season appraisal, which involved Sid, his club boss, and me as CDM/LM, I aired my concerns regarding the large workload, suggesting it was diminishing Sid's overall effectiveness as a Performance Coach. As a result of the meeting, agreement was reached to provide him with further assistance for the following season. However, following the completion of the data collection period, Sid decided to take a different career path from that of a Performance Coach, seeing himself more as a Rugby Administrator or Manager, where the pressure for success and results on the field would not be as demanding.

9.1.4. The IAR as Head Coach

While my own story can relate to some of the complexities previously noted by other Coaches surrounding aspects of player management (Greg, 9.1.1) and the need to change the attitudes and perceptions of the team (Jim, 9.1.2), I will focus my attention in alternative areas to highlight the varied contexts that comprise coaching life. Some of the events described were initially thought to be unique to Hong Kong rugby and its particular status as a *Developing Rugby Nation* while others offer a somewhat painful reminder of personal experiences endured early in my development as an aspiring Coach. Reliving and reassessing these experiences, albeit in a slightly different context, highlights the potentially common place and reoccurring themes that exist in coaching life.

Let me begin by offering those experiences that I initially thought were exclusive to the Hong Kong sporting environment, where Rugby Union is not considered by many to be a significant or leading sport. However, over time and acquired personal experience, the instances described were found not to necessarily be restricted only to HK, but were also occurring in other *developing rugby nations*. The personal journey as Head Coach (HC) began with the harsh realisation that I was indeed functioning within an environment where the game was largely perceived as a minority sport and therefore afforded little or no preference in respect to other sports. Up until my arrival in HK, personal experiences as a Performance/Professional Coach had been largely limited to countries where Rugby Union was considered a major or high profile sport. This usually meant that vacant changing rooms, offices, gyms or other unused facilities could be utilised, if available, to facilitate spontaneous meetings, analysis sessions and/or to extended training practices past the designated time-frames, to suit the Coaches' and players' needs. Training could

possibly be hampered through extreme weather conditions, but there was little else thereafter to interfere with the planning and application of programmes as required by myself or other Coaches.

Early experiences as HC in HK leading up to my first Asian 5 Nations Competition (A5N) were however to prove quite different, highlighting the plight of minority sports by many of the government-run public facilities in HK. Problems initially stemmed from the lack of training and playing space, which meant that the numerous sports practiced were constantly vying for time on the limited facilities available. The venues on hand were either prestigious private member clubs, or government-owned facilities run by each of the local authorities in HK. For some games, we were fortunate enough to gain the use of private member club facilities, but more often than not we relied on the local government authorities who were responsible for allocating training/playing venues for the many sports available which included both Club and International rugby. The allocation of facilities was allegedly done on an equitable first come, first serve booking basis, which meant that each of the various sporting bodies could find themselves either allocated poor quality training venues with frequently inaccessible changing or showering facilities, or at best, sharing communal changing rooms and pitch space with numerous other sports. The lack of space and communal changing areas made *exclusivity* as an international training group virtually impossible, and pre/post meetings or analysis workshops prior to (or post) training very hard to organise due to the people traffic and subsequent noise created by other teams either arriving or departing from their particular sports gatherings.

The time spent in HK leading up to the study period had alerted me to these potential logistical problems and made me aware that early planning was essential if you were to have any hope of obtaining one of the better facilities. Therefore, in an attempt to secure the best facilities during my first year as HC, I placed early requests with the local government administrators to secure training pitches and extra outlying office space for pre-training meetings and analysis sessions. In spite of the added cost of hiring the extra facilities which were still far from ideal, they were the best available venues and I was therefore grateful for the extra time and space supplied to help create a conducive international training environment for the players.

On arrival at the first session, believing that I had secured use of the extra facilities, I was frustrated to find that the allocated room had been handed to another sporting body for their use. Utilising the services of a Chinese bi-lingual player to investigate the confusion, it was allegedly down to clerical error on our part, with nothing noted in their records to confirm we had booked the extra facility despite my personal efforts to ensure that it had been done correctly. The incident raised early awareness into the insignificance and standing of the HK rugby team with any further negotiation proving unsuccessful and the meeting room left in the hands of a local club basketball team with their community based needs deemed more important than our international programme. The experience also taught me first hand that local government dealings were at best, nebulous, with the scenario repeating itself during the season at both club and international level, generating similar frustrations for many of the CCO club Coaches. The occurrences also often generated friction between Coaches and local ground-staff, as all too often they were totally inflexible in their approach, adhering strictly to local government legislation in either closing grounds at the merest hint of inclement weather or seemingly ignoring prearranged

agreements without any apparent reason to ultimately thwart my own and others' planning. It was during such occurrences that I and other CCO study participants became familiar with the frustrating and often farcical exchanges where local government ground-staff would conveniently dampen our protestations with '*cannot do*' or '*no understand*' responses to our often plausible requests to seek a logical outcome to problems that arose. These phrases were to become quite prevalent during my tenure as HC. For that particular session (and others), it meant the pre-arranged analysis sessions had to be postponed, which in itself raised further complications as HC, this time linked to the employment pressures placed on players in HK.

In keeping with the history and tradition of the game in HK (section 2.4.1), many of the current squad members were drawn from a wide spectrum of high-ranking professional employment fields. These included a cosmopolitan mix of bankers, commercial and business executives, lawyers, solicitors, teachers and aircraft pilots, along with a smaller percentage of students and local Chinese players. No matter what their professional calling, all were realistically expected to place their career aspirations well in advance of any sporting interests and ambitions they held, in order to meet their company demands and secure their future employment status. The players still within education were also placed under similar pressures, encouraged by family members and tutors to put aside hobbies such as rugby so as to use their time more constructively to meet the high academic standards set in HK. This meant that many faced what I considered to be excessive working (or educational) demands, and were pressured into working often long and unsociable hours while also failing to meet their necessary nutritional or recovery demands as potential international athletes. Those in business were often pressured into

attending hastily arranged business meetings or social functions with little or no prior warning; some players were also confronted with heavy travel itineraries, flying to all corners of the world to meet their particular company demands and often forced to spend extended periods away from their partners and/or families.

In a slightly different fashion, the local Chinese players were also expected to meet their own employment demands, working long hours in businesses where it was deemed culturally unacceptable to leave their workstation until their superiors had themselves departed. This meant that most of the players were often placed in a difficult '*can I, can't I? Shall I, shan't I?*' scenario, initially agreeing to attend training sessions but always apprehensive that the employers' late departure, last minute meeting or emergency would frustrate their plans. As a consequence, for most club and international sessions, it was normal practice to receive last minute phone calls and emails from players informing me they would be late or unable to attend training at all because of the late demands placed on them by their employers. Unfortunately, the low standing of the game granted by many employers meant that little recognition or compliance was given for those players who were representing their country as International athletes. Instead they had to depend on a mixture of good planning, using up their valuable annual leave and/or the good will of those few empathetic employers who were willing to free up some time for international training and competitions abroad. For many players, the working and sporting demands simply became too much, placing unwanted strain on their family relationships and eventually forcing them to retire early from the international game.

Taking these employment pressures into consideration, one can then perhaps begin to understand the personal frustration caused by these unscheduled changes to training plans, wasting the precious time of players who had worked hard to free themselves up for the extended meetings or analysis sessions. The issue was also further compounded because the meetings then had to be rescheduled, placing even more pressure on players to attend the rearranged analysis sessions, aspects of team preparation that I believed were critical to the overall development and success of the team.

This tale of woe regarding these organisational complexities has one final twist, still associated with that first, and subsequent, National training sessions. The particular incident further compounds the standing of the International game in HK, while also highlighting the need for a personal shift in my own thinking and planning when compared to previous experiences as a Performance Coach in my home nation. Upon reflection, there is little doubt that those prior experiences nurtured a level of complacency on my part, never being forced to complete sessions *exactly* on time, with some running over to ensure that everybody was confident and clear regarding our approach to the forthcoming game. More often than not, players would then take it upon themselves to extend sessions even further to address important personal aspects of their own game in a bid to instil further confidence in their abilities. This meant it was not unusual for sessions to run 20 or 30 minutes past their designated finishing time, with ground-staff reasonably compliant to the needs of the players. During this first training session in HK, however, I had become so caught up with pre-training organisation and subsequent complications that I had not considered the possibility of not reaching my designated training aims for this particular session or the individual needs of the players themselves. On nearing the end of our designated

time-slot and realising that I was some way off achieving my intended objectives, I began to consider the options open to me; unfortunately none became available, and as the training neared its completion, I noticed a substantial crowd gathering, many of whom were spilling onto our training area to gather misdirected and misguided *frisbees*⁶ from the field of play. As the designated finishing time loomed, numbers increased and it became obvious to me that they must be the next sporting group to use the pitch and that I would be lucky to reach my designated finishing time, with absolutely no chance of extending it towards reaching my session objectives. Diary notes from this particular occasion display both my awe and frustration at the experience, putting me and the game firmly into context within the HK sporting community:

What a bizarre and totally frustrating night, totally racked off with ground-staff in making out they had no record of booking, and then not letting us use the office after training instead, even though the room was not in use. Then to cap it all, the session was a mess, not getting to where we needed.....only to be pushed off by the local Frisbee club at 9.00. Didn't even know Frisbee was a sport? Do they have fixtures or what? There must have been around sixty of them flinging their frisbees around on the side of the pitch while we were still training. Crazy, three weeks out from our first A5N International and we squeezed off the pitch by gang of frisbee flinging Chinese!

Although this was probably the most bizarre scenario experienced throughout my tenure, other complications and distractions arose quite frequently to continually highlight the lack of preference afforded to us as an international team. A regular occurrence of the ground staff was to switch off the floodlights *exactly* on the designated time of completion. This resulted in the team being thrown into darkness while in the midst of a particular tactical manoeuvre, with similar instances often occurring during the all important final team run-through on the eve of International

⁶ Flying discs invented by Fredrick Morrison in 1938 which are thrown and caught for free-form recreation and as part of many different flying disc games. A wide range of flying-disc variants are available commercially (Kennedy, 2006).

games. On the opposite end of the continuum, on one occasion, despite securing the use of one private members club ground for one International match, the ground-staff refused to open the changing facilities or switch the floodlights *on* until the designated start time for the session, Although I can smile when I reflect on these issues now, at the time each one caused great frustration amongst players and Coaches. Many of whom had come from similar backgrounds to myself, originating from nations where Rugby Union was considered a major sport and thus afforded some degree of privilege and flexibility, particularly in the preparation of Performance and International teams. In respect of this thesis, the relayed experiences are intended to illustrate the organisational complications that can arise, often testing the adaptive capabilities of the HC in making the best of difficult logistical and organisational problems.

Next, we move onto matters *on* the field of training and discuss the difficulties of managing and coaching such an eclectic range of playing nationalities, cultures and abilities. To give the reader an example: during one International game during my first season as HC, the management team were chatting over a coffee and calculated that there were 11 different nationalities contributing to the match day 22 man squad for that particular game. These nationalities included, English, Welsh, Irish and Scots along with French, Americans, Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians, all having rightfully qualified to play for their adopted country, along with a number of local HK Chinese (and Eurasian) players. Although having gained professional coaching experience within teams that contained four or even five different nationalities, this posed a larger challenge due to the wider mix of cultures and abilities and particularly the subsequent language difficulties that arose.

The complications proved particularly testing in relation to the local Chinese, largely due to the English-Chinese language barrier, their particular tactical and technical needs, and also because of the existing cultural differences when training within the rugby environment. The language difficulties were quite apparent as the game and much of its unique esoteric terminology was taught through the medium of English. This required the Chinese players to learn what was for them, a virtually new and very complex game in a foreign language with some of the terminology being largely non-translatable. The situation was compounded because, unlike the majority of expatriate players who had grown up in cultures where rugby was very popular, most of the Chinese players were unaware of the concepts and laws of the game. For those Chinese players who had been skilful enough to enter the Performance and International game, they had generally gained only limited exposure to rugby over recent years through the various HKRFU development initiatives or through being schooled overseas in other rugby-playing countries. These players had been quickly identified by club Coaches in HK who fast-tracked them to the Performance game primarily because they possessed some natural talent, but also because it was in-keeping with the clubs' need to meet the HKRFU eligibility criteria as set out by the HP (section 3.3.1).

In many ways, this fast-track approach proved very positive in meeting the HP's overall vision to develop more local Chinese players in rugby, but in reality, it meant that they generally lagged behind expatriate players in terms of skill application and particularly game understanding. The situation created a broad spectrum of abilities within the team at both club and international level, proving particularly problematic for all Coaches who had to train such a wide cross section of abilities.

While I was never directly pressured to include Chinese players in the International squad, I supported the HP's eligibility initiative and felt it important, where possible, to select a representation of local Chinese players to aid the overall development of rugby within the local community. Their inclusion however sometimes proved problematic, as they tended to slow the overall progress of the team down because of language issues and their relative inexperience in the game. In practical terms, it meant that a proportion of each session had to be spent teaching the Chinese players the particular technical and tactical concepts that we were trying to implement. This was something that would not have normally happened within a Performance or International environment, as a certain level of game understanding and skill application would be assured from the outset. The educational process was of course further protracted by the Chinese-English language barrier, with most of the communication having to be translated into Cantonese (with some English terminologies) for the non-English speaking players in order for them to fully understand. In general, the expatriate players were supportive and helpful towards the needs of the local Chinese players, understanding the requirement to stop and explain things perhaps more often than they would have liked in order to gain a *whole team* understanding of concepts and techniques that we intended to implement. It should also be mentioned that the problems noted were not exclusive to the international game or solely Chinese players. During my tenure as HC, similar language and educational difficulties also arose with French and Argentinean born players, and I also witnessed many similar problems in my capacity as CDM/LM whilst visiting the CCOs in their club coaching roles.

Cultural differences were also to play their part, with difficulties arising because the Chinese players did not like to be singled out during practical sessions for any form of constructive correction or criticism. While it should be noted that in my experience I have met few players who take public criticism well, I believe that when done constructively, it is an accepted occurrence within Performance/International environments where both good and bad practice is highlighted by the Coach for the overall benefit of the team. However, as I became more familiar with the cultural background in HK I realised that the Chinese players perceived any form of correction as a *loss of face* with the Coach and fellow players, assuming they had displeased or disrespected their team mates and Coaches. The situation proved difficult, as much of the corrective work within the coaching environment involved the Chinese players in meeting their previously explained educational and skill-based needs. This *chicken and egg* scenario was further complicated by their reluctance to ask questions or seek clarification on the technical and tactical information provided, as again it was not in their nature to appear un-informed in front of Coaches and peers.

Overall, the situation produced a difficult management conundrum in passing on new information in a foreign language, some of which could not be accurately translated, with the Chinese players expected to apply that information effectively to an International standard. For me, it was hardly surprising that an element of corrective work and further clarification would be required. At times however, this proved immensely frustrating as it was not in their culture to seek clarification on aspects delivered or respond well to open correction. A situation that proved challenging for *all* Coaches in producing a productive and progressive training environment, and a topic given further scope later in the reporting section (11.3.1).

The problems experienced as HC in dealing with the local Chinese rugby fraternity, also prompted to me to consider the delivery and content of Coach Education courses as CDM. Since taking up my post, I had generally led the delivery of standard IRB Coach Education (section 2.3) courses and workshops, which were normally well attended by both Chinese and expatriate Coaches wishing to gain formal accreditation at various levels of the game. During such courses, I relied on the assistance of a less experienced Chinese Coach Educator with whom I had worked alongside since my arrival in HK, and with whom I had managed to develop a good working relationship. Assuming that the material and delivery of the courses were of a suitable standard for all those attending (with questionnaires handed out to quality assure this), my Chinese counterpart initially assisted with aspects of translation, gradually taking on more delivery responsibilities as his experience and confidence grew. However, because of the experience gained as HC in respect of the Chinese players' limited understanding of the game and their reluctance to question or seek clarification on aspects of my coaching, I began to question how effective my CDM delivery and course content actually were for the Chinese participants attending.

Following reflection and some honest discussion with my Chinese counterpart (a process which, in itself, was the result of an 18-month working association, where I had worked extremely hard to gain enough trust and respect for him to feel comfortable in offering honest opinion and feedback), he confirmed that to maximise the effectiveness of the courses for the Chinese participants attending, changes had to be made. He felt that over our 18-month working relationship, he had acquired sufficient expertise to coordinate more effective Chinese-based courses that would better suit the needs of the Coaches. As a consequence, he thereafter coordinated

and delivered Chinese-based courses that were generally an extended version of the standard IRB content which sought to meet the lower level of understanding regarding the concepts and rules of rugby. Even though my grasp of Cantonese (the local dialect in HK) is limited, when I attended the Chinese-based courses to observe, the level of interaction between my Chinese counterpart and the Coaches attending the course was startlingly different to the mixed courses I had previously held. The Chinese Coaches attending appeared much more comfortable in the absence of expatriates and openly questioned and interacted with the Chinese Educator (and each other) regarding the concepts and techniques delivered.

Following this quite significant change, a new strategy policy was discussed with senior management in the HKRFU who acknowledged that to provide a better quality Coach Education delivery to local Chinese players, aspects of inclusivity would perhaps need to be compromised. Moving forward, changes in our approach to Coach Education were made, with Chinese language courses appearing more frequently on our annual Coach Education programmes in conjunction with the traditional *mixed* courses which were still held to ensure levels of inclusivity were maintained. As a result of the success of this initiative, a second full-time Chinese educator was eventually employed by the Union to meet the growing interest in local Chinese coaching, with numbers attending those courses increasing quite significantly. I was confident that the success of the new courses was not solely based around the language barrier itself, but primarily because the Chinese only audience were much more confident interacting amongst their own ethnicity, happy to seek clarification on concepts delivered from fellow Chinese Coaches and educators. However, had it not been for the experiences gained as HC, I am not sure I would have arrived at this conclusion as quickly as I did.

In a reciprocal fashion, the improvements to the local Chinese Coach Education brought further and subsequent benefits to the HC role during the second season as HC (and of data collection). My attempts during the first year had been quite traditional, adopting an inclusive and integrated approach to training in trying to build a good team spirit and culture. I came to realise however this was perhaps not the best formula for effective development. Following the success of the CDM initiative, I adopted a different approach to allow the Chinese contingent within the team to work more as a group during international training programmes. I also utilised the services of my Chinese Coach Educator colleague and requested that he email (or occasionally meet) the Chinese contingent prior to training to ensure that they understood the concepts and techniques we intended to cover that evening. He also encouraged them to work and discuss concepts together as and when the training programme allowed. Over time, feedback from my Chinese counterpart suggested that this approach was more productive for the Chinese players, particularly as during my first season in charge, I had worked so diligently and somewhat misguidedly by trying to integrate them too much with the larger expatriate group. To summarise this particular topic, the experience could in many ways also be considered as another positive outcome of adopting the multiple-role standpoint, with the HC's role having positive and reciprocal benefits on my function as CDM.

Moving systematically through the series of problems confronting me as HC, the next issue involved my dealings with Assistant Coaches (i.e. managing sideways) and Senior Management (managing up). Again, while having experienced similar contexts in my previous dealings as a Professional/International Coach, the instances reported served as a *deja vu* to previous personal experiences, again offering a seemingly cyclical insight into the Coach's role. During previous dealings

with other Coaches who formed part of the overall management team, I recalled occasions where some have been overly ambitious in progressing their careers, attempting to further their position usually at the expense of my own, or other HCs' standing, in seeking to impose their own agenda. Also recalling scenarios where other Coaches have struggled to maintain the respect of players because of their inability to engage and challenge them to an appropriate level. These problems also extended out to other members of the Coaching staff, including conditioning and medical personnel, all of who fall under the control of the HC in the creation of a conducive and progressive Performance environment. Whatever the issue, all members of the coaching team have to be managed accordingly in order to ensure that team harmony is maintained. In previous personal dealings, this ranged from having a quiet (or sometimes harsh) word in the ear of pertinent individuals so as to redefine their explicit job demands and appropriate lines of demarcation, to unfortunately having to remove Coaches from the team environment altogether because of their inability to contribute positively to team needs.

The particular problem experienced in HK was of a slightly different nature and involved the personal welfare and emotional state of Brad, the Assistant Coach with the Senior Men's team. As previously reported (section 3.4.3.1), Brad left the study after the first season of data collection, returning to his home country for family reasons. Events leading up to his final departure that season were quite protracted, with Brad, the players and management all aware that at some point he would be leaving his post, but all unsure of the exact time scales. This left me in somewhat of a predicament, as removing him from the environment immediately would have been received negatively by Board members and some players, because Brad was a very popular and respected individual. Instead, I decided that the best policy was to

gradually minimise his contribution over the course of the international season so that when his departure eventually materialised, it would lessen any disruption to the team. Although agreeing to the proposal in principle, Brad had difficulties coming to terms with his marginalised role.

Over the course of the first phase of International competition, which coincided with the mid-season domestic league break (Christmas 2010), Brad changed from always being supportive and positive in and around the team environment, to being somewhat negative and disgruntled. The transformation became quite noticeable, with some of the senior players making comments on the change of attitude. On a personal level, the situation proved difficult as Brad had also become quite ambivalent in our dealings together, a position that proved disconcerting as our working relationship up until that point had always been good.

Over time I came to realise that he was harbouring some resentment, because I had initially been the one to reduce his workload while also being the person to take up those responsibilities from an applied perspective. Having some empathy for his position, and holding Brad in high regard as a Coach and colleague, I thought it better to address the issues sooner, rather than later. At both a personal and professional level, it was important to address his behaviour before the all-important second International competition phase (if he was still in post) to ensure his attitude did not adversely affect the team environment. Personal diary notes from that time recall:

Caught between a rock and hard place with Brad, feel for him that he has to go, but ultimately it's his decision. Can't have him walking around the environment for A5N sapping everyone, better if he left for home before it starts, but that looks unlikely. Would be easier all around if he resigned, and he'd probably do so if I asked. However, with him still in HK, the players would assume I'd squeezed him out and that would have even worse consequences than him sapping. Need to sort it with him and get him to realise how he's coming across at the moment.

Following a discussion with Brad, where I explained to him that his mood and behaviours were being noticed by other squad members and how this could negatively affect the team going into the A5N Competition, Brad responded honestly and positively. He admitted he was struggling emotionally to come to terms with the decision to move with his family back to his home country and in finishing his role as Assistant Coach, a job he had immensely enjoyed. He had also considered resigning from his post early, but had personally felt that during this difficult period, even with a reduced involvement, his continuation gave him something positive to focus on. He agreed that moving forward, he would attempt to mask his emotions and behave more appropriately for the next competition phase as the last thing he wanted for himself or the team, was any kind of negative association assigned to him personally. His email to me following our meeting revealed:

Thanks for the chat today, I feel so much better having cleared the air. Deep down I've known I've been a bit of a prick of late, but will try and make it up over A5N. As you said, I don't want to leave a bad taste after all the good years, so need to kick myself up the backside. It's tough however, knowing you're going at some stage.

During the second phase of competition however, by which time Brad had received final confirmation of his return date, he seemed to spiral further into the negative cycle of behaviours and emotions, outwardly more morose and disgruntled than before. As a means of best managing the situation, I eventually gave Brad more responsibility than originally intended which seemed to lift his spirits and overall attitude. My feelings on the matter were as follows:

I'm finding myself having to baby-sit Brad through the campaign to make sure he's positive around the team. I have to keep urging him to stay positive and remind him that it's not about 'him,' it's about the team. Keep telling him that he has an obligation, after all he's done over the years, to leave a positive footprint on the team. I really don't want him to be remembered for being the problem he currently is (diary extract).

Fortunately we came through the competition quite successfully, achieving our overall aim, and Brad received the send off that he wanted and deserved. Reflecting on my own management of the whole affair, I asked myself if I had made the wrong decision in allowing him to stay on? The answer from an objective rugby and business perspective was probably, yes! However, I believed, and still believe, that even in Performance/Professional sport, there exists an unwritten code of ethics amongst Coaches where values such as respect, integrity and friendship with trusted colleagues are as important as the need for results.

Those same values were tested to the full during the following International season (second of data collection), this time involving dealings with the HP who chose to double-up as Team Manager (TM) for the Men's Senior Team. His involvement as TM was two-fold; firstly, as a means of reducing the overall costs of appointing an independent TM; and secondly, because it allowed him to observe and oversee the environment from his senior management position as HP. Having developed a strong working association with him in a previous Performance rugby environment, our relationship was strong and even though he was my direct superior, I always felt comfortable discussing all aspects of my CDM/LM and HC roles honestly and openly. In doing so, I was always respectful that if we could not reach agreement on Performance matters, he would ultimately have the final say on unresolved issues. While his involvement as TM undoubtedly added value to the overall team effort, his inclusion was to also prove a testing experience with lines of demarcation involving our roles sometimes becoming more than a little blurred, causing conflict and placing a strain on our longstanding relationship.

Under normal circumstances as HC, I would have been responsible for selection, devising training programmes and the general management of team preparation leading up to major competitions. TM responsibilities included the coordination of necessary travel arrangements in and around Asia, the booking of training facilities and the general day-to-day management of team affairs in supporting my needs as HC. This meant a reversal of roles within the international environment, where the HP was to have taken on more of a support role in his capacity as TM, even though he was still ultimately responsible for ratifying final selection and other financial and organisational details.

An agreement was reached that when we were in the company of other Coaches and/or players, he (the TM) would suppress his need to offer opinion as a HP until an appropriate opportunity arose, so as not to undermine my integrity as HC in the company of other team members. In reality, the situation proved difficult with the HP often failing to adapt to his new subordinate role within the team environment and instead, offering views and opinions more from the position of HP rather than TM. This conflict of roles caused confusion and a little consternation among other coaching staff and players as to who was actually in charge of the team. Coming from a similar Tier 1 professional coaching background to that of my own, the TM/HP also held strong views on tactical elements of the game. This meant that as well as questioning some of my organisational requirements and team selection in the company of other Coaches, he would also air disagreement within team meetings and analysis sessions, inadvertently undermining my position in front of the players. Although normally apologetic when pointing out these instances later, he could not seem to differentiate in his roles and was always keen to have an opinion on all matters discussed, unable to let matters drop if he could not receive agreement and

compliance on his opinions. The situation became quite unmanageable at times, particularly in the selection of the team leading up to important games where late changes occurred as a consequence of the work and travel demands placed on players. This meant that we would often have to re-think our selection immediately prior to training sessions and games, with opinion differing on whom should be included. This sometimes led to animated discussion on or around the training pitch; an occurrence, which I'm certain, did not go unnoticed by other management and players.

Similar discussion and disagreement also arose during the high-pressure environment of matches, where it was necessary to make snap judgements in managing the success of the team on the field of play. Here, the TM/HP often challenged the tactical information sent to the team and my in-game substitutions, adding doubt and pressure to an already charged environment. While I acknowledge a level of *uniqueness* in these issues related to the HC role in HK, I also wish to convey to the reader that they also carry an element of *sameness* in exemplifying the types of interference and pressures that can be placed on Coaches by senior management. Those pressures may have been relayed in different contexts and at different times, but nevertheless they exist and place added pressure on the Coach in an already pressured environment. Here, they serve as personal *flashbacks* to a previous era where similar doubts and uncertainty prevailed and promoted long hours of thought and deliberation on how best to manage each particular individual, and each situation towards maintaining the overall direction of the team.

Records from my personal diary highlight such reflection:

Had selection problems before the first game, and tactical disagreements with [name of HP]. He seems to be challenging me more and more and usually at the wrong time. It became quite heated on the side of the pitch when I went for Player A and not Player B [local Chinese]. He actually accused me of having personal issues against Player B, and I shot back by suggesting that he could be overly protective and cautious regarding the Chinese guys. Did the right thing and left decision until after training, but the players are not daft, they must be able to see we're disagreeing on the side of the pitch. Understand he wants to promote the locals, but I have to make sure we win. I also know that he's protecting me from all the political crap from above [the Directors], but I'd rather deal with it and explain my decisions to them directly, as *he's* just dumping the pressure on me instead of them. Beginning to get that feeling of 'déjà vu.' Back to the old days!

Later extracts display how the dynamic grew, having to adapt my approach to avoid added conflict without compromising my own principles:

.....having to give a lot of [thinking] time as to how to manage [name of HP], having to almost make it into a trade-off, letting him win one battle so I could win a larger and more significant one. Also found that letting him sleep on things is better than springing surprises on him, but can't always do that unfortunately. Was spot on with management of team selection, I knew he'd be happy as long as I ran [player], so happy to let him have his way as long as I could pick [another player name] to start – he deserves a start. It all worked out ok.

Not all situations ended in such an amicable compromise however, with many conversations culminating in what became a regular standoff question, 'is this your opinion as TM or a stipulation as HP?' This was sometimes delivered in jest or at other times levelled in a more serious tone to establish whether it was merely his opinion as TM, or a directive as the HP. At times, I displayed my own personal show of strength when in the company of other Coaches by illustrating that my judgement on particular matters was final and he would indeed have to *pull rank* in undermining my decision if he wished to proceed in his preferred direction. Fortunately, this was something he rarely did when placed in this potentially difficult management scenario.

Although, once again, the particular circumstance described here could be considered quite unique regarding the placement of the HP as TM. Personal experience suggests that parallels undoubtedly exist between the experiences described and those previously *lived* when dealing with players, fellow Coaches and senior management. Furthermore, and throughout this section as a whole, I have attempted to provide a realistic insight and flavour into the rich tapestry of coaching life. Providing readers with a cross-section of incidents and events to best exemplify the daily trials and tribulations of the Coach, while also highlighting reoccurring themes that should be given further consideration by NGB Coach Education organisers. Further examples of each Coach's plight are covered in later chapters (11) along with suitable suggestions to better prepare aspiring professionals to cope with their dynamic and often turbulent training and playing environments (Chapter 12). Prior to those final reports and recommendations, the following chapter will provide insight into how those themes emanated from the data provided throughout the study.

CHAPTER (10)
THEMATIC ANALYSIS & THE NVIVO
PROCESS

10.1. Background

Although qualitative software has been publically available for over 25 years, there are still no formal or mandatory requirements for it to be used within academic or doctoral study (Johnston, 2006). Over recent years however, NVivo has proven a valuable currency within the research process, helping investigators to meet UK government standards for qualitative study in producing work that is *contributory*, *defensible* (in design), *rigorous* and *credible* (Spencer et al., 2004). More recently, qualitative sports studies have also co-opted the use of the NVivo data management tool as a means of providing transparency and trustworthiness to the data gathered (Cruickshank, 2013a). This has been achieved by ensuring that the NVivo data management software becomes an integrated part of the research process at the earliest point in proceedings, so as to allow the potentially novice NVivo Researcher time to progress through their necessary technical learning phase (Richards 2005). In doing so, they travel through what Gilbert (2002) described as a *tactile-digital divide* (working on screen versus paper) and *coding trap* phases (getting too close to the data) to attain the necessary *meta-cognitive shift* that enables them to reflect appropriately on their use of the NVivo software in best meeting the demands of their project and recognised research standards (Spencer et al., 2004; Johnston, 2006). The meta-cognitive reflective state acknowledges that ultimately it is the skills of the Researcher and how they choose to manage the software that dictate the success of their research (Richards, 2005). A process that is achieved through facilitating appropriate 'dialogue with the computer' (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012, p.829) while not becoming overly dependent on the electronic tools available to them (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012).

It was with such consideration in mind that the NVivo data management software was engaged within this study, with acknowledgement alerted to the need for displaying *transparency* in describing the processes used in gathering, interpreting and presenting the final data (Andersen & Skaates, 2004).

10.2. Transparency

Within the field of computerised analysis, much emphasis has been placed on the need for transparency and openness in displaying exactly how the Researcher generates their final theories from the accumulated data (Squires et al., 2013; Sinkovics and Alfoldi, 2012; Johnson, 2006; Richards, 2005). Bringer et al., (2004, p. 262) for example, proposed that 'transparency is necessary for accountability,' as it provides reviewers with a necessary insight into the analytical processes involved to support (or not) the congruence between method and findings. Johnston (2006) likewise stressed the need for researchers to pay less attention to the results of their endeavours and instead take more interest in the processes used in getting there. Furthermore, Johnston (2006, p.285) proposed that if managed accordingly, the NVivo software can significantly aid this process in providing 'unprecedented levels of transparency' (Johnston, 2006, p.285) through the production of a clear *audit trail* or *chain of evidence* that adds greater credibility and overall trustworthiness to the results attained (Bazeley, 2009; Ghauri & Firth, 2009 Yin, 2009). In attempting to present such transparency, I retrace my own NVivo journey towards this final phase of theory generation.

10.3. The NVivo Journey

Fortunate enough to receive sound advice from a well-versed supervisor (Richards, 2002), the earliest consideration was given to how the NVivo process could best compliment the project, taking into account my unfamiliarity with electronic data management software. After gaining a sufficient conceptual grasp of what could be realistically achieved through use of the NVivo software from my neophyte standpoint, and still more comfortable with the tried and tested manual coding techniques (Jones et al., 2007; Evans et al, 2004), it made sense initially to employ the software as a data storage and organisational tool (Welsh, 2002; Bringer et al., 2006). This allowed me to make continued progress on other aspects of the PhD, while also allowing my familiarity with data management techniques to flourish with on-going experimentation.

Further investigation into the NVivo 9.0 application supported the earliest intervention in uploading the whole of the PhD project into the analysis process (Richards, 2005). However, after due consideration I followed Bringer et al's (2006) advice in only including the data and results gathered in this project (i.e. interviews, focus groups, observations, field and reflexive/reflective diary notes), rather than considering all aspects of the research literature (literature review, methodology, etc.). The approach was in-keeping with the inductive standpoint adopted for the study by setting aside any existing or preconceived research theories so as to allow the collated data to generate its own results (Glaser, 1992; Bringer et al., 2006).

In line with this standpoint, traditional manual data analysis techniques (section 7.8.1 - inductive thematic analysis) were also employed, preferring throughout the early stages of analysis to *trust what I knew*, while at the same time, coming to terms with the unfamiliar electronic software (Davis & Meyer, 2009). This promoted the use of

both manual and electronic methods in final theory generation (Cruickshank et al., 2013), an approach recommended by researchers who suggest that 'to achieve the best results it is important that the researchers do not reify either electronic or manual methods and instead combine the best features of each' (Welsh, 2002, p.9). Also, by utilising both methods, it would avoid the *sole reliance* on the NVivo software and potential pitfalls associated with that such as fragmentation of data and/or preponderance for over or under simplification of coding which could seriously undermine the credibility of final results (Jack & Westwood, 2006; Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012).

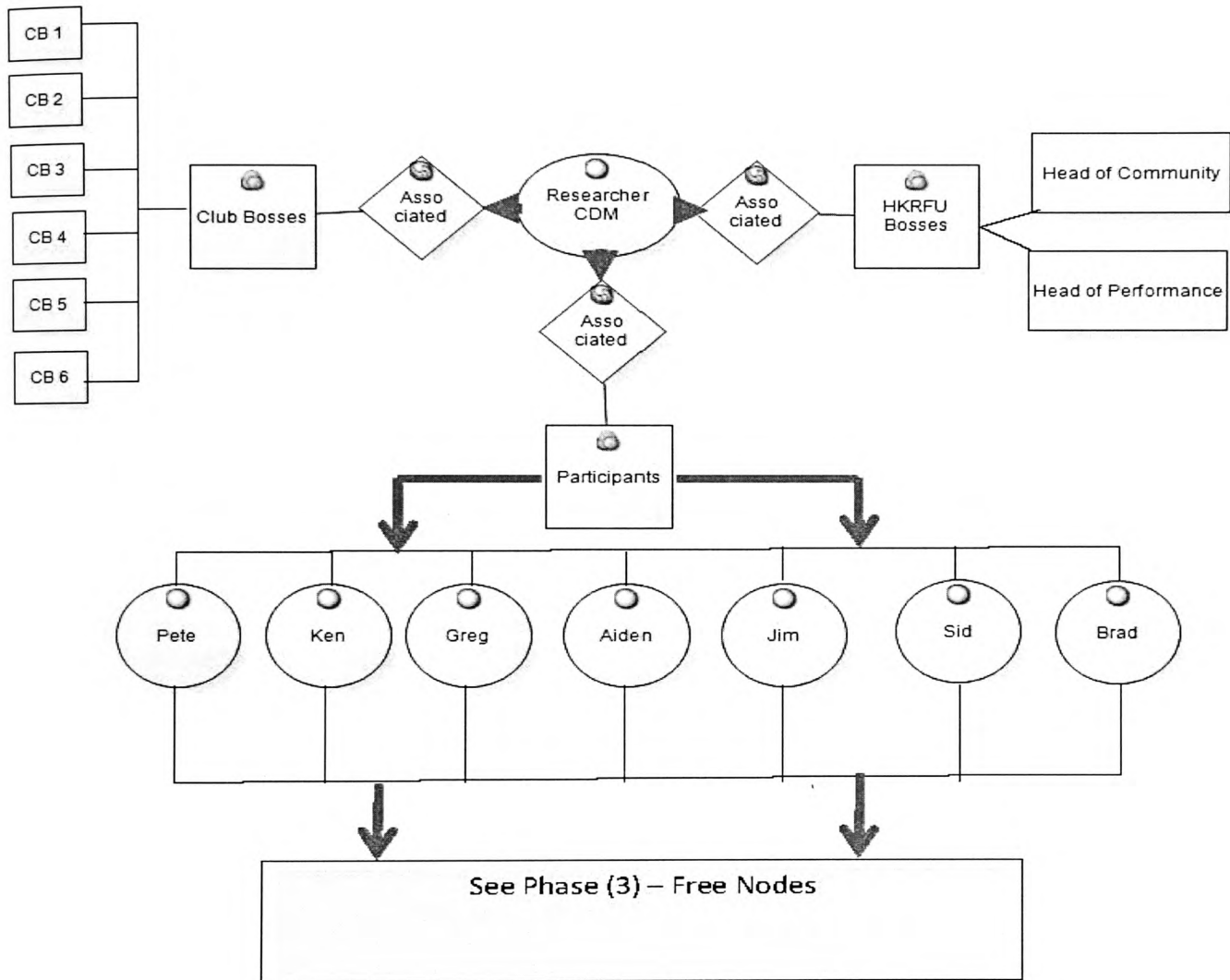
On completion of season one of data gathering and subsequent analysis through manual thematic analysis techniques, and after what I considered a suitable period away from the data to regain a fresh perspective, my intention was to begin the data analysis process again, this time using the NVivo software (Welsh, 2002; Gray, 2009). During that process, while I understood the need for careful planning in setting up the overarching coding template of the data analysing process, I realised my current skills base would not allow me to make the appropriate software connections between the various parties involved in the data gathering process (Osman, 2004). Seeking alternative means of expediting my technical learning curve (Johnston, 2006) and unable to attend any of the extortionately priced training workshops either in Asia or overseas due to prior work commitments, I managed to locate an enthusiastic would-be tutor from the local HK University who was happy to educate me in the application of NVivo 9.0 software, for an appropriate fee. I concluded that the added insight and training would facilitate a *backup* or *quality assurance* to the manual thematic findings, hence providing a more rigorous interrogation of the data (Richards, 2005; Davis & Meyer, 2008).

Initially a little perturbed that my advisor possessed no understanding regarding the game of Rugby Union or sport in general, I progressed having few other alternatives. His complete lack of rugby knowledge however turned out to be somewhat of a blessing, with his continual questioning from an uninformed sporting standpoint prompting me to reflect greatly on my overall approach to the project (Richards, 2005; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). His constant probing during our early meetings regarding what specifically the research topic was about, who was involved, their relationships, their interrelationships, what questions I needed to answer and why, no doubt expedited technical learning closer to the desired meta-cognitive level in how I should structure the analysis process and overall data coding framework (Buck et al., 2011). This meant not being too zealous in producing an 'overly descriptive prosaic project,' instead adopting a realistic approach in what the software tools could do to aid the analysis process (Johnston, 2006, p. 383; Wong 2008).

Figure 6 provides insight into the overarching data coding framework involving the various participants, club bosses (CB) and HKRFU staff (HCM & HP) throughout the numerous observations, formal interviews and discussions that took place, while also highlighting my inextricably linked position which was central to all parties as CDM/LM and IAR.

Figure 6 – Overarching Data Coding Framework

NVivo – Coding Template Analysis Overview



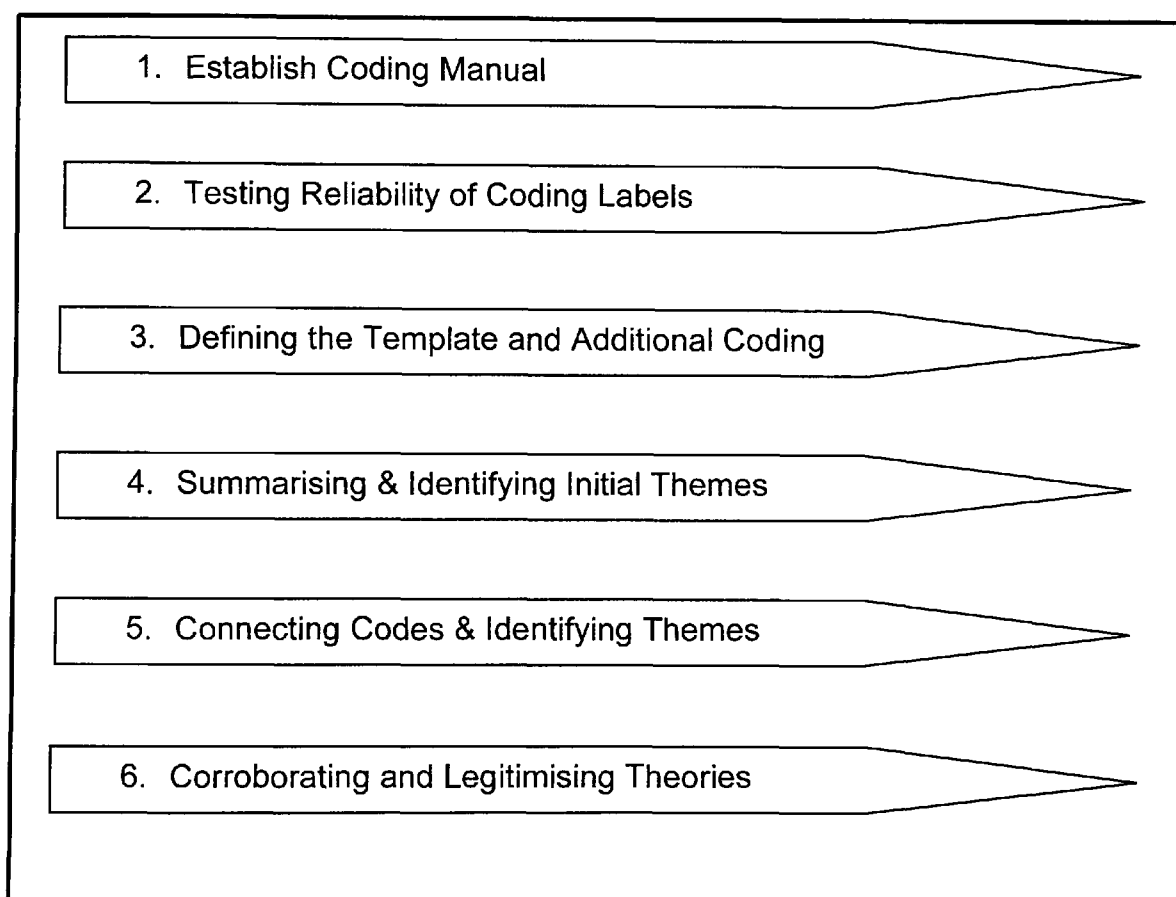
To ensure also that a level of consistency was maintained for the approach to both manual and electronic data coding phases, a simple but effective Data Analysis Framework (Table 4) was established to highlight the procedures involved in both techniques (Davis & Meyers, 2009).

Table 4: Manual and Electronic Data Analysis Procedures

Manual Thematic Data Analysis Procedures	NVivo 9.0 Electronic Data Analysis Procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews listened to, read, and re-read to ensure that transcriptions matched what was communicated during the interviews. • Hard-copy transcripts were micro-analysed by breaking them up into meaning units consisting of a few words, a few sentences or whole paragraphs. Colour coding pens and hand written comments (documented into the margins of transcripts) were used to identify and segregate initial sub-themes. • Initial sub-themes focused around the fundamental research questions (<i>What coaching actually entails?</i>) with further detailed sweeps of the transcripts then undertaken to unearth new and related sub-themes (Howitt & Cramer, 2008). • Common sub-themes were linked to overarching themes and final theories through the utilisation of Ryan and Bernard's (2003) analysis framework (section 7.8.1). • Further scrutiny was then carried out to probe for added information that would substantiate and link (or not) comments, observations and interpretations to main themes and final theories (Aronson, 1995). • Data was continually refined until no pertinent/ new sub-themes or themes could be extracted (i.e. saturation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews listened to, read, and re-read to ensure that transcriptions matched what was communicated during the interviews. • Soft-copy transcripts were micro-analysed by breaking them up into electronic meaning units. Meaning units were highlighted by selecting and dragging identified phrases, sentences and paragraphs to appropriately labelled locations relevant to the main research question. • NVivo 9.0's Free Node option was used to create a representation of sub-themes using specific descriptors for each node label that related directly to the associated topic or sub-theme. • Related sub-themes were then identified and categorised under a hierarchical Tree Node facility and were provided with a more abstract description to encompass the underlying and linking sub-themes. • The hierarchical tree node themes were then re-scrutinised and cross-referenced in search of new and underlying themes before being legitimised (or not) towards the corroboration of final theories. This was done in relevance to the underlying research questions. • Data was continually refined until no pertinent/new themes could be extracted (i.e. saturation)

In respect of the NVivo 9.0 analysis, the extra tuition and on-going research into how the final theories could be best generated also prompted the implementation of a series of *inductive data-driven coding stages* to enhance the overall thematic process adopted (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). As well as enhancing levels of transparency in proceedings, the six coding steps, which are an adapted version of Boyatzis (1998), and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane's (2006) coding framework, also served to add to the overall rigour and trustworthiness of findings (Figure 7).

Figure 7 – NVivo Six Step Coding Framework (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006)



Step 1: Establish a Coding Manual

The choice of the code manual was important as it serves as a data management tool for organising segments of unrelated, similar, or related texts to assist with interpretation (Richards, 2005). The first phase of this process began by redefining the fundamental research question (what coaching actually entails?), into more meaningful coding units to begin subdividing the large amounts of raw data (Wong, 2008). This meant scrutinising the data over several sweeps to initially identify:

- *Which functions CCO Coaches performed as part of their role?*

The process involved identifying a code label and definition or explanation of what the particular theme was concerned with, before linking it to the associated data (Boyatzis, 1998). This sometimes involved just a few words, whole sentences or even whole paragraphs to identify the various roles that each Coach undertook as part of his daily function with the team(s). At this stage, each code took the form of *free nodes* so as to not attempt link themes or concepts too early in the coding process (Wong, 2008). During this first phase of analysis, aspects of their daily function arose in the following examples:

(a) *Free Node Label* – Recruitment

Description – Player identification and recruitment policies

(b) *Free Node Label* – Team Culture

Description – Developing and imposing a team identity

Step 2: Testing the Reliability of Codes

Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) purport the need to substantiate the applicability of the codes (free nodes) to the associated raw data in the formation of a credible framework or coding manual. To achieve this, one of the CCO participants (Aiden) and HP (critical friend), both of whom were familiar with similar academic research projects from previous experience, were asked to work through their own personal interview transcripts and match the raw data to the inductively processed coding labels. Following a broader explanation regarding some of the descriptors used for of each of the free node labels, both participants were able to associate comments with the pre-defined labels and could therefore add to the overall internal validity of the coding framework (Culver et al., 2012).

Step 3: Defining the Template of Codes and Additional Coding

As expected, this first phase (Stage 1) analysis into the roles of the CCO coaching roles served to illuminate several other areas for further deliberation and deeper analysis (Nevitt, 2012). These involved considerations based around other aspects of their role in relation to:

- *Aspects of their CCO coaching role that they were perceived to be proficient at and why? (Evidence was taken through self-analysis and through the comments and observations of others).*
- *Further probing into aspects of their CCO coaching role that they were perceived not to be proficient at and why? (Evidence was taken through self analysis and through the comments and observations of others).*
- *Which people or what factors influenced their decisions?*
- *What were the overlaying and underlying consequences of their actions? (On themselves, team members, family, significant others?)*

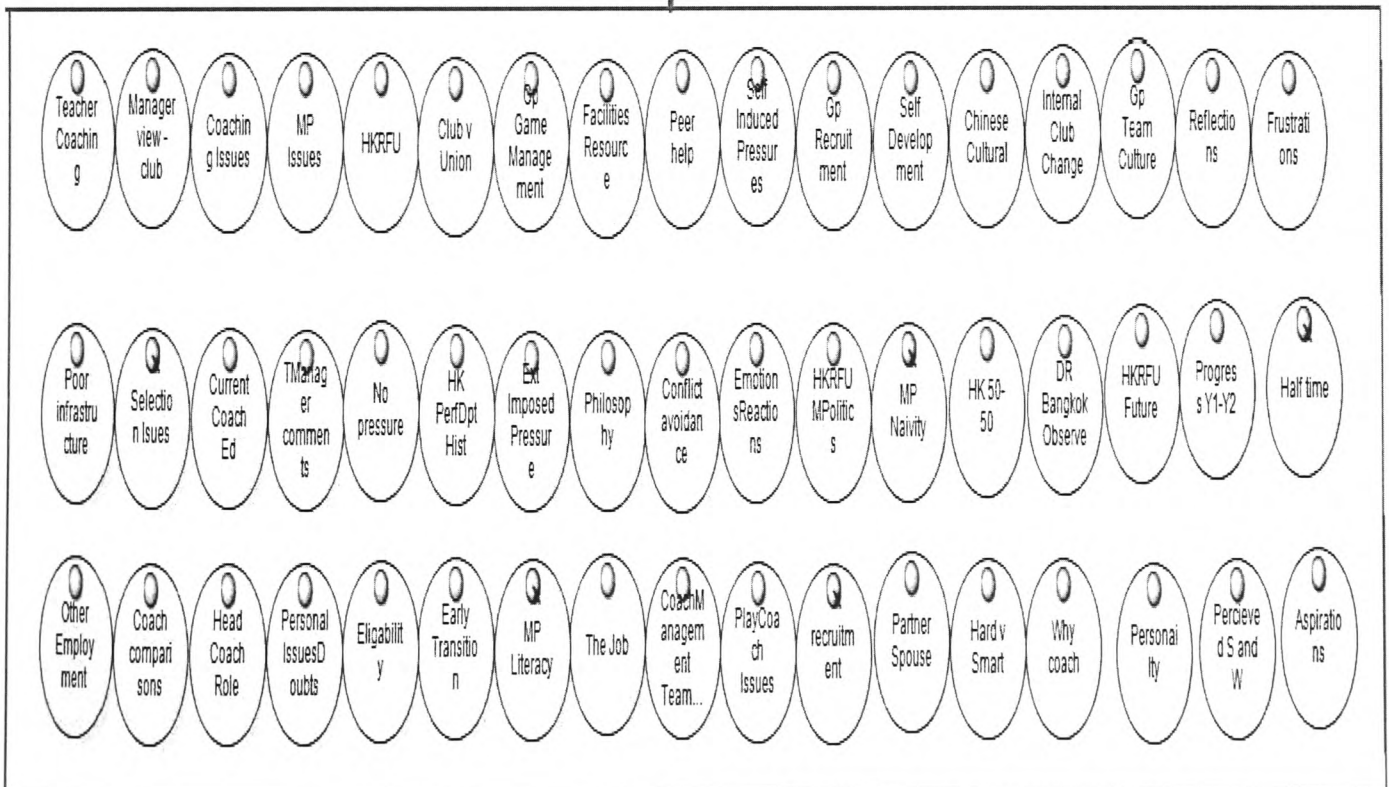
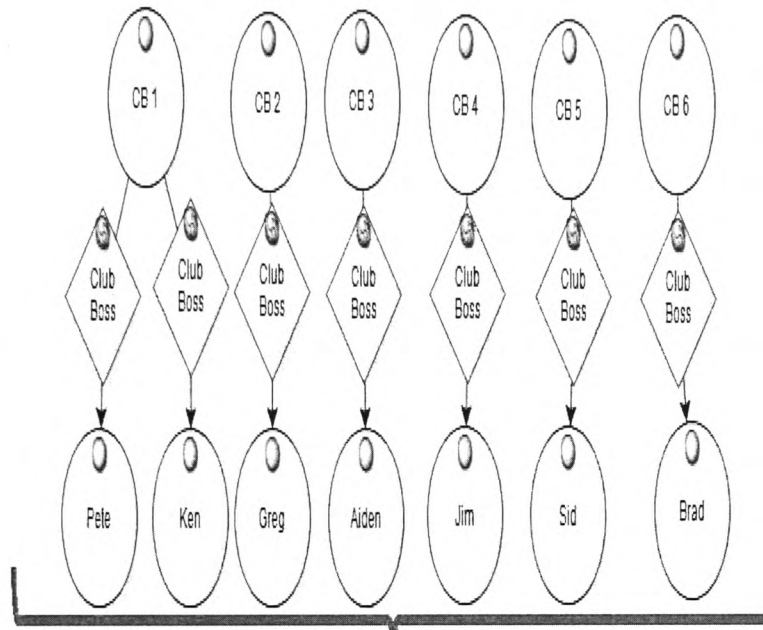
This meant that further analysis was not confined simply to the preliminary codes, with other inductive codes being unearthed and assigned with labels and suitable descriptions in line with previous sweeps of the various transcripts. This level of analysis delved deeper than the identification of simple coaching tasks, in search of the underlying decision-making processes, actions and subsequent emotions experienced by the Coaches. As a consequence, new coding labels arose in relation to:

- *Label* – Technical & Tactical (T & T).
- *Description* – Implications of technical and tactical implementations.
- *Source* – Self-imposed or externally influenced; impact on team; acceptance/rejection levels; emotional impact/consequences on Coach/team.

Following several more micro-sweeps of the various transcripts, 51 (free node) coding labels were produced. Added consideration was given to further sub-division of codes, with over 70 having been initially identified. However, in relation to the overarching research question, some of these were deemed an *over-elaboration* in that they would not add value to the overall outcome of results, while others were merged with existing tree nodes to formulate the final outcome (Johnson, 2006; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Figure 8 illustrates the collated free nodes and associated coding labels that formed the initial coding manual.

Figure 8 - Free Node Overview

NVivo – Phase 3 Coding 51 Free Nodes/Themes



Step 4: Summarising & Identifying Initial Themes

Following the generation of free nodes, the next stage of coding involved the identification and linking of themes (Richards, 2005). This entailed linking specific data labels to an overarching theme, in the form of a hierarchical tree node that offered a greater level of abstraction (MacMillian & Koenig, 2004). A simple example of this would be the various *emotions* experienced by Coaches in relation to their coaching roles, with the particular emotional response linked to its subsequent source or origin in order to define new pattern generations. Figure 9 offers one such example surrounding the more abstract theme of *emotions*, with Figure 10 providing a broader overview of how the wider study themes were generated and grouped.

- *Label* – Emotions.
- *Description* – Emotions experienced.
- *Summary/Source* – Reactions, self-induced, externally imposed, no pressure, spouse/partner effects.

Figure 9 – Tree Node Exemplar

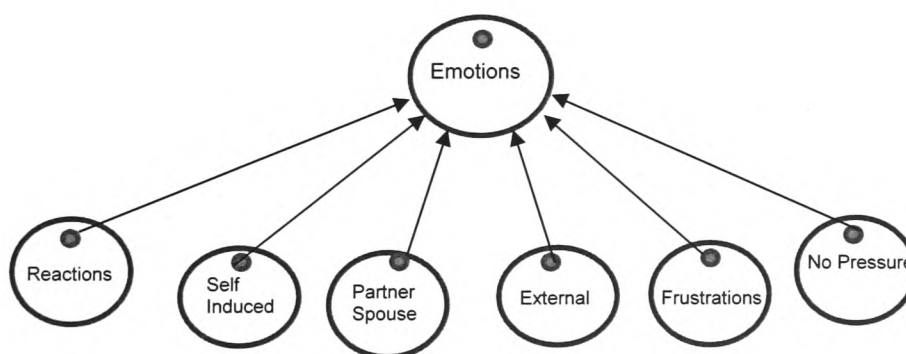
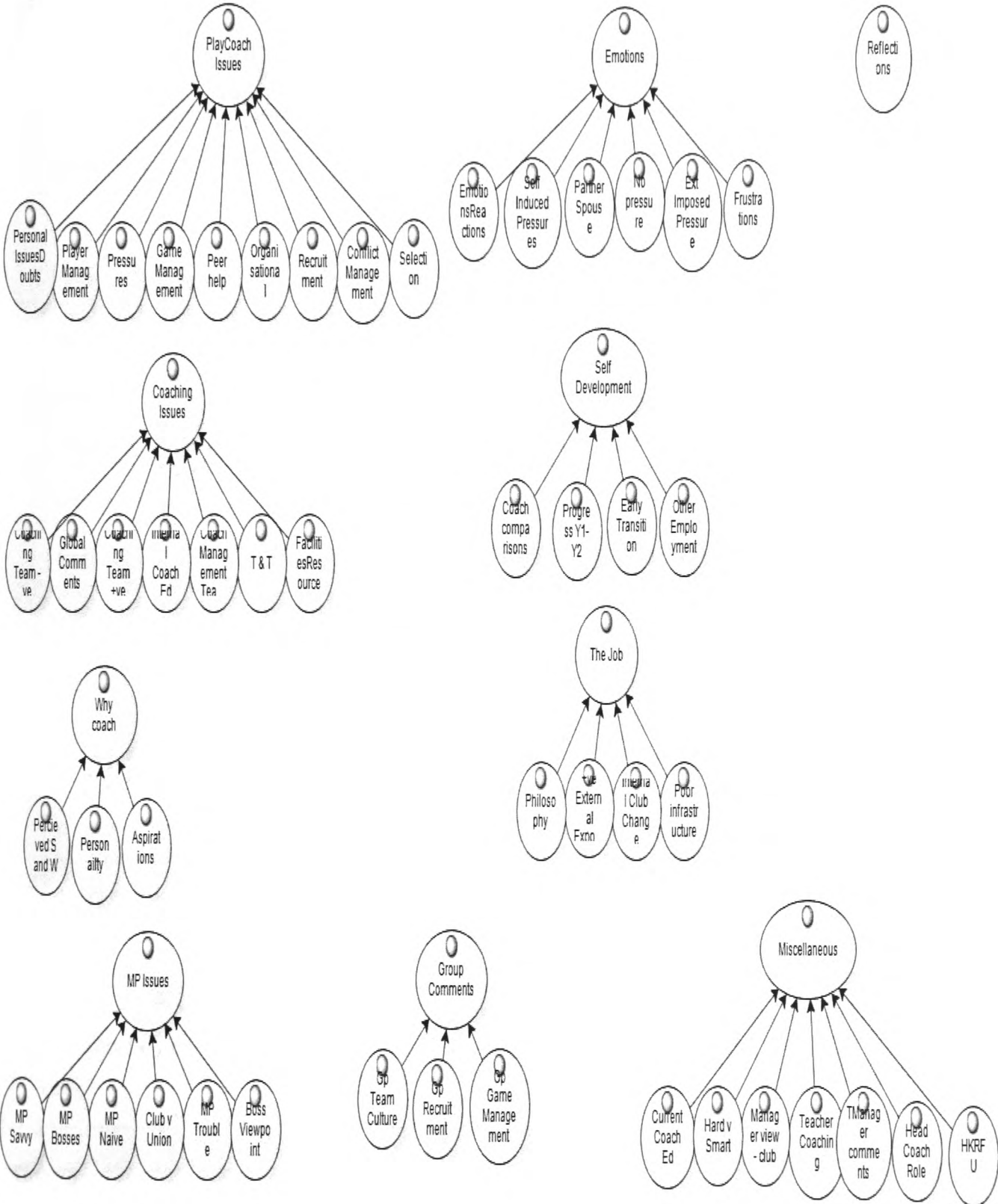


Figure 10 – Free & Tree Node Development Towards Wider Study Themes



Step 5: Connecting the Codes and Identifying Themes

Connecting codes is the process of discovering themes and patterns in the data (Squires et al., 2013). This involved probing further into the abstract hierarchical tree node themes in order to identify meaningful links or connections in the generation of other underlying themes or theories. For example, by taking the hierarchical *emotional* tree node and linking the specific emotions experienced back to their source origin I was able to highlight underlying links between aspects of their coaching role and the subsequent emotions endured, and discover why they were experiencing those particular outcomes. A simple example is provided below in analysing where sources of *frustration* emanated from and why, in respect of the CCO's daily roles. This was done to search for underlying or common sources of frustration towards the generation of an underlying theme. Table 4(a) provides a simple example of the processes involved:

Table 4(a) – Stage Five Data Coding Exemplar

- Tree Node Source: *Emotion*
- Free Node Label: *Frustration*

Links - Tree Node	Free Node Label
Coaching issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruitment
Player-Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tactical & Technical• Game Management• Facilities• Personal Issues/Doubts
Micropolitical Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MP Naïve• MP Bosses

Step 6: Corroborating and Legitimising Themes

The final stage involved confirming findings to corroborate final themes and theories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). At this point, previous coding stages were closely re-scrutinised to ensure free and tree nodes were representative of the data and associated coding labels (Davis & Meyer, 2006). Extracts from interview texts were then compared against potential theories to corroborate or dispute their credibility. Building on the emotional response of frustration, further analysis revealed that many sources of frustration stemmed from aspects of their Player-Coach role where they felt ill-equipped to deal with dual application of roles on a number of fronts. As a means of corroborating this theory as a potential area for future Coach Education consideration in line with the larger study aims, legitimising statements were sought to substantiate the link. Table 4(b) below offers such an example:

Table 4(b) – Stage Six Data Coding Exemplar

- Theme – Player-Coach Issues
- Free Node Label: *Frustration*
- Tree Node Source: *Emotion*

Links Tree Node	Free Node Label	CCO Corroborative / Legitimising Statements (Interview statements)
Coaching issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruitment	<p>“.....the league rules dictate that every player must have a visa and trying to get everyone a job and look after each one individually.”</p> <p>“My wife said, what you doing? Just put it on a bloody spreadsheet, it’s far quicker and it makes you think ‘well, oh ye that’s so obvious.”</p>

Links Tree Node	Free Node Label	CCO Corroborative / Legitimising Statements (Interview statements)
Player-Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tactical & Technical • Game Management • Personal Issues/Doubts 	<p>“I’ve got to be honest, it’s bloody difficult. They have an opinion on everything, every single thing.”</p> <p>“I’m juggling my coaching and having to play at the same time.”</p> <p>“[Name] came over as a Player-Coach, with the emphasis more on the coaching. But you know, because of the weaknesses we had in our side, he had to play. So the key problem was that he was the Coach, the Captain, and was making all the calls. So there was a lot of feedback from players saying it was too much.”</p> <p>“I’m really struggling with the whole Player-Coach thing, it’s just too much”</p>
Micropolitical Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MP Literacy • MP Bosses 	<p>“I’m weary of him (the Chairman), and knowing though that with my contract up in April, I need to dance occasionally and...if he wants to push something in the Union then I need to be his voice and make sure it gets through.”</p> <p>“[The Chairman] won’t agree with certain things. He thinks we’re paying over the odds for certain players. So I’ve got to manage him, as well as Coach, as well as play.”</p>

Having provided a transparent overview of how final theories were generated through both the manual (thematic) and electronic (NVivo 9.0.) data analysis techniques, the following section will discuss in more depth the results of the analysis.

CHAPTER (11)

FINAL THEORIES & DISCUSSION

11.1. A Micropolitical Standpoint

This penultimate chapter will present the final theories generated through the Thematic and NVivo data analysis procedures. The theories are the final product of the two seasons of analysis and hold the potential to inform future Coach Education delivery and development of aspiring Professional Rugby Union Coaches. While some of the topics discussed may only relate to coaching within HK and other similarly placed developing rugby nations (section 3.3), others will hold broader implications, potentially affecting Coaches everywhere. These topics should therefore be afforded greater consideration by the IRB and respective NGBs in better facilitating the practical, rather than conjectural needs of aspiring Coaches (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Callow et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2011). Throughout this chapter, the realist and confessional writing format is retained as in previous reporting sections (9.1) to best convey the evidence produced from the IAR perspective, and relay the viewpoint of others involved. Here however, the final theories have been linked to relevant academic theory to substantiate and corroborate the evidence provided (Denison & Rhineheart, 2000).

As will become evident, the final themes and theories emanate within, and largely as a consequence of, the micropolitical world that each of the Coaches find themselves embroiled within (Potrac & Jones 2009a & 2009b; Jones et al., 2012). In line with this, the presentation of evidence will serve to highlight that micropolitical existence from which the final theories evolved. These largely surround managerial and technical components of the coaching role, and although some form of differentiation is provided in how the various micropolitical (managerial and technical) issues are reported, they serve only as broad indicators for ease of discussion, as many could be considered interchangeable throughout (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a).

11.1.1. Early Happenings

My early reflections and the subsequent interventions incorporated into the study, took into consideration the unique environment that existed in HK Rugby when seeking solutions to the issues and complexities facing the Coaches involved. To adequately express those insights, I have to make comparisons to my own development as an aspiring Professional Coach, recalling how difficult it could be to share quality time with other likeminded Coaches outside of my own particular team environment. Very rarely was I able to spend time debating new concepts or ideas in the company of Coaches from other clubs who found themselves placed in a similar *pressured* situation to that of my own. We were only able to meet occasionally at games involving each of our respective teams, to swap pre or post match platitudes, or at sporadically scheduled NGB conferences and workshops where ideas and philosophies on rugby matters were reticently shared. I use the term *reticently* as it best describes the levels of caution or guardedness evident in these exchanges never really spending sufficient time in each other's company to develop the necessary levels of trust and rapport to honestly express our thoughts and opinions. Instead preferring to err on the sides of caution and politeness during the infrequent gatherings, 'fearful of revealing information that might provide advantages to their competitors' (Schroeder, 2013, p. 315).

The HK environment however offered different pickings, with the small geography of the region and the tightly knit rugby community offering ample opportunity for regular interaction between Performance Coaches to take place. As a consequence get-togethers were frequent, occurring through forums such as the weekly CCO

meetings, team analysis sessions⁷ following the round of weekend games, and/or during the many other unscheduled visits to the Union offices for managerial or clerical purposes. All forums served as either formal or informal mediums where Union and club business could be discussed, with the CCOs then responsible for reporting important information back to club executives to ensure that relevant developments in the Performance game were effectively disseminated.

Over time, the regular gatherings and interaction promoted high levels of trust and rapport between individuals, already reaching a point prior to my arrival where the CCOs felt comfortable openly sharing information about their respective club teams. This cohesion was further enhanced by utilising the weekly meetings as extra Coach Education forums (focus-groups and practical work-shops) to directly address specific aspects of their coaching roles (Jones, et al., 2011a). The levels of discussion and good natured banter generated at these frequent gatherings provided an additional level of unity, enabling the CCOs to share and discuss problematic areas of their role, while also providing me with another arena for participant analysis (Cushion & Jones, 2012). This meant at one level I was able to familiarise myself with participants during the many interviews and observations that took place on an individual basis, while also being able to observe the CCOs from the uniquely different *group* perspective in the company of likeminded peers discussing matters pertaining to their coaching role. It was through observing such interactions that I was able to arrive at some significant realisations as IAR and CDM about the group and the seemingly closely knit bond that had developed within what Jones et al.

⁷ All Premiership games were initially video recorded centrally by the HKRFU and made available to the CCOs on the Tuesday following each game. This encouraged CCOs to visit the Performance Department offices each Tuesday to view games, usually in the company of other Performance Coaches who were there to view their own team's performance. The feedback from the video then usually informed their Tuesday evening session. This format changed later during the study period with extra resource allowing games to be made available on Monday afternoon following games.

(2011a) described as their *community of practice*. The observations encompassed a realisation of the highly *micropolitical* environment in which the CCOs functioned; the equally high levels of micropolitical literacy or *cunningness* evident amongst the group in attempting to furnish their personal and/or club driven agendas (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002a & 2002b; Jones et al., 2012); and finally, the value of the focus-group setting and subsequent peer interaction as a significant educational tool in the overall development of the Coaches, and production of knowledge (Jones et al., 2011b; Cushion & Jones, 2012).

As well as these factors influencing many of my thoughts, decisions and overall management of individuals throughout the course of the study period (and beyond), they also offer an explanation as to why the highly charged micropolitical environment has been utilised as the *modus operandi* in the identification and reporting of forthcoming themes (Potrac et al., 2007, p. 34).

11.1.2. The Micropolitical Ambiance

In avoiding replication of information, many of the micropolitical issues and potential themes linked to previously reported transcripts (Chapters 6, 8 and 9) will not be revisited here to any great extent. Instead, I leave readers to draw their conclusions on previous events, with this section calling on other similarly unique experiences to embody the micropolitical environment and events contained therein (Ryba & Schinke, 2009). In that respect, this section (11.1) will consider topics related to recruitment and salary issues, while also offering an insight into the interactions between Coaches and bosses (both HKRFU and Club Executives) in best exemplifying the manipulative and micropolitical environments that existed.

❖ 11.1.2.1. *Micropolitics - Recruitment*

Although on the face of things, I appreciated that each Coach had their own club's success at the core of their agenda, when together, they all seemed happy sharing their thoughts, philosophies and concerns regarding different aspects of the game. Similarly, outside of these meetings and on an individual basis, each Coach seemed equally comfortable divulging personal and professional information to me as their CDM/LM, often feeling quite privileged in the type of information relayed, as their mentor Coach and wizen elder.

However, as the study period progressed, I became more and more aware that there was a silent undercurrent to the CCO group. This undercurrent illustrated how I had at times, overestimated the strength of my own relationship with the participants who I eventually concluded often saw me more as a senior management figure, rather than their mentor and ally (Lyle, 2002; Jones et al., 2009). Also, I underestimated the bond that existed amongst the group itself, as while on the face of things they seemed happy baring all during our many get-togethers, they also displayed high levels of 'micropolitical nous' in deliberately lacking transparency regarding certain aspects of their role (Potrac & Jones, 2009b, p.229). This savvy undercurrent initially came to the fore regarding aspects of their club recruitment policy during the build-up to the first season of data collection. The particular issue involved a lack of transparency in openly discussing targeted players for their on-going summer recruitment policy, which I thought initially stemmed partly from the fear that:

....oh, I'm reluctant to give anything away in case someone else gets to hear that players are on the loose and interested in coming to HK. If information gets out, then one of the other guys [CCOs] could come in and offer more money. So it's best I don't tell anyone, and besides, [name of club boss] has told me not to let anyone at the Union know, either (interview extract – Brad).

Not totally convinced by this argument, particularly as Brad had been one of the CCOs to entrust me with confidential and personal information, I pursued the matter further. In the end my persistence paid off, able to unearth a more insightful agenda revealing how some club bosses were supposedly coercing their Coaches into hiding the true facts regarding the types of player they were attempting to enlist. It became apparent that many were targeting players that did not fit the mutually agreed HKRFU recruitment profile; a profile that targeted younger and well educated *uncapped* players who were potentially employable in HK's tough and dynamic business markets and who were prepared to stay for three years, hence making them eligible to play for HK. Instead, some of the Coaches, allegedly under pressure from club bosses, were being encouraged to enlist the services of older, more experienced players. These were players who were likely to bring immediate benefits to their club's performance, but who would prove of little value to the international game due of their age, or because they had already gained international representation with other countries, thus rendering them unavailable to the HK team. When discussing the matter in open forum during our weekly CCO meeting, Brad revealed his position in his comment, "yes, (name of his club boss) told me not to say anything, he said that we would worry about all that once we had signed him up, and got him out here." Sid, initially uncomfortable in commenting, eventually offered:

Ye, it's difficult sometimes, the club wants to do well and so do I. It's tough trying to keep everybody happy so sometimes it's easier not to say anything, because it usually doesn't happen anyway.....[laughs], they usually end up not coming to us!

When pressing other CCOs regarding their stance on this matter, most admitted being reluctant to divulge specific details for similar reasons, feeling pressured to an extent by club bosses to keep team affairs away from the Union for fear of interference regarding their recruitment drive. I think it's important to highlight here that this particular recruitment issue is not unique to HK, with similar conflict generated between many respective NGB's and their club/regional factions regarding player recruitment. This disagreement is borne largely out of the fact that club bosses are generally unsupportive of their NGB's longer-term policies towards safeguarding the game, and instead are more concerned about the short-term success of their club/regional team in the domestic competitions of their respective home nations (Malcom et al., 2000; Gregor, 2012).

When reflecting on my own observations, the comments made by the CCOs, and the uncomfortable silences sometimes experienced in their company during group or individual informal discussions, I was not convinced that the chosen recruitment policy was purely down to the instigation of the club bosses alone. Having got to know and understand the CCOs' ambitions and desires to succeed, I believed the Coaches themselves to be largely responsible in looking for the *quick fix* solution to team success. This involved, at times, conveniently hiding behind their club bosses, while secretly supporting (and initiating) their policy as a means of winning the prestigious domestic competitions in HK. However, the CCOs' stance on this (and other issues discussed in this chapter) was one of great reluctance in openly admitting that they were opposed to some of the Union policies. Even after constantly reminding the CCOs of my obligations surrounding confidentiality as IAR, it was still difficult to get some participants to divulge potentially delicate information as they felt it could later compromise their position with the Union. While taking

reprisal on individuals would not have been a consideration on my part, this particular topic did highlight that I had over-estimated the levels of trust and rapport built up with participants, particularly surrounding matters that could potentially put the CCOs in conflict with HKRFU policies. From my perspective, this was an understandable standpoint, but one that made the production of relevant data problematic in some areas, while also highlighting another disadvantage of adopting a multiple-role stance (section 12.2). A minority, however, were happy to provide opinions on different matters, usually in less formal surroundings with Aiden confirming that:

I think other Coaches are hiding behind their committee for things like recruitment and visa issues. And I know this is going to come out in one of our meetings, it could probably come out tomorrow, I don't know why we aren't more up front about it.....Well I do, it's because of you and [name of his club boss] [Aiden laughs at his comment].

On pursuing why he and others were happier to comply more with their own (and their club's) wishes above the needs of the Union, he explained that it would probably "help to win something which will look good on my CV, and that's going to help down the road a bit." This meant that winning titles and cups in HK would make him a more attractive employment proposition when applying for more prominent coaching positions in top tier rugby-playing nations overseas; an ambition that many had already highlighted to me during our individual interviews (section 3.4.3).

With further evidence difficult to obtain from participants during the study period, I seized the opportunity with Jim at the end of the data collection period (and prior to his imminent departure back to his home nation where he had secured employment with a Tier 1 professional team for the following season – section 3.4.3.5), to revisit this and other topics.

Feeling less pressured about having to say *the right thing* he was happy to offer more forthright opinions when probed on this subject, revealing:

...to be honest, when recruiting, the 'long term thing' was pretty low on my list. I realise what you're trying to build here, but I could have been out of a job in eight months so I had to make sure that whoever I got was going to help me win a league or cup. If he helped you too, then great, but my main thought was for the club and me. That was my driver and [name of his club Chairman] agreed with that and let me get on with it.

When reflecting on other aspects of his CCO role he was equally forthright when suggesting:

Ye, the Union talk about the 50/50 arrangement with our contracts and that we have an obligation to go into bat for them, the 'greater good' and all that. But the reality is, that from our side of things it's nowhere near 50/50 as the club pays us quite a bit more. So it's obvious where I'm going to lean, if I was pushed.

Jim's reflections, as well as confirming my thoughts surrounding recruitment, also illustrated other interesting aspects of the study environment. Initially, in that they highlighted the high levels of micropolitics evident, much of which was at the instigation of the CCOs themselves. Secondly, they illustrated the high levels of micropolitical literacy and nous evident in how each CCO managed the club and Union affairs (Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b). Thirdly, they demonstrated that the levels of trust and rapport built up with study participants, had certain limitations in what type of information they were happy to divulge. This standpoint was no doubt adopted because of the invidious and conflicting position that each Coach found themselves embroiled within by having to serve *two masters* (Brumbles & Beach, 2008; Pitney et al., 2008; Sherry & Shilbury, 2009).

The invidious *two master* standpoint, and the problems that occurred, were often a consequence of the CCOs' own making, with the events reported raising awareness to the underlying communication problems that existed between the HKRFU and those clubs involved in the 50-50 Job-share Scheme. The format of the Job-share Scheme meant that the CCOs were placed at the centre or hub of the communications process between key members of both club & Union staff, allowing them a level of control over what information flowed between both parties. This meant that sometimes it suited the CCO Coaches to limit what information was processed between the two factions in either, making themselves look more proficient in their job from both a Union and club perspective, or allowing them to run more sinister and personal agendas.

Suspensions were heightened by them often ignoring or playing down requests for formal meetings to be arranged with club bosses, suggesting that they (the bosses) were allegedly unavailable due to their busy work commitments. Even after being placed as intermediary between the Union and club bosses, it took me much of that first data collection period (2010-11, 12 months) to establish any sort of rapport and trust with the relevant club personnel towards gaining a fuller picture of proceedings. This was indeed, due in part to the heavy work commitments of club bosses, but also I believed because the CCOs had been keen to keep both factions separated, doing so to maintain the distance and discord between Club and Union, so that neither party were ever totally aware of their movements or manoeuvrings (Potrac & Jones , 2009a & 2009b). Following certain events, the problem was later reconciled through the establishment of the previously mentioned joint appraisals meetings (section 6.2.3), which facilitated a regular and direct line of communication between club officials and the Union in my role as LM.

The meetings helped to promote regular dialog between both factions, reducing the responsibility on CCOs to act as intermediaries, and thus limit the potential micropolitical manoeuvrings and personal agendas described herein.

❖ 11.1.2.2. *Micropolitics - Salary*

A similar withholding of information became apparent during the second season of data collection, stemming from a previous refusal to meet a salary demand put forward by the CCOs and club bosses at the end of the preceding season (season one of data collection 2010-11). Initially, the idea of the scheme was that the Club and Union would each provide 50% of the Coaches' salary with transparency evident regarding how much each party contributed. However, during informal talks throughout the second season of data collection with various club contacts, I became aware that certain CCOs were receiving added income above and beyond the agreed salary scale. I assumed that a private agreement between the CCOs and club bosses had been reached as a result of the earlier decision not to meet pay demands. It also became apparent that prior to negotiating these under-the-table deals with club bosses, that (as in the previous occasion – section 6.2.3) some level of discussion had taken place amongst the CCOs themselves, displaying somewhat of a united front in how they presented their argument and why they warranted the added incentives. Not only were the CCOs successful in negotiating these under-the-table increases, they also somehow managed to convince the club bosses that it was in their best interests to keep the final agreements confidential. They persuaded the bosses not to make the Union formally aware of any arrangements, suggesting that it might cause ill-will or disagreement which could potentially jeopardise the future of the Job-share Scheme.

Discussions surrounding the payments with the HCM and HP confirmed that they had also been alerted to rumours of the additional payments, with agreement reached that there was “not a lot we can do about it at the moment.” They confirmed that it was “ultimately up to each club how much they valued their CCO,” with the additional payments being secreted under the guise of housing benefits and/or general expenses to camouflage their existence (interview extract, HCM). It was decided therefore to leave the matter unattended until future contract renewals came around, when the issue could then be openly discussed.

Matters, however, came to the forefront sooner than expected through discussions following the end of the study period (season two data collection, 2011-12) and during the first batch of joint appraisals involving respective Club bosses, their particular CCO, and me as LM. Through each of the various appraisal meetings, where one of the agenda items was yet another proposal for a salary increase, I alerted club bosses that I was aware of the additional payments. This prompted further debate as to how those payments had eventuated, with one boss explaining:

Yes, they [the CCOs] actually put a good argument together, we never met or anything, it was just done by phone and email where we [club name] and [third club] got some demands from our Coaches which we thought were quite realistic. They explained what other Coaches were earning in their position, not that that influenced us in any great way. But then how the rents had gone up quite significantly in the last few years in Hong Kong, the cost of living too. I think they said by 11% in two years, where they got that from I don't know, but it sounded about right. Anyway, we talked then as a group of bosses and gave each of them extra cash. Not what they wanted, and I think [name of club] agreed to pay a bit more, but it wasn't to turn your nose up to, either.

Further discussion involved why they did not feel it appropriate to inform the Union of the additional payments. The club boss further revealed:

They [the CCOs] said that if we told you [Union], you'd just adjust the monthly club subvention⁸ with them losing out and not getting any benefit from the increase. So we decided to keep quiet for their sake, it was us [the clubs] footing the cost, after all.

Continuing the discussion, it became apparent that the CCOs had also been adopting a similar *need to know* stance with their club bosses, conveniently forgetting to declare additional payments that the CCOs received as part of their International Age-group or senior coaching duties (above that agreed on the 50-50 Job-share Scheme). I mistakenly assumed that the CCOs had made club officials aware of the additional income, with on-going discussion revealing that they had conveniently omitted these payments in talks with their bosses, as a full disclosure of their financial position would have weakened their leverage during negotiation for the under-the-table payments. The eventual enlightenment of the CCOs' earnings caused some anger and embarrassment for a period between CCOs and particular club bosses who felt a little betrayed that they had been supporting their corner while not being given all the financial details. The realisation also removed any further discussion regarding a salary increase for that forthcoming season while also alerting club employers to the micropolitical cunningness of the CCO group (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002a & 2002b; Jones et al., 2012).

⁸ Each Club was paid a monthly subvention by the HKRFU as their NGB, from which the CCOs salary was deducted. 50% paid by the Union with the other 50% taken from the Clubs subvention allocation.

On later broaching the subject with Sid (one of the Coaches involved), he revealed:

I was really pissed off with you [me] at the time, but after a while, realised it was always going to come out at some point, a bit naive really. Jesus, didn't [name], our Convenor have the shits with me for a while....Thanks for that! [laughs]

On pursuing my instincts and intrigue at that time (and before gaining confirmation from the aforementioned club boss), I inquired into if and how the CCOs had colluded on this matter in displaying a united front with their bosses. Sid further confessed:

We didn't call a formal meeting like, but a couple of us we normally go for a coffee after our weekly meet and chew the cud [discuss events]. And we thought it was best if we got our stories right. We weren't happy last year when you turned us down and I don't think you or the bosses realise that rents have gone up by 20-30% since me and Jim have been here, and some of the guys have been here longer. I've also got school fees to think about and everything's gone up really, except our pay, that is.

The conversation and views were similar to ones held in previous discussions regarding salary increases (section 6.2.3), and as previously, I sympathised with their plight to a certain extent. However I also firmly believed the 50-50 Job-share Scheme had a value and the CCOs were receiving a fair recompense for the role(s) they carried out. On reflection, and upon analysing the behaviour of the CCO's surrounding these recruitment and salary issues, one could be forgiven for assuming that their actions were those of highly skilled operators in the field of micropolitical literacy (Jones et al., 2012). Further scrutiny into the incidents, however, might also suggest a naivety on the part of the Coaches, in assuming, as Sid alluded to, that their dealings in the small, tightly knit rugby community would not eventually come to light and potentially jeopardise their standing with senior club and HKRFU staff as in this, and other matters (Jim - 9.1.2 and 11.1.2.3).

❖ 11.1.2.3. Micropolitics –Control and Management Manipulation

Progressing through my many dealings with the CCOs, it became evident that they considered themselves adept at micropolitical 'manipulation,' and 'scheming', in their attempts to influence situations and people in a preferred direction by displaying what Jones et al. (2012, p.275) described as 'skilled strategic action.' When chatting about progress at their clubs, CCOs were quick to comment about their management of bosses and senior staff in on-going issues towards the outcome they desired.

Such comments included:

If I'm perfectly honest about it, it doesn't bother me at all. I'll let them have their say, but I think I'm a clever enough chap to nod, nod, nod and then go pretty much and do my own thing (Ken).

Also referring to his senior staff, Brad added, "they need to be turned like other people, you know, it's important that everyone is in the group, the team, and that they are going in the direction I want." Sid also commented on how it was preferable to sometimes keep club executives somewhat in the dark regarding his dealings as he perceived them as "more of a hindrance" than a help. Jim, probably the most vociferous on the subject, suggested:

They [the bosses] are not at the coalface all the time. Ultimately they are businessmen and they've got agendas or they've got opinions because they love the sport. They love being involved because they have money or because they've been voted in there. And as much as my relationship is good with my chairman, some things he doesn't need to know about. Manage a situation, let it run two or three weeks, even two or three months, and then if you need to, bring it to his attention. Rightly or wrongly, I've done it a couple of times and got away with it.

When recalling contract renewal negotiations he had undertaken with his club bosses at a later stage, following impressive improvements in his team's performances, he recalled:

We are in waters now where this club has never been, so I'm on the way up. And what the alicadoos [bosses] want, not just [name of Chairman] but all of them, is once they get a taste of that apple, a bite, they then want it all. So I've given them a bite and now [name of Chairman] wants me to sign a new two-year deal. Not one, he wants me here for two years.

Jim was not alone in perceiving himself as a good manager of situations. Aiden also shared a similar contractual discussion illustrating how his strategically placed presentation to club executives following a series of consecutive wins had significantly aided his cause:

I looked at the four games and thought they were very winnable....Then I thought well, there was a natural break in our season after those games so I thought it would be the best time to put a proposal forward as to why [Club name] should keep me on. I knew I'd be in a strong position.

Also, during the same interview, Aiden discussed how he had managed to convince his Chairman of the advantages to the club if he was permitted to take up Senior International coaching duties with HK. The appointment meant that Aiden would at times be absent from his normal club duties to Coach and travel with the national team; something that some club bosses were reluctant to allow. Relaying the conversation he had held with the chairman to try and persuade him that he could take up the role, Aiden recalled:

I told my chairman, I said, 'the good thing about this [name] is that I'm getting access to the International players in HK. Other Coaches have been doing it for years, you know, using the position to help the Club.' So you know he bit straight away and allowed me to do it.

From these examples and those offered in previous narratives (Chapter 9), high levels of micropolitical literacy are apparent, with the CCOs seemingly able to steer their bosses in a preferred direction (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a; Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Jones et al., 2012). However, in attempting to confirm my insights on these and other matters, and after establishing sound relationships with many of the club bosses, I thought it important to seek their opinions and observations on such matters. While during the discussions (end of season interviews –season two) some remained steadfastly loyal to their Coach in what they revealed, other bosses were happy to provide an honest insight into how, at times, they were content to allow the Coach to believe that they were in control of situations as it served little purpose to constantly expose each Coach's agenda unless they saw a real need to interject.

One boss recalled:

Ye, Jim annoys me at times, he pisses down my leg sometimes telling me that you and [name of HP] are pushing him in certain directions to push Union policy. Then when I talk to you and [name of HP] myself, I know it's not true. It's Jim preserving himself and trying to get his own way, which is ok to a point, but he sometimes goes over the top, as you well know.

There seemed to be a general acceptance amongst the bosses that the CCOs had to be given some latitude in allowing them to develop and make a few mistakes, adopting a similar mentoring capacity to that of my own (Lyle et al., 2009 & 2010).

This was epitomised by Jim's boss who offered:

What I'm trying to do with Jim is encourage him to step back sometimes and just delay making a decision. You know, whether it's just writing an email or listening to others, just to step back and think more about what they are going to say instead of just jumping in and making the wrong decision.

Another of the bosses discussing early concerns regarding Aiden, revealed that while he seemed to pay the necessary attention to him during meetings and/or discussions, he questioned whether he actually acted on the information agreed, suggesting that the Coach was simply “humouring me,” or paying lip service to my comments. He remarked:

...he’s listening, he’s feeding back, he’s saying all the right things, but I get the feeling it’s not really what he thinks. So I’ve started going more often to our Tuesday and Thursday night trainings to actually see if we we’re putting into practice what I thought we agreed to do.

Following the chairman’s observations at training, it became clear that Aiden was not meeting agreed expectations. Events eventually proceeded to a point during the season where the chairman revealed, “So I sat formally with Aiden pretty early on and said that he had to change. I laid it on the line to him, quite directly, what I thought needed to change.” This was, however, quite different to the picture being painted by Aiden at this time, suggesting to me that all was well where club duties were concerned. The comments further illustrated the advantages of keeping club and Union bosses separated, where possible.

Another example involved Greg’s clandestine pay talks with the outgoing Chairman, during the all-important handover period with his new GM. Greg’s mismanagement of an Assistant Coach appointment around this period has already been discussed (section 9.1.1), however this new issue once again implicated Greg, who saw a similar window of opportunity to benefit from the positive relationship he had with the outgoing Chairman in securing a substantial pay increase. Up to that point, Greg (because of his relative age and inexperience) had been one of the lesser-paid CCOs, and because of his team’s recent elevation to the Premiership, I suggested he had talks with the club and that I would support his application for a move to the

next increment on the salary scale. However, instead of negotiating with the new GM, Greg cleverly (once again) went to his old Chairman who supported his application for a rise of *several* increments higher than his present salary scale. He also suggested that I was in full agreement with the large increase, a point I had not actually agreed upon. The situation became quite messy, and Greg finally received a larger than anticipated salary increase, much to my personal annoyance after I had been misrepresented. That annoyance did not stop with me however, as his new GM was also keen to teach Greg a valuable lesson in dealing honestly and transparently with senior staff. Discussions with the GM revealed:

Greg had asked for a pay rise in the summer, which was again passed off when I was away on annual leave by the Chairman, and it wasn't something I was comfortable with. I wanted to see Greg in action before I made a judgement on whether he got a pay rise.... But Greg knew he could tap in there [to the Chairman] as he would have said yes to anything. So I felt he'd been a bit sneaky in doing that.

However, in gaining retribution for Greg's underhanded dealings, the GM quickly balanced the accountancy books while also asserting his authority by withdrawing previously agreed match day payments to Greg. This was something he could control, confirming that, "I then had a problem paying him more money to play....so I actually had an issue about giving him more money, and stopped it." Greg later highlighted his indignation on the matter and commented:

The General Manager offered match fees and then the week after I wasn't given them, which I think personally was, was a bit bad. Because once you get into an agreement and then you kind of back out, I felt well.....well it was a bit shitty really. If he went straight off the bat I would have been fine with it, but to kind of give it and take it back, I would rather that conversation come up before.

In summary, I share these experiences not to portray the participants in a bad light, but to paint a true picture of the coaching environment, as it was; a contextually bound world imbued with opportunistic improvisation and uncertainty (Purdy et al., 2009; Jones et al, 2012). An environment that could initially have been misconstrued as being Coach-driven or Coach-dominant, in respect of micropolitical manipulation and control (Jones & Wallace, 2005). An environment however, that under the surface, illustrated a big brother is watching outlook (Hendrix, 2013), where senior club executives offered Coaches latitude and some level of autonomy, while constantly undertaking surreptitious appraisal and information gathering in ensuring they maintained overall control and direction for their club.

11.1.2.4. Micropolitics - Serving Two Masters

When making your own judgments, and in some small defence of the Coaches, one may also wish to consider the uniqueness of the HK environment, a surrounding in which the CCOs had to contend with *two masters*, therefore facing interrogation and scrutiny from dual and often different perspectives. This point was noted by Jim and others during the study:

It's very tough out here because I'm employed by two different people pretty much, and each have a certain amount of financial involvement with me and then fighting for power over me as well. From the way I see it, no one really talks and comes to a common ground. Everyone wants more, it's really quite tough as a Coach, I'm almost left in the middle.

Ken also highlighted that:

Sometimes you're not sure who to bow to! On one hand, the club pay you more, but then the Union argue there would be no money at all if it weren't for the 7s. Then the club is run by amateurs and volunteers, versus the Union which is run by professionals. It can all get a bit messy and confusing sometimes.

During the second season of data collection, Aiden also remarked on changes within his club structure. He offered somewhat sarcastically:

It's a ridiculous situation for me as I technically have three bosses to impress....no, four! [laughs]. I have to answer to you and [name of HP], to [name of club Chairman] and now the club [a private multi-sport facility] has appointed a sports convenor, so I've got to attend bi-weekly meetings there now too. The coaching is out the window now, I just attend meetings! [laughs]

As previously noted (section 9.1.2), I believed the situation to be both a hindrance and a help to the CCOs, using the ambiguity of the situation as a convenient *out* in controlling what information was processed back and forth so as to manage their own agendas. Agendas, evidence illustrates, that were often mismanaged through an over-estimation of their own capabilities, while underestimating the abilities and foresight of others' (i.e. the club bosses).

However, their difficult position should also be acknowledged with the Coaches, at times, finding it genuinely difficult to make progress through having to juggle the different agendas of both club and Union. This placed them in an invidious position, with aspects of role-conflict and role-ambiguity apparent in their dealings, no doubt exacting its own emotional toll on the Coaches involved (Brumbles & Beach, 2008; Sherry & Shilbury, 2009). A position ably exemplified by Aiden in relaying the difficulties he faced with his club boss:

He's [club boss] the type that if the Union said red, he'd say black, you know. He always thinks the grass is greener in the Union and there are always going to be situations where he will be in disagreement with the Union policies.....I'm trying to think of an example, off hand.... but the Union will say something and from a Performance point of view, he'll agree unquestioningly that it's a sensible idea, but at the same time, he will want to pick around it until he finds a fault.

When probing as to how he managed such situations, Aiden revealed:

When I have a different opinion, say I'll pull together an email. It will have a nice introduction, you know pleasantries, then I'll get my point home but I'll try and keep under the radar by not being too explicit. You know, not totally disagreeing, but 'I see where you are coming from here, but what you need to understand about the Union is they are trying to do this, this and this.' Then he might come back with, 'yes, and I don't really care, we need to fa, fa, fa, fa.' So I won't then try and have the last word, I'll go, 'ok fair enough.' So I'll make sure my opinion is...expressed but I wouldn't necessarily say it's always heard. Sometimes it is, and some things he'll take on board, but not always, well not often really.

These comments further illustrate the delicate and manipulative, micropolitical world in which each Coach functioned, and although HK could be considered somewhat unique in its approach, it confirms previous reports on the existence of micropolitical activity within sporting confines (Jones & Wallace, 2006; Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b; Jones et al., 2012).

More significantly, the events described also highlight potential development and training areas for aspiring Coaches in raising their awareness to the politically combative sporting environment that they are likely to be entering (Potrac & Jones 2009a & 2009b; Jones et al, 2012). Receiving appropriate training to become more astute and transparent in their dealings with senior management within their organisation, many of whom will have already acquired high levels of micropolitical literacy from their own areas of business expertise (Bevir, 2013; Gilmore, 2013). This type of exposure would better prepare them for their respective rugby *arenas*, possessing heightened awareness regarding the types of individuals and contextually specific circumstances that they are likely to meet in their attempts to progress the team and their personal circumstances (Kelchtermans & Ballet 2002a & 2002b; Cruickshank, et al., 2013).

This may perhaps point to education in *emotional intelligence*, an area where improved emotional awareness could serve as a basis for better understanding and problem solving (Lozovinia et al., 2012). Such exposure could aid the development of Coaches in monitoring their own and others' feelings and emotions. This circumstance could in turn, positively influence their cognitive processes and overall decision-making capabilities to better discriminate their thinking and direction of behaviour towards more successful problem solving (Lam & Kirby, 2002; Becker, 2009; Rutkowaka & Gierczuk, 2012). Based on the evidence of this project, exposure to such training is required so that Coaches can develop a more acute sensitivity to people and events while attempting to orchestrate outcomes more competently (Jones et al., 2012; Lozovinia et al., 2012).

11.1.3. Reflexive & Reflective Standpoint

On a more personal level, when the issues surrounding the CCO recruitment policy and personal contracts came to light, it raised obvious doubts and confusion regarding the bond and type of relationship that existed with the individuals and the group as a whole. My reflexive standpoint was initially one of *heighted awareness* and disappointment in realising that trust levels weren't what I anticipated, and that I (and others) had been *played* to an extent by the coaching group (Jones et al., 2007). However, further reflection brought with it a more philosophical standpoint in considering what my own actions would have been if placed in their situation at the same point in my own coaching development. I resolved that I would probably have taken similar action in being reluctant to divulge material (data) that could prove harmful to my later development, while also over-estimating my own micropolitical astuteness in comparison to others, similarly to my own detriment. Eventually, I

came to appreciate there was no malice in their actions, the CCOs were simply looking after their team and their own personal interests to the best of their ability. I realised also, that ultimately I was their *boss* and therefore reserved the right for temporary exclusion from their *need to know* world, when situations demanded. I further resolved my position as one placed on a *parental pedestal*, sometimes visited for wisdom and guidance on both personal and professional matters, yet at other times, my presence and opinion was strictly *persona non grata*, with the coaching group happy to cavort and scheme in administering their own agendas, both personal and collective (Jones et al, 2011b; Jones et al., 2012).

11.2. **Focus Group & the Action Research Environment**

While remaining within the overarching micropolitical framework to highlight the important issues faced by Coaches, this section (11.2) will concentrate attention to focus group surroundings to best represent further themes and theories. This will be done to evidence the influence of the dynamic AR and focus group environment in dealing with events and complexities faced by Coaches, while also illustrating the type of adaptive action employed (Eoyang, 2010) through the employment of Stringer's (2007) Look, Think, Act cyclical framework (section 4.5.3).

As previously stated, the complexities surrounding the CCO role (generated either through personal observation or as a result of general conversations and interviews) were often held up for general discussion during weekly meetings and/or scheduled focus-group sessions (section 7.3.1.1). Topic areas generally arose as a result of two, three or more of the Coaches airing concerns about a particular aspect of their coaching role, with suggested themes then emailed out and discussed accordingly. After introducing each selected topic, discussions would generally run their own

course, often unearthing potential causes and solutions to the particular areas of concern. The *power of the group* (Lewin, 1946) became very evident within these communities of practice (section 7.3.2) highlighting the conducive nature of the AR environment for its ability to share common concerns with both action and research evident in the search for successful outcome (Wenger et al., 2002; Jones et al, 2011b). These features are apparent during the forthcoming events discussed.

11.2.1. Reflective Process – The Need For Contextual Specificity (Look, Think, Act)

One such example involved the implementation of *reflective sheets*, introduced initially to prompt CCOs towards becoming more objective in their assessment of how effectively they were preparing their teams (Greenwood & Levin, 2003; Nelson & Cushion, 2006; Jones et al., 2011b). To describe this particular issue, I have utilised personal diary extracts to best represent how events unfolded, while also taking the opportunity to exemplify my own reflective and reflexive processes throughout this, and all other topics discussed.

❖ **Look**

Interesting sitting back and listening to the guys discuss the previous weekend's performance. It's usually the referee's fault, the players' fault, or down to something that has gone on in the week regarding facilities, training or unavailabilities. Watched Ken's preparation two weeks ago and then Brad's sessions last week, and while the sessions were ok, I'm not sure if I were a player, what the key objectives for the game were. Currently they are coaching *broad-brush* and not addressing specific aspects of their game to combat each particular opposition. (Diary extract)

During this particular period (season one of data collection) games were not available for analysis usually until the Tuesday following matches because of financial and resource problems. This meant that the CCOs' comments at the meetings on Monday morning were based on subjective memory, rather than from any objective video analysis undertaken on the previous weekends' games. Over the weeks, criticism became cyclical in terms of "the ref was crap, he killed us" (interview evidence – Jim), with many similarly directed comments and descriptive adjectives used by CCOs to convey opinions of the various referees involved (e.g. dreadful, abysmal, awful). Some even accused the referees of bearing personal grudges against them; Brad commented, "Mate, I don't know what I've done to him, but whenever we get him, he kills us." A comparative level of blame was also laid at the door of players with many similar superlatives used to describe their own team members. A typical comment was exemplified by Greg in this matter, who explained, "I'm fed up of saying the same thing to him every week. Week in, week out, we work on it, and every week he does the same thing; its crap." My diary comments at the time revealed concerns that:

They are using the refs and players as a convenient *out*. I watched Saturday's game and Ken is kidding himself when he tells the group that the referee killed them. He wasn't great, but certainly wasn't down to why they lost, it's just an easy out, a distraction from what he really needs to address. They need to become more realistic and accurate in their assessment of training and game components.

Following numerous other conversations and comments surrounding *others'* inabilities, it prompted me to consider how I could change the current thinking. I wondered if at some level, that each CCO was reflecting more than was apparent at meetings, regarding their own particular contribution to the team performance (Lyle, 2010; Jones et al., 2011b).

❖ *Think*

It was important I encouraged each Coach to adopt more of an internal perspective regarding their personal *locus of control* (Rotter, 1954). In doing so, it would prompt each Coach to accept more culpability regarding their own actions in the preparation and performance of their team, while also holding the potential to positively affect levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy regarding other aspects of their coaching role (cf. Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011). Personal diary notes at that time recall:

I need to prompt these guys into a more objective reflective state. It seems apparent to me that they think a lot about how they prepare their team and analyse the players' performances, often being very critical of them, the ref, and/or anyone else in the line of fire. However, they seem far less critical of themselves and their own performance throughout the week and on game day. I'm sure, in their darker moments, they must think long and hard about themselves and what they are bringing to the table. Particularly annoys me when blame is being constantly laid at ref's door. This has gone on for a few weeks now and is always a safe backstop [out] for them. If they progress to the professional game, it won't be such an easy out.

Later thoughts:

Have given considerable thought to how I can *train their objectivity* under the current restraints. It's all about encouraging objective reflection really, and need to get them reflecting on their own performances before, during and after games. Have drafted a sheet that will hopefully encourage them to do some constructive [critical] reflection on, and subjective assessment on: [1] Their training week leading into games - what objectives were set? How well were they trained/received through the weeks training?; [2] Their game-day management (pre/post-match chat, warm-up, half-time management, tactical changes, etc.); then [3] Before doing their video analysis of the game, assess how effectively those areas transferred into the game from both a personal perspective and hopefully from the opinions of a few senior players. Also subjectively assessing the performance of the referee and noting areas of particular concern from memory, before the benefit of the video. Then, [4] following their video analysis to revisit their *memory assessment* and compare their subjective thoughts and scores, to the objective and statistical feedback from the video. It will be interesting to see their results, pre and post analysis, particularly concerning the referees. It's just an exercise in bringing their perception and reality a little closer.

❖ Act

Following the compilation of what I considered to be a suitable reflective template, I arranged a focus-group session the following week to discuss the introduction of reflective performance sheet (Appendix 4). I circulated the draft copy to each Coach to analyse prior to the meeting so as they had time to deliberate its use and any adjustments or changes that might be needed. The initial document only really served as a starting point for discussion, with the CCOs no doubt having an opinion on its design and implementation. This acknowledgment was always central to the introduction of this and other initiatives, to ensure that the Coaches held sufficient ownership over suggested implementations (Kidman, 2001). Upon raising the topic of *objective reflection* at the following meeting which included a brief description of internal and external locus of control (Judge & Bono, 2001), it seemed that some of the Coaches did indeed reflect at a deeper level than was previously apparent, and Jim suggested that he already had a strategy in place:

I go through my checklist after every game, what we did well what we didn't do, actually my Saturday night is normally a write-off for me.....The wife will probably come up to me at the end of the game, give me a kiss to cheek I'm ok, but then she's off because she knows I'm not really there. I'm there, if you know what I mean, but I'm not. I'm going back over the game in my head. Over and over, what went well, what didn't, It's not really fair on her, but it's the way I am.

Likewise, Sid suggested how he found it difficult not to "keep replaying the game in my head, when I get back home, or if I'm out," with Brad agreeing that it was "difficult to park it, sometimes," meaning that he too could not help but reflect back on aspects of the game throughout that evening. When probing further about Jim's elusive checklist, it became apparent that there was little structure to his, or others' reflective episodes. "I just sort of do it. It's bloody annoying really, you want to switch off and enjoy the evening, but it just keeps popping into your head.....ye, frustrating"

(Aiden). Following more debate, I provided some insight and background into Reflective Practice research surrounding the various types of skills and reflective processes involved (cf. McKernan, 1996 - technical, practical, critical), in relationship to the reflective sheet I had prepared. Eventually, the Coaches began to see the potential benefits of bringing more structure and objective accountability to their reflection in allowing them to structure and channel their reflection in a more productive fashion. Notes from my diary recalled:

Some good input from the lads, with only really Brad sceptical about it. Don't think he sees the benefit of it, but he needs to understand that he's a little more experienced than most, and also has the benefit of being just a Coach as opposed to Player-Coach. However, I also perhaps need to accept it's not for everyone. After a bit of talking around, they all seem happy to give it a go and seem to know what I want from it. They are all good to give it a dry run this weekend and see what teething problems arise. Particularly keen to see how honest they are about things, and great idea by Aiden for the Coaches involved in the game I'm watching on Saturday to get their sheets through to me on the Sunday/Monday morning before they have watched the game on video. I can see what they were thinking about, and how they assessed themselves, and the ref, prior to the benefit of the analysis. That way they can't tweak things to make their scores look good and I'll have had the benefit of watching the same game. Also asked [name of referee manager] to attend same game to assess the ref. Interesting to also note that the Player-Coach thing [debate] keeps reoccurring, it really took off in the meeting and i need to revisit it in the future.

Following the implementation of the reflective sheet over the following weeks, the CCOs were quite studious in the production of their reflective feedback, some of which served to highlight marked differences in their pre and post-match interpretations. The data provided by the Coaches (Appendix 4 - exemplars) illustrated that they were keen to gauge their pre and post-match assessment capabilities in the specific areas agreed upon. These included the formulation and training delivery of key weekly objectives to the team, the performance of the referee, pre and post analysis, along with their subjective opinions on how they managed

game-day as either Coaches or more often than not, Player-Coaches. Comments from some of the Coaches at the time reflect how the process began to change their thinking:

Looking back, like immediately after the game, I would often look at external factors for why we were poor or why we lost. The ref usually being at the forefront of my rage! This clouded my thoughts somewhat and it's not until I've watched the footage, in a more relaxed state, that you realise it's perhaps more to do with what my players are doing or not doing, rather than the ref or anyone else. That then got me thinking more about me, and my efforts in the week and it's strange because I should know better! As a player, I would always look at my own performance before anything else, rather than look for external factors. So I've started thinking more about the performance in regards to our training and did I get it right, or was it a player problem? (Aiden)

Brad, after displaying an initial lack of interest in the whole reflective process, highlighted how the reflective episodes had prompted a change of approach on match-day:

....I've taken to going behind the posts. I got to thinking about how I get so caught up with the crowd on the side of the pitch, they yell at the ref and it has to be having some influence over me. Previously, I would be marching up and down the touchline barking my orders to everyone that moved, including the referee! Now I go behind the posts to watch; it's quiet there so I can really watch what's going on. I feel more in control.

Although, from a scientific perspective, the subjective nature and make-up of the sheets can be questioned, its implementation was intended as more of an applied Coaching tool (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). Therefore, the subjective assessment of the Coaches provided by the simple scoring mechanism, proved relatively incidental, with the major aim to direct their reflective episodes more constructively while also heightening awareness to each Coach's responsibilities in the preparation and performance of their team (Pain et al., 2012; Cruickshank et al., 2013a). This was achieved through encouraging an honest self-assessment of their weekly contribution, which began with their direction, input and performance as Head

Coaches. Research in the field of self-assessment has illustrated the benefits of *self-evaluation* which forms a 'vital aspect of learning,' enabling participants to better understand the content of the material being analysed, as well as their ability to conceptualise and reflect critically on their practice (Karnilowicz, 2012, p.591). Even though the initiative was relatively short-lived (one season, primarily because added resource, manpower and more appropriate scheduling meant that game analysis could be completed earlier, hence allowing CCOs to attend the meetings armed with objective information from the game), I believe the process achieved its aims and appeared to provide 'a means of reflecting methodically' to 'increasingly recognise the specificity and limitations of their own knowledge' (Jones et al., 2011b, p.13). The process also provided:

A renewed sense of responsibility over their coaching delivery, a development encouraged through the adoption of a process of self-monitoring. This was not only in relation to clarifying what they already knew, but also, through the learning and implementation of new knowledge, in becoming aware of alternative progressions and horizons (Jones et al, 2011b, p14).

While this topic prompts the obvious need for Coaches to structure their reflective patterns more constructively, current evidence suggests that development programmes are already proactive in encouraging Coaches to enhance their current reflective and reflexive capabilities (Cushion et al., 2003; Nelson & Cushion, 2003). Perhaps a more pertinent requirement may be that of contextual relevance or contextual specificity in *what they reflect on*, providing Coaches with some direction and structure towards a more purposeful reflective outcome. This is a point already alluded to by researchers who support the call for development programmes to be specific and realistic to the requirements of Coaches (c.f. Jones & Wallace, 2005; Jones & Turner, 2006; Cassidy et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2011b; Cruickshank et al.,

2013b). The idea of developing exactly *what* Coaches should be reflecting upon is one previously lamented by Sid within the current study, who posited the positive benefits of “actually having something concrete to think about. It made a real difference rather than just doing it (reflecting) with no real structure.” The concept of contextual specificity within Rugby Union circles has also recently been heralded by Cruickshank et al. (2013a & 2013b) for its relevance in the production of a healthy and progressive *team culture*, a topic that generated interest within this particular study, and one which is given greater scope later in this chapter (section 11.3.1).

11.2.2. Technical & Tactical - The Need For Contextual Specificity (Look, Think, Act)

A similar contextually relevant stance was also required for technical and tactical components of the game (Cruickshank et al., 2013); an area where many Coaches in the study struggled to engage and challenge key players to a sufficient level, hence making it difficult for them to gain the necessary trust and respect needed to forge and maintain strong and progressive working alliances (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, 2002b; Porac & Jones 2009a & 2009b).

❖ **Look**

In accepting that current Coach Education programmes are generally proactive in updating technical and tactical information from the game on current courses (Lyle, 2002; Cushion et al, 2003; Lyle et al., 2010), evidence from this study suggests the need for those updates to consider the realities of the coaching environment (Cruickshank et al., 2013b). Some of the contextual realities have already been expressed through the previous plights of Greg (section 9.1.1) and Sid (section 9.1.3), with evidence provided during the study highlighting how current Coach

Education provision is still missing vital components (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Cushion & Jones, 2012). This point is probably best summed up by Jim during one of our many informal discussions where he echoed the sentiments of many Coaches involved in the study by suggesting:

Ye, they talk about scrum and lineout and all that crap on Level 3, but it's not real. They don't understand the cheating and gamesmanship that goes on. They don't understand that it's not a perfect world where all the players are, 'yes sir, no sir.' It can be fucking tough managing people. Some you like, some you don't. Some who don't like you, or respect you because they don't think you have the knowledge, or they simply don't agree with what you're trying to do.

Furthermore, Jim, staying with the topic of current NGB Coaching awards and comparing their relevance to real world coaching environment, offered:

It's just something I know I have to do. It's a bit like exams in school. You just have to get the badge, it doesn't really mean you're a better Coach, you're just ticking the boxes and that's a bit of a worry I think. You know, when I'm just going on courses because I have to get the badge, not because of what I learn.

Further evidence was offered from Sid:

Part of the issue with Coach Education is the levels tend to be the same, a 'once size fits all' type of thing. It's all a bit unrealistic to what I really do with the club, and the people I have to deal with. I tried to raise that point on the Level 3 course, but he didn't really answer my question. He just skimmed over it and went back to the theory of it.....which is ok but....!

Although adopting a more positive stance, Ken followed a similar train of thought in suggesting that there was some difference between what was delivered on courses, to the reality of the coaching environment in which he functioned:

I really enjoy the interaction on courses, and it's great when you get a couple of old guys who are happy to talk about their experiences, it just brings some reality to it. It actually proved awkward at times for the guys delivering, because they [experienced Coaches] were like challenging their opinions on things. And that's the problem sometimes for me, is fitting what they teach on these courses, back to my own coaching at the club.....joining all the dots and that. That's what those experienced guys do, they make it real.

❖ Think

Alerted to such concerns, I always ensured that full consideration was always given to real world, contextually relevant issues as CDM during any of my dealings with the CCOs (Lyle 2002; 2007a; Potrac et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2011; Jones & Cushion, 2012). In relation to the particular problem surrounding technical components of the game, it was important to make regular visits to each club environment (a six of total) so as to gain, and maintain, a realistic insight into the contextual realities facing each Coach. This meant realising their world was far from ideal, often lacking adequate facilities and resources in many areas. So while I acknowledged the individuality of each context and each Coach, I also realised the need for a valid and meaningful assessment criteria that could reflect progress both individually and across all clubs/Coaches in the form of good practice guidelines (Lyle, 2002, 2007b).

In formulating such a document I also had to consider the wisdom of Lyle's (2007b) UKCC Coaching Report (section 5.2.) in ensuring pertinent criteria were incorporated to meet the developmental needs of the Coaches. These surrounded aspects of: (a) relevant sport specific knowledge; (b) role-related competences; (c) integrated skills; attention to cognitive organisation; (d) process-management skills; (e) capacity building; (f) evidence of clear progressions; and (g) attention to interpersonal skills, with the assessment based from suitable research-based education and training criteria to meet these demands (Kavussanu et al., 2008; Cote & Gilbert, 2009). As with previous implementations, a draft copy of the suggested assessment criteria was sent to each Coach to analyse for the purposes of deliberation and possible change (Appendix 5).

❖ **Act**

As expected, the introduction of the formal assessment criteria stirred much debate and some level of apprehension on the part of the Coaches in line with Rock's (2009) SCARF Model (section 3.2.3.1). Concerns surrounding the makeup and application of the criteria were discussed to allay any fears, with some minor adjustments made to the overall assessment weightings to meet the preferred needs of the Coaches. It was explained that formal assessment and feedback would remain confidential to each Coach with it serving as a periodic indicator to their overall development. They were advised to look upon the formal assessment in an individual capacity, rather than make comparisons against other Coaches, as I assumed they would do. This way, it would avoid possible disappointment on the part of some individuals (Lyle, 2002). The Coaches also agreed that should any common themes arise from the assessments, they should be debated in open forum to further enhance their overall development. Initial feedback regarding the assessment process was good, with Coaches experiencing a different level of 'invigorating stress' (Allen, et al., 2012, p.6). The various comments ranged from, "yes, it's good, puts a bit of pressure on you, but that's good" (Sid), to "I've never been assessed before. I've been really nervous all day, but looking forward to it too" (Greg). Brad, offering the most comprehensive feedback, suggested:

I think it's singularly the best thing I've ever done as a Coach. Even though you're here regular like, this was different. And I assume if we are lucky enough to get onto bigger things, it's stuff like this that happens all the time. Ye, it's proved really valuable having you come in and put a bit of pressure on, also knowing what you're looking for, and what we have to do.

From the wider perspective of the focus-group forums and meetings, of which many were generated as a result of technical components of the game, the Coaches from the study were quick to highlight their value for discussing many of the *imperfect world issues* they faced (Lyle, 2002, 2007b). Pete highlighted the value of the group gathering and declared:

To be honest, I'm really enjoying the meetings that we have, our CCO meetings and that, and obviously the little workshops that we've been doing recently. They've been really good, actually listening to the other guys and how they are getting on with their bits and pieces. It's good also to know that others are getting the same crap from players and bosses, it's really helped.

Likewise, Greg commented on the value of the focus group meetings:

....because some of them [other CCOs] are coming from a wealth of experience, from the top of the game as players and Coaches, they're just invaluable for talking too, and gaining more knowledge. By throwing ideas around with everyone, you're always going to find something and I think, 'oh ok, I can use that.' Some of it's good stuff, some of it's from their environment, but you can transfer different bits of knowledge back to suit your team.

Also in line with Ken's earlier comments on current Coach Education provision, Brad made similar comparisons regarding his own experiences:

I'm not knocking the courses, I'm just saying they're not the be-all and end-all. With the courses that are run, sometimes the best information gathering for the Coach is at the lunchtime, or like here this morning, when the Coaches are talking to each other. That's when the best information is shared and comes out.

The comments offered by study participants, support the call for more contextually relevant training and development arenas that are pertinent to technical (and other) components of the game. Evidence also corroborates the benefits of informal or incidental learning environments (in the form of focus groups and practical workshops) as a means of fulfilling these requirements (Cruickshank et al, 2013a & 2013b; McKenna et al., 2013). This would suggest that future Coach Education

programmes need to give more credence to the contextual reality of material delivered if it is to gain more credence with applied practitioners (Jones & Wallace, 2006; Jones et al, 2012). Creating appropriate learning environments where 'Coaches *feel* that more learning is taking place' (Lyle et al., 2011b, p.332) because of the contextually relevant domain in which they are receiving the information (Vella et al., 2013).

❖ 11.1.3. Reflexive & Reflective Standpoint

It was interesting to note that throughout many of the focus groups and workshops organised to address the concerns and complexities of the coaching role, I did not always possess the expertise or knowledge to inform proceedings. This meant often having to sit back and allow the power of the AR group environment to produce its own answers (Dunstan-Lewis, 2000; Dick, 2002 & 2004). Initially, it was an uncomfortable process in not having all the answers at my fingertips, but I soon realised that my personal silences were often rewarded with new knowledge, or valuable insight into one or other of the study participants. Such insights often allowed me to observe the critical analysis of common issues faced by the Coaches while in the company of their peers. This sometimes led to the formulation of agreeable solutions to their part, or at other times, simply allowing the Coaches to unburden themselves through the maxim of, *a problem shared, is a problem halved* (Coghlan & Brannick, 2004; Pain et al., 2012).

Over time, I became increasingly trusting of my own silence, and the power of the group to manage themselves towards an outcome (Lewin, 1946). Quite often, I simply had to introduce a theme or topic and the group would take control. This was not always the case, particularly during meetings where more delicate topics were

discussed surrounding the aspects that might compromise their position within the HKRFU (e.g. section 11.1.2.1 - recruitment). In such cases, I prompted and cajoled with little effect. Generally however, the environment procured was one in which I benefited the Coaches as much by listening, rather than directing and controlling the learning process. This further maximised the AR environment by empowering Coaches to problem solve for themselves, while I, the Educator, could add to my own knowledge base (Kidman, 2001; Krishnamurti, 2013).

Such an approach could offer other Coach Educators some interesting food for thought in lessening their control of the learning context to harness the expert knowledge that lies within. As was the case here, this new approach could supplement Coach Educators' own contextual knowledge base through *listening* to the tacit, real world, experiences of others who may already be part of the group, or whom perhaps were invited in from the performance and/or professional playing arenas outside. Coach Educators would become more aware of how to best meet the needs of the Coaches in attendance (Blasé & Anderson, 1995; Kidman, 2001 Partington & Totten, 2012). Recent work from Vella et al., (2013) has posited the positive benefits of adopting such an approach, describing the learning environment as a *parallel process* where learning becomes a give-and-take reciprocal process between mentor and client/athlete. Evidence from this project would suggest support for such an approach, in line with the need for more contextually relevant information to inform future Coach Education programmes.

11.3. Management Complexities

Moving forward, other complexities unearthed through the analysis process surrounded the various aspects of the CCOs' management role as Head and/or Player-Coaches. A major issue among these complexities was the ability, or rather inability, of the CCOs to develop a positive and dynamic *team culture* or progressive Performance environment. This inability stemmed from a lack of previous coaching experience in this area, which in turn, manifested other problems surrounding aspects of recruitment, the man-management of players and Coaches, as well as other staff within their particular club environments (Cruickshank et al, 2013a & 2013b). This problem was further complicated through many of the CCOs acting as *Head Player-Coaches (H-PC)* within their team setting, a topic that in itself is given further scope later in this section (11.4). Awareness to these factors became apparent early in the data collection period (season one), with a series of workshops and focus groups then organised to address pertinent issues. This meant initially addressing aspects of team culture, within which the Player-Coach issue was a significant factor. Moving forward, some insight into the current theoretical research surrounding aspects of team culture will be provided, and supported with events and occurrences from this study.

11.3.1. Team Culture – In Theory

Within academic circles, the concept of *team culture* in Rugby Union and sport generally is relatively new, with much of the existing research undertaken within organisational and business settings (Gilmore, 2013; Ryanne, 2013; Schroeder, 2013). Recent debate within sports contexts however, have surrounded a series of articles (including, Gilmore, 2013; Grix, 2013; McKenna, 2013) generated through

the work of Cruickshank et al., (2013a & 2013b), who investigate the notion of creating a high performance culture and mind-set within a professional Rugby Union organisation. Although the work has created much debate regarding many aspects of Cruickshank et al's., work (cf. Gilmore 2013; Grix, 2013; McKenna 2013; Ryanne, 2013; Schroeder, 2013), general agreement was reached that the concept of *team culture* within Rugby Union held a 'number of difficult-to-grasp issues,' which were 'very hard to define, put your finger on, tease out and test for' (Grix, p. 297). In earlier work, Cruickshank and Collins (2012, p.340) defined team culture as:

...a dynamic process characterised by the shared values, beliefs, expectations and practices across a number of generations of a defined group.

They further conceptualised that changing a team culture was a management-led process that included shared and group values, perceptions and behaviours that pervaded the performance arena over time, and which persisted and facilitated high performance (Cruickshank et al., 2013a, p. 272). These were beliefs that I supported from personal experience as an applied Coach and accredited Sport Psychologist, always striving in my previous employment to create a shared culture where team values and standards were jointly agreed upon and implemented so as to ensure a mutually conducive training and performance environment (Schroeder, 2013; Cruickshank, 2013b). This often meant taking into consideration available resources and the wider organisational aims to establish a top-down (Coach-led), bottom-up (player-driven) sub-culture to move things forward (Wang, 2012; Cruickshank et al., 2013b; Gilmore, 2013).

11.3.2. Team Culture - In Practice

From the observations made throughout the study period, it became apparent that many of the Coaches possessed limited experience as to what a successful team culture comprised of, having all inherited clubs that still very much held onto the old community based, social ethos that had prevailed during their inception and development. While that outlook was still fine for many of those lower community based sections of each club, it meant a change of outlook and approach on the part of those involved in the premiership leagues, moving more towards a performance mind-set in terms of their preparation and performance. In order to deliver the most valid interpretation of complexities faced by Coaches, aspects of *team culture* are delivered from varying perspectives and by different people (Mason, 2002; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). For reasons of clarity within this section (section 11.3), the observations (Look Phase) of both the bosses and Coaches are provided separately. This is done to lay an appropriate foundation for the issues discussed, which were a consequence of the Coaches' inability to propagate an appropriate team culture. This, in turn, informs aspects that could be considered as bi-products or effects of their inexperience, involving conflict management along with further occurrences (section 11.1.2.1) linked to recruitment.

❖ **Look (Team Culture - Bosses)**

The views of the bosses were, in many ways, quite sympathetic to their particular Coach's situation and revealed the problems they had to contend with:

...like a lot of sides, we struggle to manage the range of cultures and backgrounds. You know we go from one extreme from a Chinese lad at university who lives in Sham Shui Po in a 500, 400 square feet flat and where money is a serious issue, to your aircraft pilot and Wall Street investment banker at the other end; and of course, the language problem as well.

Likewise, another boss was keen to highlight the specific problems facing the Head Coach at his club, purporting:

...[the teams] operate far too independently. We hardly ever speak to our ladies section. Our development lads who speak largely Chinese, you know, also don't interact with our colts or Premiership section. There's a real need and potential for bringing them all together, even actually socially, and not just as part of training.

The boss further added that:

...and it must be tough creating a strong team spirit when you haven't got a ground! There's only really one team that has their own ground and I remember it was a big part when I used to play, and with most other teams. You know, when you have your own ground you can use it, creating that 'fortress-like mentality' which helps with things like team spirit and team harmony...I guess. And when you look at us, we've trained in 4 different venues already this season with our home pitch unlikely to be available until at least the end of October.

Finally, another club boss was keen for his Coach to address specific issues at his club, highlighting:

....in the past, it can get a little bit cliquey, you can get a group of guys who have been together for a long while, they want to play with their mates and they are not necessarily as welcoming to new faces unless they are absolute stars. Um...and the same is true of our development side.

For the Coaches themselves, their lack of insight and understanding surrounding a Performance team culture meant many were either unaware of the need for change, or had little idea about how to manage the change process at their club (Cruickshank et al., 2013a and 2013b). As a consequence, many allowed the club to run as it always had, with players arriving late for training and matches, leaving early and generally displaying little appetite for self or team improvement. Many of the older players (even though they were considered Performance players) would prefer to stay with their fun-based social approach to training rather than applying themselves to new and more challenging concepts. Many of the Coaches were therefore

sceptical about introducing change, as it was met with resistance from some of the old established players, and instead preferred not to cause too much disruption in order to preserve themselves and the social and community-based mind-set that had prevailed (McKenna, 2013). This approach however, was soon to cause problems and friction at some clubs, with the new breed of player being attracted to HK beginning to air some dissatisfaction regarding the current state of training. One boss reported:

...and I have actually gone to them personally by email and said 'look guys, you know, you are now the senior players, you do have to take some responsibility for...um, either creating a mind-set or correcting a mind-set. I need your help to make sure that you know, that everybody is coming to training. Don't please, simply stand on the side-lines and knock [criticise], from a club perspective that doesn't help anybody.'

From my perspective as CDM/LM and HC, and following the advent of the 50-50 Job-share Scheme, it was crucial that the top club teams progressed so as to maintain our international standing within Asia and the all important annual Asian 5 Nations Competition (section 3.4.1). Therefore, an important part of each CCO's remit was to ensure that their Premiership teams progressed, introducing professional systems and structures where possible, to improve overall standards and also accommodate the influx of better quality players that were being attracted to Hong Kong. This also meant moulding their teams into a cohesive unit through the creation of team rules, values and subsequent behaviours, so as to raise playing and training standards at their club, sometimes under difficult circumstances (Cruikshank, 2013; Gilmore, 2013). Their situation was aptly summed up by Pete, who suggested:

....with the players this year it's been a bit more demanding in the fact that they are a higher level, or they've played at a higher level back in NZ. So they have high expectations of their own. The other hard thing for me was actually.....was that they are also good friends from back home.

Interestingly, even though many of the CCOs had come from professional and international playing backgrounds, few had any real insight into what type of environment they should be attempting to procure and how they could successfully mould an eclectic mix of nationalities together. Aiden typifies this when reporting:

As an ex-player, I was pretty confident in my ability to create a 'winning environment.' What I failed to acknowledge though was that not everyone in my team here was cut from the same cloth and didn't have the same mind-set or professional rugby experience as me! I knew what I had to do as a *player* to create my piece of the environment but what I wasn't so sure of was how to create that from scratch as a Coach.

Their plight was not helped by some of the CCOs preferring to rely on the services of longstanding volunteer Assistant Coaches and administrators who could offer little help or expertise in their pursuit of *change* towards a more *Performance* minded sports environment (Jones et al., 2012). As a result, various people-management issues arose between players, staff, and senior management, with some CCOs finding it difficult to make any real progress towards an effective team culture. Many were unclear as to what their environment was, or what it should be.

Each Coach found it particularly difficult to attain a successful balance in managing older established players and traditions against those who had recently arrived from a semi/professional playing background, and who had gained previous experience within progressive *Performance* environments. Some Coaches also experienced difficulties in recruitment, unaware of the type of player needed, as they had not established any type of team profile and were therefore unsure as to who best suited their current team needs (Hughes et al., 2012). This, in turn, often resulted in criticisms of poor financial management by their respective bosses, with the Coaches accused of mis-spending valuable club funds on inappropriate players.

❖ **Look** (*Team Culture - Coaches*)

While some examples of these issues have been relayed earlier in the transcripts of Greg, Jim and Sid (Chapter 9), other examples of the operational problems faced by Coaches are provided to illustrate the types of environments that existed, and the subsequent complexities that arose. Sid recalled:

I turned up to the worst team, no culture in existence at all. No, I tell a lie, there was; it was a losing culture!...coming from a country that's got a professional rugby culture and trying to instil that into the team is tough. Half the guys are there because it's a release from the work. You know, rugby is not the be-all and end-all for them.

Ken, on trying to make some early changes in his environment recalled:

....it wasn't what I expected, I went in there and tried to make a few changes, expecting I could make quite a few changes and it didn't really happen, I didn't change as much as I would have really liked. I probably just changed enough to get us moving forward.

In attempting to explain why change was not evident, Ken recalled problems with:

..people, communication issues, the language barrier, all sorts really.....also I think with those guys, also because of their culture, they respect people who...ah, are elders, they respect people who I suppose are higher in the food chain [older], if that sort of makes sense. So maybe I haven't really quite got there with them yet, in terms of age and experience.

On probing further, his (and others') lack of management experience became evident, displaying a lack of trust (McKenna, 2009b) and empowerment (Gilmore, 2013; Lee et al., 2013) in sharing the responsibilities with his fellow coaching staff who were themselves, in need of some direction and personal development:

.... everything else in terms of the coaching side of it, I think I don't really ask opinions from others too often...I really try and drive it myself. I try and dominate it so if there is a bit of pressure, I don't know, probably because of who I'm with....I don't think of getting advice from them.

When inquiring further about his coaching staff, Ken commented:

My team manager for example is someone who right from the start, when I met her last year, I realised was probably just lazy she was...um, maybe it wasn't laziness, maybe it was a bit of ignorance really, and maybe the previous Coach wasn't putting enough pressure on her to do a good enough job.

He offered similar views on his Assistant Coach:

He's nodding a lot but doesn't really understand it, and that's where I think he needs to work better and communicate better in terms of making sure he's fully understanding what we want to achieve.

When suggesting that it was also his responsibility to help develop staff, he remarked:

Ye, what I'm probably not doing is putting enough pressure on um...my coaching team. There's been a couple of times when I've been annoyed at [Assistant Coach], and [Team Manager], they've known that, but I didn't really say anything to them.

Other Coaches displayed similar difficulties in moulding and developing their coaching team and overall environment. Sid was one such Coach and suggested that:

...we [him and his Assistant Coach] have a very strange relationship, we rubbed each other up the wrong way when we came into a confrontation and we had a few run-ins like that, quite a few times actually. At other times, you know, we were perfectly good together, so...ah, it's frustrating.

Likewise, Aiden commented on his club assistant:

I can sit there and give them the schedule, give them this, give them that and talk them through it 15 minutes before the session. Ask them if they are clear? 'Ye, ye ye, that's fine,' they all say, and then I look back and [laughs], hang on, they're doing something different. I think, bloody hell, I've just walked through that 15 minutes ago and it's not what I said.

On a wider note, and when entering the study during the second season of data collection, Pete, also offered views on the current state of his club, somewhat shocked by its disparate nature:

We have three sections with the Senior, Youth and Mini's, and each section doesn't talk to each other. So they've got three different Chairmen, and each section doesn't know what the other is doing with, you know, money flowing across each section to the other; It's all in bits and pieces.....I know the expectation on me is to be the glue between it all. So I'm the middle-man they go to, to sort problems. They palm off the information, then expect me to push the information to the next guy and sort it.

As a result of their limited management experience and inability to create a conducive Performance environment, team morale suffered at some clubs, with players either preferring to play in lower socially-based leagues or to leave to join other teams. Further coming to terms with his environment, Pete commented:

And there are [development team name] boys as well. There's another sort of dynamic happening there. What's happening there is, I've talked to them about coming up to help our threes, twos, so I can then push players up to the Prem's and Prem A's. [Performance teams]. They've said they don't really want too, they want to play with their mates.

Jim also offered similar experiences from early in his tenure:

I lost three players from me not understanding the Chinese *loss of face* thing. I lost one kid because in his eyes he should have been first choice, but he hasn't really committed himself to be on time or to train regularly. And it's a shame because he was not a bad player, but I didn't want him there if he was going to become a cancer in the team. So in the end I let him go.

Likewise, other Coaches offered their experiences in how they found it difficult to achieve a healthy balance within their environments, usually resulting in losing one faction [old] or the other [new] (Schoeder, 2010; Cruickshank et al., 2013a):

Managing those players was difficult and unfortunately, a couple of them were Cantonese so I didn't really get off to a good bat with them right from the start. Eventually I lost those players....they left or just stopped turning up to training. So I ended up...er, with only a squad of 22 (Sid).

Ye, I had one sort of guy, I...ah, couldn't control. A good player but a complete loose cannon. Like the nicest guy off the field you could come across, but as soon as he got that red mist, he was just a complete disaster. Fighting against opposition on the field, and against our team in training. I tried a lot of different techniques to keep him under control, befriending him, arm around the shoulder sort of thing, then keeping him at a distance, all sorts of things. In the end I just couldn't, fortunately he left after a season (Greg).

Pete, later remarking on one of his key overseas signings:

I actually had to send one of them home due to...ah, his poor management on and off the field stuff, and obviously on the field as well where he got suspended for three weeks. So, that didn't help us out at all...and I vouched for this chap to come over and it fell to pieces, it was sort of...sort of egg on my face in the end.

These insights provide readers with a wider perspective of the problems faced by the Coaches in trying to manage and develop their respective team cultures. Attention within the *Look* phase will now focus on two particular aspects of their role, surrounding recruitment and conflict management to further highlight how their inexperience undermined success and raised concerns in these areas.

11.3.2.1 Issues – Recruitment and Budgetary Management

As noted earlier, the inability of Pete and others to recruit the right type of player raised issues with club bosses who thought their Coaches were wasting valuable financial resources on the wrong type of players. For some CCOs, I was to find out

that this had quite dramatic consequences. For example, upon reflecting on his time with Aiden, Aiden's boss recalled:

And I guess there was a little bit of a disagreement about where those players should come from. So my view after being in HK for fifteen, sixteen years, off and on, and being involved in rugby, either playing at first grade, coaching or managing. The teams that have won have typically had some very strong New Zealanders in there. Perhaps a very strong Polynesian too, a player which a lot of players in HK are scared of, but which New Zealand players aren't because they play against them all the time. Um...whereas Aiden was coming from playing in Scotland and Wales and that was where he was trying to source the players from, was primarily Wales and Scotland. And to some extent a lot of those players were guys that he had played with, so they were older, and so we had a disagreement about that.

Leading into the second season, by which time Aiden seemed to have gained more trust and respect from his boss, Aiden's boss declared:

Aiden wanted to take on more of the responsibility, more of the financial budgeting responsibility and those sorts of things, which I agreed to. So we gave him the first team budget and said effectively, 'look this is the first team budget and you have to cover your physios, your transportation, basically anything to do with the first team comes from here.' Then I basically let him get on with the recruiting of the team and the rest of it. I came back about two and a half, three months, before the start of the season and asked where we were. We knew we had to get two new props, both our props had left HK and weren't coming back. We had a weakness at hooker and a couple of other key positions. And um...., I told Aiden that unless we get our front row sorted then there's no point in getting anyone else, you know, we can't win our ball, we can have the best backline in HK, but they are not going to get any ball.

On probing further, he added:

So when I looked at the money that had been spent we still hadn't got the right players in, and you know, the budget was pretty much gone. I basically came back to him and said, 'you can't spend another dollar until I've got the two props sorted out,' which caused a little bit of tension, but I guess from Aiden's perspective, he always thinks we can go out and generate more money from somewhere and doesn't quite have the understanding that the budget, is the budget. So ah, as a result we've definitely overspent this year.

The extract also highlights the transient nature of HK rugby with clubs having to recruit quite heavily during the off season to replace players who have moved to different locations, usually as a consequence of their employment. Later during the interview, and continuing on the theme of recruitment in which Aiden had, in his boss's opinion, squandered money on flying potential new recruits into HK with it unlikely that they would ever choose to stay. His Chairman continued:

All that [money] could have gone to helping another player or whatever, and unfortunately that happened three times. And that's when we basically came back and said, we've actually pulled all financial responsibility off Aiden now. I told him that 'you don't make any financial decisions without me or the treasurer signing off on them.'

As a consequence, the team did not start the season as well as expected which placed Aiden under pressure and saw the rise of other concerns:

After a couple of months into the season we sort of sat back down with him and said, we are...are not where we want to be or where we thought we were going to be, and this is the feedback we're getting from players, and this is where we need to go to move forward.

To add insult to injury, Aiden later recounted to the group of CCOs during one focus group meeting, an occasion where his boss had undermined his position somewhat during this period:

.....we had a number eight who just rocked up to training after the World Cup around Christmas, and I didn't know. [Name of club boss] sort of said in passing, oh ye he'd met the guy while he was at the WC, so invited him up to play. So up he comes he simply told me, 'oh and by the way we've signed this guy.' [Group laugh]

These comments once again illustrate the delicate micropolitical world in which the Coaches functioned and serves as another example of the micropolitical cunning (literacy) of the CCOs themselves (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Jones et al., 2012). When casting my mind back to this period during the second season of data collection, it was interesting to note that Aiden had not told me of the restrictions and

pressures imposed upon him by his club bosses. Instead he simply informed me during our frequent conversations that “[Name of his club boss] had been questioning me regarding results.” The full revelation of events therefore, came as somewhat of a surprise during the interview, and also confirmed my decision to push for the commencement of joint annual appraisals at the end of the forthcoming season. This move was geared towards compiling a more comprehensive picture of events and individuals involved on the 50-50 Job-share Scheme (Jones & Wallace, 2005).

In a similar vane, another Club boss who had worked initially with Ken and then Pete over the course of the study period (following the departure of Brad and department re-organisation - Refer to Table 3), was quick to comment on their lack of managerial and budgeting capabilities:

I wouldn't say either of them are at the required level of back office management and administration that, in all honesty, we would like to see. That's not all their fault, they need help.

Commenting further, it became apparent that his decision to remove Pete's budgetary powers was aided by another recruitment blunder:

He now involves me in nearly everything and always consults with me. So very little happens without me being aware of it.....And ultimately I now sign every cheque so as far as financial issues, I know where the money goes.

When enquiring with Pete as to why such measures had been implemented, he relayed the history behind his disappointing recruitment policy for that season, confirming how the second of his newly recruited players, from his country of origin, had also failed to work out.

Pete confirmed:

....it was due to his own poor management of the probation period he had to go through for his personal training qualification [to gain his HK work visa]. So he had a two weeks left on his probation and then was going to get his visa and everything would have been fine. That probation period was all but finished and on the Sunday before the Monday he was due to qualify he decided to get on the booze and.....didn't turn up to work on that Monday. So obviously the employer said, 'well that's not good enough mate, you've left clients hanging, and we've decided to put you back on probation,' which was another fortnight, and that just didn't work for us [because he couldn't play]....We had to tell him, 'mate, if you don't sort anything out by the end of November, then we are just going to have to send you home.' Come two weeks before the end of November he said 'I don't think things are going to work out,' so we had to send him home.

Upon further probing the bosses in regards to their opinions of their particular team environment, they confirmed other concerns that had materialised. The first concern, as alluded to in many of the excerpts provided previously, was the lack of experience that each CCO possessed in managing and developing others, and the development of their team environment, generally. Another concern stemmed from many of the Coaches' failure to implement and impose a set of acceptable team rules regarding things like punctuality, dress code and behaviour while at training and games. Coaches also failed to impose appropriate sanctions if these rules were breached at their clubs, with a further reluctance on their part to deal with any sort of potential conflict that might arise (LaVoi, 2007; Holt et al., 2012). This was either because it was not part of their nature, or because of the dangers it held in compromising their relationship with others in their position as H-PC.

11.3.2.2. *Issues - Conflict Management*

While, I was already aware of the CCOs' tendency to 'ignore or move away from conflict', it was good that many of the bosses also identified this feature along with the resultant manifestations that arose as a consequence of their problematic team environments (Holt et al., 2012, p. 136). The common identification of the CCO strengths and weaknesses placed further justification on the introduction of the forthcoming joint appraisal mechanism, while also adding to the internal and external validity of my own observations from a theoretical and environmental triangulation perspective (sections 7.7.1.2 & 7.7.1.4; Mounteney et al., 2010).

On the evidence based from my observations and from some bosses, it seemed that many of the Coaches avoided any potentially contentious issues at their club. Many hoping that problems would simply disappear, or hope they would be dealt with by other senior managers at their club (Holt et al., 2012). These surrounded de-selection issues, the de-contracting of players and Coaches and/or other disciplinary breaches at the club. Greg's boss, for example, recalled a previously discussed event (section 9.1.1) where Greg had misguidedly made the appointment of an Assistant Coach at the club during the GM's overlap period from his previous employment to his new position. Greg saw an opportunity to take advantage of the transitional phase to force the appointment through, much to his detriment, as the situation went quickly awry. This resulted in Greg soon having to call a meeting with relevant personnel to rescind the appointment.

His GM recalled from that meeting:

I found in the meeting....that Greg felt very awkward in the situation, he found himself having to deal with it. But in the end, I was the one who made the tough call and said, 'right it's not going to work, you need to work with these guys, I don't think it's going to happen'.....Greg especially wasn't comfortable in that situation, he was happier to just let it go on to an extent where he hoped it would deal with itself.

Other bosses were also quick to pick up on the theme:

Pete, despite his tall scary nature, it is in fact an aspect that he doesn't like to deal with, and Ken before him I'd I say also. Neither of them are that good with confrontation, certainly not in a management sense. Not able to argue their case, and often they've deferred to me in that, and that shouldn't in reality be me.

From a different perspective, Aiden it seemed was a little over zealous at times in his feedback, often evoking conflict and discontentment in fellow players and Coaches through his less than tactful approach. His Chairman reported:

Some of the players' feedback had been that he can be very vocal on the field, particularly when things aren't going well, he can be very negative particularly when he was doing the Player-Coach thing....And ah, what had happened a few times last season and once this season, was once they lost the game, Aiden kind of wears his heart on his sleeve a little bit and was very upset he'd lost the game. It was a close game, perhaps we should have won it and he said a few things that could be termed disrespectful to other players and then, I wouldn't say stormed off, but walked off....and so then instead of going back and putting his coaching hat on and saying some positive stuff, you know, 'well done; we lost the game, but blah, de blah'. You can't rip into them then and there, that's done on Tuesday night.

Although Aiden's particular approach could also be aligned with emotional intelligence (Lozovinia et al., 2012), and emotional regulation (Campo et al., 2012), the examples generally illustrate the Coaches' unease in managing conflict, providing added insight into their struggle to attain an effective coaching and learning environment (LaVoi, 2010; Holt et al., 2012). On a wider note, this *Look* phase (section11.3) has summarised many of the causes and effects related to the development of a healthy and progressive team culture on the part of the Coaches

involved (Pain et al., 2012; Cruickshank et al., 2013a). In doing so, it has thrown up some potentially interesting development areas for further consideration. These surround various concepts of management training, ranging from aspects of people and conflict management, to areas inclusive of budgetary control, talent identification and recruitment. In large, the evidence provided displays the need for Coach Education to consider how young aspiring Coaches can understand and develop a productive and dynamic team culture. This understanding may well in itself minimise some of the other managerial consequences noted. However, it is more likely that inclusion of such training (i.e. people skills, conflict and budgetary management, talent identification and recruitment) would better equip Coaches in dealing with the everyday *contextually specific* occurrences that might arise (Holt et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2012; Cruickshank et al., 2013b).

❖ **Think** (Team Culture)

Previously alerted to the various management and cultural complexities highlighted by bosses through my own observations and conversations, a great deal of consideration had been given to how I should approach and improve each Coach's knowledge and understanding of their predicament regarding *team culture*. After some deliberation, the best way forward was to hold a general discussion surrounding the topic of *Team Culture and Environment*, with the intent thereafter to follow-up individually with each Coach to address specific issues within their own team setting. I was aware that some issues may need to be addressed on a confidential basis, as they may be linked to private club matters or other more personal issues involving the welfare of team members; matters that they would be reluctant to discuss in great detail during open forum (Campo, et al., 2012;

Cruickshank et al., 2013b). On reflecting upon how best to broach the subject, it was interesting to note that some of the Coaches (Jim and Brad), while still experiencing their own day-to-day problems, seemed much more confident and proficient in procuring a healthy and dynamic team environment. It seemed from their previous exposure as either players, Coaches or other work-based experiences that they were more aware of how they wanted to shape their overall team environment (Ryanne, 2013). These environments were very much a mirror of their own personal values system, standards and behaviours, a point also evident in their recruitment of new players (Campo et al., 2012). Jim, for example, offered:

I think starting off two years ago, I had to try and create a culture and that culture I suppose comes around with what my personality is....and people bought into that.

While Jim's plight in developing a progressive team culture has been adequately illustrated previously (section 9.1.2), I call on interview evidence provided by his club boss to substantiate some of the good practice that Jim instilled at his club. The club Chairman described his impact:

Jim came out and he made an impact immediately by encouraging, by getting numbers at training. And the most important thing I noticed straight away was that we were having 30-40 guys at training. And that was a function of Jim's reputation if you like. The way he took sessions was very much like a player, he understood what the boys needed, and he was really.....how would you say.....harsh, ye harsh on them. I'd never seen guys driven the way he drove them. So in the first season, he was raw, but he built a very good team spirit with the boys.

When inquiring into the consequences of his harsh regime, the boss lamented:

Only a few guys decided they couldn't keep up with this regime. You know, training hard twice, three times a week, but on the flip side, there's two guys now playing in the first team who four years ago were playing in social rugby Jim inspired these guys.....and that's just two examples. He brought in another couple of guys who dropped down the grades, and in the first season he got them back up. So I would say over all, it was positive. Guys, you know, some guys like their Coaches to be professional, and like to be driven, and he brought that to us.

In also providing a balanced overview of Jim's efforts, he highlighted other, less effective areas, suggesting:

Um and going back to the raw thing, it was very, very difficult to get Jim to explain to me on paper what he was doing, and to a certain extent he still does.....But when I watch the sessions, I understand where he's coming from, but he still remains very much a ah.....inspirational Coach, and what you see is a lot of spontaneity in what he does.

When inquiring about Jim's ability to instil a level of discipline within the developing team culture and manage particular aspects of conflict, a similar balanced response was evident. This was a standpoint which in many ways reflected Jim's position on his personal coaching continuum, highlighting that he was, indeed, a *developing Coach* with much still to learn about his craft (Lyle, 2007; Lyle et al., 2010).

Reflecting on Jim's disciplinary capabilities as an on-field Coach he relayed:

I would say he's the harshest I've seen since I've been with the Club. If you arrive late, you're jogging for the first 20 minutes of the session. If you don't phone him and tell him you're going to be late, the chances of you being picked on Saturday are well down the scale, unless things are desperate. As a disciplinarian, he's good.

However, for off the field social issues, Jim was less proactive, perhaps highlighting a reluctance to deal with certain aspects of conflict:

....the boys caused a bit of trouble in the bar.....um, this is socially, but rather than him taking a similar level of responsibility for it, as he would for training, and as I believe he should do as Head Coach, Jim doesn't see himself as responsible for that discipline. Twice I've had a word with him about it, you know, telling him to sort it, as at the end of the day it reflects on [club name] and you, the Coach.

While in one sense, the comments display Jim's ability to mould the team together on the pitch, they do suggest some flaws in his holistic management approach. These frailties however, were much less evident in the approach of Brad, who seemed much more enriched with other life experiences, as a result of being a parent and an ex-police officer in his previous employment. Brad transferred these

experiences into his coaching towards the procurement of a good team culture by impressing many of his strong views and opinions on others. Early interviews with Brad displayed his personal philosophy on his team environment and general dealings with people:

Ye I have been successful at [club team] but I...I think there are lots of reasons for that success.....One is I've also been surrounded by very good people at [club name], and I'm big on that sort of thing.... We've got no clubhouse or facilities, but we make sure we have good people and we just all have to do things. We exist on an email type system and everybody gets involved....there is a big *we*, *not me* culture at the club, and I try to drive that.

In terms of managing the relatively high turnover of players that was a feature of HK's transient society, Brad displayed a loyalty to his existing players, with new arrivals having to earn the right to become part of the team:

...I'm very big on applauding the guys that have been here, rather than celebrating the new guys. I'm very big on that, it shows loyalty....Very often I've been in sides where the new guys get the first shot over the older guys and that's not right. I think it should be the other way around and you've got to be better than the guy who's there, and earn the right to play before him.

When focusing on what type of people he looked to recruit, he suggested:

I like honesty in people. I believe that's the biggest trait that you can have.....also loyalty! Those two for me are huge and as a result of having those two traits, I think everything else comes into play along side of them. You know, if you're honest and you are loyal, you're going to be a pretty decent bloke....And I know, and this is probably the anal side of me, I know that people don't always come up to that mark all the time and I have to look at that and tell myself that not everyone can have the same ideals as you, but it's stuff that I look for in others.

Brad further commented on the development of other coaching staff:

We're very lucky, we've got a lot of people and it's what keeps the club going, we are very strong....we also employed two young local Coaches to help our development team, and they're doing a great job, so I do a lot of work alongside them initially, just to get them up to speed and make sure they are comfortable with how we do things.

When chatting about his preparation and organisation of, and for, the team, Brad displayed a level of trust and maturity in his approach:

The boys really do like the social aspect of things....they thrive on that, and another big one for myself I think is, if the quality is there in training, and the quality is there during a game, we don't need a large quantity of training. So sometimes it's right to shut up shop..., and go home early, get them with their families. And in the past, just mix up training a little bit and not always have the same training, we'll go to a swimming pool or something like that.

For game day too, a similar level of maturity and forethought was evident:

I'm getting better but its hard...um, you know, with things that happen regularly here, like a player may drop out, or we have players from the second team reserving for us, and they get injured in their game. You know, stuff like that on match-day.....I guess at the end of the day it all makes you a better Coach because those things are I guess, they're not unique to HK, but it's not what I'm used to back home. There you had 22 and you knew what was going on. So here I've had to really plan for things, I have my backup plan if someone falls over, so we have a plan B, but sometimes that backup plan breaks down too, and we need a plan C also. So, I'm anal in that sense, I like things to be organised on match-day, but for training as well. I'm down on my pre-game check list right down to the very minute and everything like that.

When asked to describe his views on discipline within his coaching environment, Brad was quick to point out that:

I guess I have a moral code that I always stick by as well. I like to be open and honest with the players and sometimes that....that can be tough on them, you know, delivering the information. But like anything, anything in life, if you try and bullshit someone, you're gonna get caught out.

When inquiring as to his own thoughts on instilling discipline and managing conflict within his club environment, he remarked:

I wouldn't say I'm indifferent about it, that wouldn't be right. But I've had to tell people their son had died as result of a car accident on several occasions in the course of my previous work, and passing that information on is tough. So to tell someone they have been dropped from the team or they are doing something wrong is easy compared to that, I just tell them as tactfully as I can.....And in both scenarios [police and rugby], you tell them straight away, you don't....you don't hedge around it or try and spin it differently,.....be direct.

These comments highlighted a stark contrast to other Coaches within the study. Greg's GM, who often attended training to sometimes observe or take part when time permitted, shared his views:

I have a big thing about lateness and getting that through to him, and how some of the boys pitch up ten minutes late for training. And Greg's way of dealing with it is to carry on the session and just almost ignore those players...But they need to be spoken to in some way, and his way of dealing with it is to just completely ignore and carry on with the session....And I find then that I have to be the one at a training session, when really, I'm there just as a player, and I give these guys a bit of a bollocking for being late for sessions and I ...I think that's partly because he doesn't like to stand up to them. Ye, and he's not comfortable doing that, and I...I'm more comfortable doing it and...and I think it really undermines him as a Coach if I'm having to do his.....his job. Greg needs to realise how important those things are for the team. General discipline, it's got to be there and he must speak up when people step out of line. Otherwise, if you let them, they'll walk all over you otherwise.

Regarding other aspects of his team and player management, he made his observations clear:

I find training sessions very frustrating, especially on Thursday nights.....I feel Greg has an hour and a half to use and doesn't really know how to fill it when we are doing team runs. But he feels he needs to fill the hour and a half rather than, ok we'll do an hour and fill that with quality. So you end up standing around a lot because he feels he needs to fill the time.

When probed as to how he managed the dynamic of being Greg's GM by day, but then reverting to simply being a player for training, he revealed:

That's where I really find the biggest difficulty in my role, ...I find that my frustration does come out sometimes on the pitch because....I just find what we're doing, counter productive at times. But then, its an awkward situation because as I'm then just a player talking back to the Coach, and while I want to keep on top of him in certain areas, he's still the Coach in training.....so, yes, its difficult on the pitch especially in front of the other boys.

In respect to Greg's general organisation and management, the GM added:

...he needs to structure his day in the office more effectively. I advised him to keep his own records, lists of who played, for how long, who scored, that type of stuff. His thoughts on the video...and then my monthly reports, reports from your CCO meetings, Coaches reports so I can see how we are going from his perspective. Also, if he has any suggestions, ideas, to put them down and look back over the season at them. Anything really, to getting him to basically think more.....thinking more than just Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday as...as he does at the moment.

When reflecting and comparing Brad & Jim's comments to other CCOs, *experience* seemed to be a crucial factor in their advanced understanding and grasp of what their teams needed. It became particularly apparent from interviews and conversations with Brad, how his own development as a Coach had been influenced and shaped through his previous life experiences. Likewise, although still relatively young, Jim had gained a comparative wealth of experience as a professional player and young Coach, when compared to others in the study (section 3.4.3.5). This provided them both with a more holistic insight into the rich tapestry of coaching life (Jones & Wallace, 2005), better preparing them for the demands of the leadership role. This meant that my challenge as CDM was to expedite the experiential learning of the Coaches. When prompting Brad to reflect back on how his police training had influenced his coaching, he recalled:

...there's a lot of crossover there with that. It gets you a good insight into the makeup of people, that's probably the biggest thing. Then discipline, you have to have it, and I didn't know the meaning of discipline or organisation until I went into the police.....Also the leadership, some of leadership courses they do would be of certain benefit.....Like at the end of the day, a lot of people have those qualities, they just don't know how to bring them out.....Um, doing workshops on how to handle, how to react to the different situations. You know....a domestic incident, to an armed stand-off. But it's how you approach and deal with those. It's a bit like coaching, you can't read it out of a book, you learn by watching and talking to others who've been through it. Invaluable...ye!

In a similar fashion Jim's boss offered another interesting train of thought when he reflected on the strengths of his previous club Coaches (prior to the CCO Scheme) who had come from a professional teaching or educational background. When comparing them to Jim's current position and abilities, whilst acknowledging that none possessed Jim's technical and tactical expertise, the Chairman was quick to pay tribute to their organisational and management capabilities and thus highlighted teacher training as another potential source for exploration and development (Jones et al., 2011b). Offering his experience as a means of comparison, Jim's chairman suggested:

Well interesting enough, I read an article in the Telegraph, and I think they mentioned five Coaches; Ian McGeechan, Jim Telfor, Graham Henry, Eddie Jones, Warren Gatland [all world renowned International Coaches]. All ex-teachers, some head masters, and I think that highlights something. These guys have gone through teacher training, they've had to deal with large numbers of people, they've had to delegate, train others and put plans in place for the overall direction of the school. And I believe all the best Coaches come from a scholastic background and we should learn from that.

Whilst I acknowledge that many of the fundamental building blocks of formal Coach Education have been built on and from educational principles (Drewe, 2001; Jones & Turner, 2006; Jones 2007), it is perhaps time to take stock and analyse the advancements in teaching practice in connection with the demands of the professional game and the needs of those aspiring Coaches within (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004; Wang, 2012).

❖ **Act** (Team Culture)

The good practice of both Jim and Brad proved a sound starting point for the commencement of the focus group. Even though I was aware that 'culture change is dependant on, shaped by, and specific to the context in which it is delivered,' I was hopeful that by encouraging Brad and Jim to discuss some of the implementations they had made at their respective clubs, it would generate discussion and ideas that might prove transferable to other environments (Cruikshank et al., 2013a, p.273). Seeking their permission to use both of their clubs as potential good-practice models, both were happy to share their personal philosophies and beliefs on how they shaped their relatively successful team cultures, thus providing me with an added source of knowledge for the focus group (Cruikshank et al., 2013a & 2013b). As with previous meetings, the discussion prompted much thought and debate, with Jim and Brad both offering various views and beliefs that they held. One such topic was the identification and empowerment of sub-leaders to share responsibilities (Holt et al., 2012):

I installed player power as well. I'm lucky that I've got two or three from a similar environment as myself. Really good number twos I suppose you'd say they are. They bought into it straight away, and it didn't have to be the same voice all the time. I know what kind of Coach I am. I'm, very honest, very, to the point and I'll say it how it is. And I'm not saying that's always right. Some players out here actually need an arm around them [cajoling] and the senior players do that very well for me. We formed a relationship where I was always delegating them that responsibility. You know, if I get something wrong in my coaching, in etiquette or culture that they pick up on, go in there, put the arm around them and bring them back [placate them]. Whatever it takes to make them the best they can be (Jim).

Sid commented on some of the difficulties he faced:

....the number one thing we struggle with is that we start training at 7:30, but guys are always late, with work and that. I'd love to turn around and tell them that if they're not there at 7.30, they're not going to play. I can't say that, I'd have half a team.

Following added debate from other Coaches who were facing similar problems in making changes to their current environment, Jim responded:

There are ways though, guys, of changing that culture, I've had to work through it at [club name]. A lot just use work as an excuse for being late. It wouldn't be acceptable back home for someone to turn up at thirty five minutes past seven, when we train at half-past. What you can put in place are small things, you know, if you don't text and let me know that you're not going to be there before half past then that's not acceptable, and then you're not playing. But if you let me, or the other Coaches know, that you've got work, then we know that comes first. I found then guys would put in a little extra effort to get there on time, probably because they couldn't be arsed to text or email [group laugh], but it helped.

Brad also came in with:

Ye, I had to make some hard decisions after my first year over here. In season two, I did the same as Jim with the texts and email stuff, but I also told them that they had to train at least once a week too [if they wanted to be considered for first team selection]. It hurt us a few times having to live up to my word, and not pick players, and I really wondered if I was doing the right thing. But in the end it turned us around, you know, sometimes you have to go through a little pain, but it's worth it. And....and the strange thing I found at our club is that, people now make the effort *to come* to training rather than make the effort *not to come*, if that makes sense. I think you can change that culture over time.

Discussions migrated onto aspects of recruitment, with various opinions about, what was the most productive recruitment area for teams. From previous interviews, I recalled Jim's philosophy:

....first thing that I developed coming out to [club name] was a graduate programme, so instead of looking at people around Hong Kong, as I'd identified that people in other clubs weren't good enough to play in the system I wanted to play. So it was a question of going home, looking at lads who had 2-1s at university, who could play a decent standard of rugby, I'm talking Championship rugby in England, National one, two and couldn't get a job. It worked, it worked perfectly!

During the focus group, Jim offered his opinion again, “look guys, let me say first up, I’ve dropped some real clangers out here too,” (in relation to poor recruitment decision – section 8.2), but that forced me to think harder about who and what I wanted at (club name)” This had brought a clarity of thought while also displaying the confidence to back his own judgement in respect of what type of players he wanted to shape his environment:

I’m just one that knows what I like, and it’s not the fact that I don’t like Kiwis etcetera, it’s the fact that I’ve always worked with a certain type of player and I know what I’m going to get. With Kiwis, I don’t know what their values are, I don’t know what goes on in Wellington, I don’t know how they would react to me. If a good Kiwi or Aussie comes along, then great, I wouldn’t turn them away, but at the minute I’d rather trust what I know from Premiership clubs and the type of person I’m used to.

Likewise, Brad commented:

Ye, I stay pretty much with what I know, you know, good people are important to me, so if I don’t know someone directly, I’ll go to good people I know to find out because I think good people bother with good people.....So, say someone at the club recommends someone else, and tells me that he’s a good bloke, then I’d usually take that on board and get the guy over. But ultimately, it’s about getting good people around you.

Regarding wider club issues, Brad displayed his holistic ‘whole club’ approach to pre-season preparation:

Ye, I try and get the whole club involved as one during the pre-season. You know, have some fun and games and mix the top guys with the girls and the community players, I think it’s important to do that when you can, After all, we are one club....and it....that seems to go down well.

These and other cultural aspects were debated fully during the meeting, promoting ideas and initiatives for other Coaches to implement at their own clubs. Equally important, it also provided the opportunity for me to follow up matters with CCOs on an individual basis thereafter, able to discuss aspects pertaining to their particular environment and team culture. As a consequence, physical, structural and

psychosocial matters were discussed in the form of *on* and *off* field issues (cf. Cruickshank et al., 2013a). *On* field matters involved addressing direct technical coaching needs with their Performance teams, and current team dynamic. This involved looking at current training systems and probing them to reflect on their approach to playing/training systems, game analysis, feedback and the relevant performance indicators (KPI's). Prompting them also to consider the introduction of new concepts such as performance profiling (team and individual) to further assist the development of both players and Coaches (Crust, 2002; Hughes et al., 2012; Rovio et al., 2012).

Off field issues included them adopting a wider whole-club approach to their role in attempting to unify all sections of the club, while also improving various aspects of their personal management (budgetary, recruitment, personal organisation, etc). This was an area where club bosses were also particularly proactive, in seeking various placements and courses as a further mechanism to up-skill the Coaches.

The process at each individual club began by initially asking each Coach to identify positive aspects of their existing environment towards providing a constructive starting point, then looking at what small adaptations could be made. It was important during the change process (Rock, 2009) to initially take small steps rather than attempting to introduce revolutionary changes to current policies, as a better means of gathering support for their efforts (McKenna, 2013). This meant prompting each Coach to reflect more *critically* on their current team and club environment (King, 2000; Pain et al., 2012). The first and most obvious requirement was the need to hold regular *meetings* with staff and players to gather the opinions and emotions of others towards gaining a better understanding of their needs, both personally and developmentally (Campo et al., 2012; Pain et al., 2012).

Suggestions with some Coaches were made to consider the appointment of a players' representative group, to act as team envoys for the wider playing squad during meetings. It was important here that Coaches differentiated between the traditional (tactical) *senior player* group who generally assisted with the tactical approach and training techniques implemented by the team, as this was usually expatriate dominant because of their added expertise. Here, it was important that the whole range of players were represented to offer a more inclusive opinion on team affairs. That group were then empowered to establish and implement a set of appropriate social structures including team values and rules that were acceptable to *all* members, in an effort to positively influence the overall environment (Holt et al., 2012; Cruickshank, et al., 2013a). Furthermore, suggestions were made to consider the current appointment, and possible reallocation, of Assistant Coaches and other coaching staff within the club structure, to attain the most effective balance for the newly shaped Performance environment. The aim was to get the CCOs to understand that people need to be heard and understood and to feel their contribution is valued while allowing them to evidence personal progress and enjoyment during the time they spend at the club (McKenna, 2009). To achieve this, realistic short, medium and long-term goals needed to be agreed and acted upon. A process that would engender better levels of trust, rapport and understanding among the group with *all* team member striving to meet their own needs, motivations and emotions, as well as those of the team (Holt et al., 2012). It also meant developing a micro and macro standpoint, by initially addressing their own Performance team needs before implementing similar and relative policies in the community based sections of the club, hence improving internal communication and understanding throughout the whole organisation (Neil, 2009; Jones et al., 2009 Holt et al., 2012).

In relation to team discipline issues within the Performance teams, and managing potentially conflicting issues, a similar educational process was implemented. Presentations were devised surrounding aspects of team dynamics to raise further awareness of the science behind group development (e.g. forming, storming, norming and performing), the *social and task* based composite within groups, along with the potential for social loafing by individuals if not sufficiently motivated or valued by/within the group (Carron et al., 2005). These presentations also raised awareness on the concepts of *performance* and *relationship* conflict (cf. LaVoi, 2007) and the need to meet the different requirements and emotions of each faction within their respective clubs (Campo et al., 2012). This meant understanding what Wagstaff et al. (2012, p. 34) described as the 'political tug-of-war' between the various factions involved at each club (Performance group, community, women's and youth sections) in order to recognise and align current agendas towards one shared vision.

At a more personal level, each Coach was prompted to deal with any potential conflict *compassionately and immediately*, so as to 'nip it in the bud' and avoid issues festering and magnifying (Holt et al., 2012, p.149). To assist this process, a role-play workshop was organised, utilising the expertise and experience of Brad's previous police employment to conjure up theoretical *arenas of conflict* in which Coaches could practice and act out potentially contentious scenarios (Anselmi, 2004). The role-play workshops proved particularly entertaining and beneficial for the CCOs, resurrecting previous comments made within this section pertaining to the potential utilisation of external training sources (e.g. Police training) to supplement and expedite the development of aspiring Coaches. Such exposure would provide the necessary expertise in areas like conflict management, leadership or other relationship areas, thus allowing would-be Professional Coaches to manage bosses

(up), fellow staff (across), players (down) and their overall environment more effectively in the development of a more productive team culture (Lyle, 2007b; Cruickshank et al 2013a).

Over time, positive change did become evident within the various team environments involved, with CCOs preferring to implement selected techniques that they felt their particular environment was best suited to at that moment in time. For example, Greg grasped the concept of individual and team performance profiling (Crust, 2002) as a means of better understanding the needs of both individuals and the overall team direction. He suggested:

It was great, it really was an eye opener. After we'd discussed it, I sat with the other Coaches to look at our team strengths and what we needed for the next season up with the big boys. That made things clearer. Then I sat with everyone in the team, took me ages, but it was worth it, and we discussed their strengths, weaknesses and what they needed. Some of it was tough to listen to [they aired criticisms], but overall I think we understand each other better. I think it got me some respect, particularly from the top guys, which was good.

Ken likewise held another perspective in improving the overall communications structure within his particular club, revealing:

Ye, you motivated a wee bit to organise regular meetings. I've met twice now with the heads of each section, I met them seven to eight [pm], and then I've managed to get some of the community Coaches on board with other stuff. Getting them to put some [team] values and stuff in, and I do that eight till nine pm. So it's good, I'm getting some buy-in and hope I can keep it going.

In general, I felt that all the Coaches benefited from the focus group and follow-up discussions, with talks serving as a catalyst in the introduction of new initiatives, all of which were contextually relevant to each particular club (Cruickshank et al., 2013a & 2013b). Although none of the workshops served as a quick fix in the development of a dynamic and progressive team culture, I believed the discussions had set the

course for future success, with perhaps Aiden typifying the most radical change of approach when he recalled:

What stuck with me was, when you told us that we were *old* players but *new* Coaches, and that what we did early on in that new role, would define us as Coaches moving forward in HK, and elsewhere because that reputation would follow us around. I went home and thought about it a lot. I realised that if I want to do this for the next 20 or 30 years, then I need to make some personal changes and some tough decisions in my approach with the team. I realised that if I mess this up because I'm a pushover or too much of a bastard, that's how I'm going to be defined. So ye it's really made me think about who I am as a Coach.

11.4 The Player-Coach Complexities

Another significant factor to come out the data was the issue surrounding Player-Coach complexities and the inability to balance both roles effectively. A position made more acute by the fact that each Player-Coach had the added responsibility of also being the *Head* Player-Coach (H-PC) at their club.

❖ Look

Extracts from interviews highlight some of the thinking.

I was lucky enough to get on the Professional Players Level 3 Coaching Course. I think they missed a trick with the course content however in that they failed to acknowledge the Player-Coach role in any way. Now I would have thought that as former professional players, we are more likely to get that sort of role, running alongside the coaching, as I have here. But strangely there was no mention (Aiden).

Greg, also commenting on the IRB Level 3 course that he attended, pointed out that:

The Player-Coach role...Um, I don't think it covered what a Player-Coach would do at all. And I've always been involved in the team as a player, so in that aspect I've never actually had the chance to be the [non-playing] Coach, I've always been involved, and it didn't touch on that at all.

When asked to comment further on that Player-Coach role, he admitted, "I've got to be honest, I felt slightly out of my depth, not knowing what input to give at certain times." In sympathy with Greg's plight as a H-PC, his GM recalled:

I think it was the [name of opposition team] game, that's where Greg had probably his poorest game of the year and you could see the stress of the combination of the two roles was really coming out there. He was dropping balls that he would never normally drop, and so then he had to go in at half time, when we weren't playing very well. Then, I think he finds it very difficult to actually put his Coach's hat on....um, and give an objective overview of what's happening on the pitch....He just needs to separate the two, which must be very difficult.

Aiden also commented on the H-PC role:

I have trouble with those two hats... trouble with the playing role and coaching side of the role, and doing both, well. And the mere fact that I don't think I do the playing side of things as well as I could be doing, because I'm always looking to do the coaching side on the field as well. So I'm not concentrating on what I'm doing, I'm concentrating on what the team is doing.

When asking Aiden to comment on previous issues he had in his dealings with players on the pitch as a H-PC (described by his club boss earlier in this section - 11.3.2.1), he relayed:

Ah.....yes, I'm aware of my negative side, Ye, I concentrate on the negative too much, I was aware of it, because of my review from last year with [name of club boss]. But when I'm playing its difficult, I'm not so aware. When I've played and when I've got to debrief, I've not got that ability to just switch to go, 'right, just gather your thoughts here'. And I think it was after the [club name] game, I lost it a bit.

Finally, Pete's boss recalled that during any given match-day:

....he likes to be the player who sits with his head phones on and gets in the zone before the game, and doesn't like being pestered. He likes to go into his own little world, and that's where he needs to realise as Head Coach you have to be able to do both.

These and other excerpts display the difficulties that many faced as H-PCs, finding it difficult to attain an appropriate balance, and therefore constantly wrangling over the complexities of the role which were inextricably linked to aspects of the team culture that they were trying to develop. Complexities included maintaining an objective and professional distance:

I think you've got to know where to draw the line, and that's difficult for me at this stage because of my age and the guys that I Coach, and...and a lot of them were friends beforehand, so that's been...um, my first year of that was tough...um, but I'm getting better at that now (Ken).

Or empowerment issues:

I'm at this stage where I'm reluctant to give power or control to other players. I still try and hold the control of everything [on the pitch]. I didn't have the players last year to be able to give that responsibility to, so to speak. So that's one of the things I'm quite aware of this year, is that I need to be able to let go a bit (Sid).

Or simply achieving an optimum balance between roles:

What I found hard as a young Coach is playing, coaching, socialising and you know, I'm a socialiser so that is the bit that I found the most difficult [getting a distance]. I also found that I'm doing more off-field crap than on-field. You know, dealing with stuff that I don't think are making me a better Coach, but it's what [name of club boss] wants. So I'm getting caught up in all the club stuff, the politics, and it's too much when I'm trying to Coach and play (Jim).

Coaches often felt that they received pressure from their bosses to have to continually play and Coach. Jim's boss stated somewhat paradoxically that:

.....when I say I need him on the field, I don't think he's got that much left in him. When he's on there, he's still an excellent player on the pitch, but to expect him to be playing games every week of the season, and Coach, I wouldn't. But what I've kind of insisted is that Jim's name is always in the squad of 22. Now whether he starts or comes off the bench, it's up to him, but I want him on that list. I think it raises the other guys. They want it!

❖ **Think**

Personal diary extracts from the period, highlight my growing awareness of this matter:

Some of the guys seem to be struggling with the transition from player to Coach. This isn't made easier by the fact that many are acting as H-PCs at the club....This is made worse by the fact that some of the guys are happy not to play unless needed, but are being pressured into action every week by their bosses. It seems to be growing legs as I think all those acting as H-PCs have mentioned how tough it is, with Jim and others also being pressured to play every game by their club bosses, which also takes its toll. It's linked to the whole team culture thing, with some of the guys reluctant to instil rules and discipline because I understand it's hard being tough on the guys who are going to be in the trenches with you [i.e. on the pitch].

Regarding my thoughts on how I intended to broach the topic with the Coaches, my reflections highlighted:

...I'm a little bit lost as to what to do here, not sure where to go for advice and not much out there to draw information from. I'll just have to put it out there for discussion and let the group run with it.

❖ **Act**

Following the focus group to discuss the H-PC situation (season one of data collection, March, 2011) which formed part of the wider discussions surrounding team culture (November 2010), it became apparent that problems seemed to particularly surround game-day management, with concerns about pre, post and half-time organisation, substitutions, and how to control their own, and others, emotions as a senior player, and then from the standpoint of being H-PC. Similarly, during training, Coaches found it difficult to attain an effective balance of when to be a player and when to be a Coach, wanting to do enough to maintain respect of team members on both fronts.

Aiden reflected during the meeting on specific games:

I've yet to find a balance and you've said that we have to be balanced but honest with the players, so I'm absolutely furious at half time, and I've found that difficult then to be honest as you say..... but also drag myself away from the playing to then give something reasonably constructive to go forward with.

Greg also reflected the sentiments of others on game-day:

So I find myself managing, sorting the warm-up out, then managing the game, then the hardest part are the substitutions while I'm playing. Sometimes I'm looking over at guys and I'm thinking, am I making the right substitutions?

Jim also shared the difficulties that he faced as a H-PC when applying technical and tactical information during training:

I think what you find is, you've got to practice what you preach. So say for example, you're the guard [at training], and you've told the players never move from guard.....then you have to stick to what you've preached. You can't tell everybody one thing and then not do it yourself. And sometimes I get caught outthen you know..... that's pretty.....well it's embarrassing, and you've got to put your hand up there and be honest.

Even though, as CDM, I went into this particular meeting with few solutions as to how we could improve matters, it soon became apparent that the Coaches felt it an important issue in their eyes; trying to achieve the correct balance as to when to be a player and when to be the Coach, while also portraying the appropriate characteristics of each. As discussions unfolded, I became aware that during the weekly preparations at the club, the Coaches took complete control of training sessions and were happy to manage the organisation of the team mostly from a coaching perspective, while not having to be overly concerned about their playing role.

However, come game-day, they seemed unable to manage the workload, as they had attempted to maximise their own performance in both roles. Sid alluded to the problem that he and others faced:

Within training I find a lot of the time that I personally create too much of the talk during training sessions.....If I'm doing all the talking, the players are not doing any, and then that transfers into a game. They're not talking and I also think that's a weakness.

Once again I looked to Jim for solutions (as Brad was one of the few non-playing Head Coaches) as he had been one of the few Coaches to seemingly thrive on the challenge of the H-PC role, even though he had also experienced some difficulties himself. Jim shared:

I though the best idea was to have someone just to be able to put a hand on my shoulder when I get carried away, as I tend to do sometimes in a game. It's worked well, if I'm knackered or it's not going great personally, I'll ask [player 1] or [player 2] to talk. Or if I want to take one player aside to chat to or bollock him, I'll let the boys manage the team. I've also got [name of experienced assistant] to make the substitutions. I usually tell him what I'm thinking before the game, so he knows who and when. It just gives me less to stress over, I can get on with my game.

As a result of the information shared during the focus group meetings, the CCOs were encouraged to consider some additional changes to their preparation. Firstly, they were asked to identify players in their Performance teams with whom they could share the coaching responsibilities. These would come largely from their (expatriate-dominant) senior players group who were already established as lead players in the team. They were to be empowered to take on more of the coaching responsibilities during the weekly training. This would encourage a bottom-up approach by having them accept more responsibility during the training week and carrying that responsibility into the match-day environment, thus relieving the H-PC of some pressure (Wang, 2012). Secondly, the decision was made to encourage more

experienced committee members, many of whom were ex-players and ex-Coaches themselves, to assist with warm-ups, substitutions and even half time team-talks, if their input was valued on match-day, to further reduce the duties on H-PCs. It also came to light at the meeting that following the previous appointment of the player representative group, difficulties still existed surrounding their ability to effectively police and enforce team rules and values, which they themselves had helped to formulate. Therefore, it was agreed that that these older and more respected senior figures (ex-players and Coaches) could also assist in this respect, thus giving them more involvement with the club. This was something that many senior figures had already requested. By encouraging them to assist, it ensured that all team members lived up to the pre-agreed rules and values, allowing the H-PC to be seen more as a mediator within the process (Holt et al., 2012). The enforcing of values and rules was achieved generally through fun-based mechanisms where, for example, offending players were appointed menial tasks in punishment for their misdemeanours towards the betterment of the overall environment (e.g. to clean the pitch area or training rooms after training). It was agreed that more serious breaches of discipline should fall under the responsibility of the Head PC and other club officials.

11.4.1 Reflexive and Reflective Standpoint

As CDM, I was uncertain in my dealings regarding the H-PC issues, with little evidence to support some of the suggestions put forward. This meant that I was less confident of outcomes and as such, unable to substantiate or confirm suggestions offered to the Coaches, either generally or specifically according to their own particular environment (Cruickshank et al., 2013b). In previous dealings pertaining to the development of team culture and environment, I was able to draw on my own

expertise as an applied Coach and Sport psychologist, while also able to access appropriate support literature in informing my actions (Bevir, 2013; Grix, 2013; McKenna, 2013; Cruickshank et al., 2013a & 2013b). However, a similar search for research into the PC role turned up very little, and I was forced to have to rely more heavily on the reciprocal learning power of the AR environment to produce answers (Pain et al., 2012; Vella et al., 2013).

Therefore, while not being totally confident from the perspective of CDM regarding the H-PC complexities, I was pleased in my capacity as IAR regarding this (H-PC) and other themes that had emanated through the research process. In summary, I have attempted to report issues and complexities in their true light and context, as a means of isolating potential development areas for future Coach Education. The following, and final section will summarise these finding and make concluding recommendations and observations pertaining to the overall study outcomes.

CHAPTER (12)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 Final Preamble

Before summarising final themes, recommendations and conclusions, I feel it necessary to reinforce the overall positive nature and outcome of the 50-50 Job-share Scheme. On the evidence produced within this study, one could perhaps be forgiven for thinking that the Scheme and the Coaches involved had many failings, tumbling from one impending disaster to another in their battle for coaching success. However, nothing could be further from the truth, with the innovative and dedicated approach to supporting those *would be* Professional Coaches instrumental in providing invaluable experience during a crucial period in their overall development (Gregory, 2012). This position has been lamented by the recently victorious British Lions Coach (2013), Warren Gatland, as he reflected on his own coaching elevation with Ireland at the tender age of 34. In a recent online newspaper report by Foy (2013), Gatland recalls being ‘thrust into an alien environment,’ recounting the difficulties, but also the immense value of early exposure to professional sport:

When I look back at it now, the learning experience from doing that job at such a young age stood me in good stead; as much about stuff off the field as on the field. I learned about the politics that goes with it, about dealing with committees and the media too. It was an eye-opener for me [Gatland, cited in Foy, 2013 – online article].

For the Coaches involved in this particular study, the HK experience has no doubt served as similarly a positive experience in shaping them for what awaits. For certain Coaches like Jim, the types of exposure noted have spurred them on to pursue a similar path to Gatland. For others, as in the case of Sid, it has provided a sobering reality check regarding the demands of professional coaching, leaving him and others much more aware of the harsh realities of the role.

Upon realising that his future perhaps did not lie in Performance/Professional coaching, Sid (9.1.3) expressed, “it’s opened my eyes really, as to what the job’s about, and after three or four seasons where I’ve worked hard, dealt with a lot of shit, and all to get nowhere, I’m pretty sure I don’t want to do it for the next twenty or so years. I can do without the hassle.”

As stated from the outset, the aim of the project was to delve into the murkier and clandestine depths of coaching to unearth ‘*what the job of coaching actually entails*’ (Potrac & Jones, 2009b, p.233), and to acknowledge the good, while focusing particularly on the bad, in order to reveal just *what’s missing and what’s needed* to expedite the development of young aspiring Professional Coaches (Jones, 2000; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Cassidy et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2011b; Vella et al., 2013). Therefore, the focus of this project has been largely directed to the *failings* and *problems* of the Coaches; shortcomings that are due largely to the rapid progress of professional Rugby Union and the inability of current Coach Education programmes to keep pace with the needs of Coaches (Malcom et al., 2008; Mellalieu et al., 2008; Vella et al., 2013). As a consequence, while being acknowledged accordingly in my role as CDM/LM, the abundance of *good* practice evident during the project has been largely overlooked, unless of course it has contributed to the overall body of knowledge. In this respect, the study has unearthed some interesting results pertaining to the needs of Coaches, and drawn conclusions that can be categorised primarily into two areas: firstly, those related to the adoption of a multiple-practitioner standpoint throughout the project (Chapter 6), and secondly, those linked directly to the main study aims.

12.2. Results and Recommendations (Multiple-Role Practitioner)

A major focus of the current research was to investigate the viability of combining roles towards a more effective service delivery, along with the consequences that can arise (Watson et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2007; Watson & Clement, 2008). Results from the study concur with existing speculation surrounding both the merits and disadvantages linked to the multiple-role research (Watson et al., 2006; Wallace, 2008), and confirm the existence of previously documented role complexity issues (Jones et al., 2007; Brumbles & Beach, 2008; Pitney et al., 2008). Such pre-existing issues included role-conflict, role-incongruity, role-strain, role-relationship and conflicts of interest, all of which placed an emotional toll on me as multiple-role Researcher (Watson et al., 2006; Watson & Clement, 2008). As well as providing added confirmation of their existence, this study also raises awareness of the previously unrecognised existence of *tier-conflict* (sections 6.2.3 & 11.1.2.1), an occurrence which potentially affects those practitioners who deal at varying levels of management in their multiple-role capacity. Evidence suggests that the types of relationships developed, and the information transferred between practitioner and client (i.e. Coach and player) at one level of management, could conflict at other levels, potentially raising moral and ethical concerns.

The tier-conflict complexities became evident in two areas; initially during salary negotiations with the CCOs, where confidential information gained as IAR could potentially have been used to influence decisions made at Line Manager level (section 6.2.3). Complexities also developed during interviews and discussions held primarily as IAR, where some participants displayed a reluctance to divulge personal opinions (or actions) they may have held (or taken) against HKRFU policies (section 11.1.2.1).

Their reluctance stemmed from a fear that at some future point I might wish to seek reprisals for their comments or actions in one of my other management capacities. Fortunately, in both instances, agreed study protocols were upheld and the welfare and confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout (Gray, 2009).

Building on previous multiple-role experience, this work also highlights other potentially exciting avenues of exploration (Jones et al., 2007; Brumbles & Beach., 2008; Pitney et al., 2008). If, as this study suggests, it is accepted that even with the most meticulous planning process, unexpected occurrences and opportunities will arise, future multiple-role investigation should analyse what eclectic skills are needed to better prepare researchers for the ever-changing landscape within their study environment.

On a personal level, there can be little doubt that the previous experiences gained in applied coaching, teaching, sport psychology, management and multiple-role research have served well in providing the necessary flexibility and expertise required in adapting to the needs of the study and those involved (Jones et al., 2007). This process was further enhanced by the utilisation of other expertise, when required, in the form of a critical friend and/or outside agent who offered objective advice and feedback throughout (Watson et al., 2006; Jones at al., 2007).

It would seem prudent therefore for multiple-role researchers to closely analyse the areas of expertise required within their intended field of study with a view to adequately up-skilling themselves to the inherent disciplines involved, wherever feasible (Ha et al., 2011). These improvements could include aspects of counselling, sport, business, clinical and/or management psychology, thus allowing practitioners to attain a more complete understanding regarding the experiences and subsequent needs of others (Waumsley, et al., 2010). It should also be clearly acknowledged

that the added training does not necessarily qualify the multiply-role Researcher as an expert in these fields, with awareness raised to their responsibilities for a referral of clients, where necessary (Jones et al., 2007; Ryba & Schinke, 2009).

Moving forward, and following the acceptance of a more skilled and capable multiple-role practitioner, it is then reasonable to assume that *flexible researchers* need *flexible method* in providing a better service delivery to clients (Dadds & Hart, 2001). As such, further recommendations are suggested for a review of current methodological constraints placed on multiple-role practitioners towards offering a more flexible and reflexive standpoint (Smith, 2009). Any such acceptance would of course have to include a similar set of study safeguards to those implemented within this study to safe-guard the welfare and safety of *all* those involved (section 3.4.2.1), with the Researcher also acknowledging any bias or pre-dispositions they might hold to ensure levels of objectivity are maintained in the production of relevant data (Groenewald, 2004; Smith 2009; Tenenbaum et al., 2009).

In also acknowledging some of the beneficial aspects of multiple-role research, evidence from this study highlight the merits of *knowledge transfer* from one role to another, in enhancing the overall quality of service provided. Such transfer became evident in the roles of HC and CDM, where I was able to implement coaching policies and procedures from a *top-down* perspective as National HC (and CDM) within areas of the Performance game, while concurrently influencing good practice guidelines from a *bottom-up* standpoint in my capacity as CDM during the delivery of standardised Coach Education courses (section 6.2.4).

A similarly positive *knowledge transfer* example (section 9.1.4) occurred following advice taken to adapt the structure and content of selected Coach Education courses to meet the specific needs of the Chinese coaching group (i.e. adding *Chinese only* courses to the existing inclusive 'mixed' courses). The changes heralded positive outcomes to our Coach Education delivery with a similar approach thereafter adopted within the National Men's XV training environment. Here as with the Chinese coaches, the contingent of Chinese players worked together more often as a group, to improve the quality of their learning and overall development, again with success evident (Lyle, 2002; 2007b). In summary, the instances described (sections 6.2.4 and 9.1.4) can be looked upon as a positive bi-product of the multiple-practitioner role, facilitating the transfer of knowledge gained from one area of expertise to another, so as to further benefit the needs of the client (Watson et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2007; Watson & Clement, 2008).

12.3. Results and Recommendations (Main Study)

Results from this study confirm the existence of high levels of micropolitical activity within each coaching environment, wherein each Coach also displayed a high degree of micropolitical awareness in their dealings with others (Kelchtermans & Ballet 2002a & 2002b). The plights of Greg (9.1.1), Jim (9.1.2), and Sid (9.1.3) adequately illustrate some of the difficulties experienced in their dealings with players, bosses and fellow Coaches, with further evidence provided throughout Chapter 11 which describes the wider Coaching group's micropolitical activities regarding aspects of clandestine recruitment (section 11.1.2.1), under-the-table salary agreements (section 11.1.2.2) and general management manipulation (section 11.1.2.3). Within these highly charged micropolitical climates, evidence

illustrated how the Coaches manoeuvred and out-maneuvred others towards achieving their personal and/or their club's aims (Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b). While on the surface, it seemed that the Coaches possessed high levels of micropolitical literacy in achieving their intended goals (Jones & Wallace, 2005), further evidence suggested that they overestimated their abilities, at times, even displaying a level of naivety (section 11.1.2.3) in assuming their activities would not become evident to bosses and others around them. Here, evidence displayed that while the Coaches believed they were able to manipulate or out-smart senior staff, the bosses themselves seemed content in allowing Coaches latitude and scope in their manoeuvrings, unless it held the potential to hinder or seriously disrupt the overall club development. Many of the events described illustrated a lack of maturity and *emotional intelligence* on the part of the Coaches in their assumption that they could outsmart all those around them, thus highlighting the first potential consideration for future training and education.

12.3.1. Emotional Intelligence Training

It would seem apparent from evidence gathered during this study that Coaches would benefit from a form of *emotional intelligence* training (Lozovinia et al., 2012) to better prepare them for the micropolitical dealings that will invariably arise within team settings, some of which may be at their own instigation (Jones & Wallace, 2005 Potrac & Jones 2009a & 2009b; Cushion & Jones, 2012). Exposure to such training could therefore enable them to: (a) initially identify and understand their particular circumstance along with the potential opportunities or options open to them; (b) better manage their own emotions; towards (c), positively influencing their own (and others') cognitive processes, decision making and problem-solving capabilities within

the pressurised team setting (Lam & Kirby, 2002; Becker, 2009; Rutkowaka & Gierczuk, 2012). The utilisation of the Critical Model of Coaching Synthesis (section 8.1) could assist with this process as it is able to direct and guide the Coach to mutually agreeable solutions in many areas of their coaching and management. As will become evident later in this chapter, the emotional intelligence training could also prove beneficial in other aspects of their coaching and management role; for example, in confronting some of the complexities that arose in connection with the Coaches inability to create a productive and dynamic *team culture* that facilitated appropriate individual and team development (Cruikshank, 2013a & 2013b).

12.3.2. Developing A Team Culture

Even though many of the Coaches had performed professionally in other highly effective Performance teams, few could reproduce those experiences within their own particular coaching environment. For those few who did manage to create a dynamic and progressive team culture, success stemmed from a self-belief in exactly what systems and standards they required. Their belief and understanding seemingly developed from a mixture of personal experiences gained through past rugby and/or employment experiences, in conjunction with their own personal values system (section 11.3.2). Evidence highlighted how their own personal morals and integrity heavily influenced their overall philosophy and subsequent shaping of their own team culture regarding the standards and behaviours of others (Wen-jhan et al., 2009; Cruikshank et al., 2013a).

For those less successful Coaches, causal factors for the less than adequate team environments surrounded:

(a) **Technical and Tactical Components** - Although relevance to this topic has been largely directed towards Greg (9.1.1) and Sid (9.1.3), evidence from the study confirms that all of the Coaches involved struggled at times to adequately engage and meet the demands of the players within their squads. When taking into consideration that all of the Coaches involved in the study were qualified to an IRB Level 3 standard (some attaining the award throughout the study period), results concur with suggestions that current Coach Education provision is still falling short in integrating pertinent knowledge at a sufficient rate to keep up with changes in the professional game (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Kavussanu et al., 2008; Mallet et al., 2009; Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Cushion & Jones, 2012).

(b) **Team Dynamics and Team Building** – Evidence suggests that Coaches would benefit from gaining a better understanding of the science behind team dynamics and team building, in order to assist them in creating an inclusive and progressive team culture/environment (Carron, 2006). Within this team culture, consideration should be given to the cultural range of players involved within team settings, as it could be argued that due to the growing popularity of Rugby Union, the added finance, and the easier global access, that the growing trend of multi-cultural squads is likely to continue for the foreseeable future (Clark, 2008). Therefore, a fundamental understanding of how teams develop and grow in this context is required, with individual NGBs in developing rugby nations (which usually contain a large contingent of one nationality) needing to tailor the delivery of

modules to suit their particular region and specific cultural needs. As was the case in HK, this meant a delicate balancing act in understanding how to bring a diverse and eclectic mix of players together, while also focusing efforts on the Chinese contingent within teams to ensure their particular cultural and learning needs were met (Lyle, 2007a).

Team building activities should follow a similar route, incorporating multivariate components that consider aspects of task and social cohesion through the setting of relevant goals, and thrive-based challenges which encompass the wide range of cultures involved (Rovio et al., 2012). Efforts should be geared towards building a cohesive and dynamic team culture where all members feel they are developing personal skills and making a valuable contribution to team affairs (Cruickshank et al., 2013a & 2013b).

(c) **Conflict Management** - Closely aligned to the topic of team culture and team development/cohesion (Carron, 2006), was the need for Coaches to instil and monitor a clear set of mutually agreeable team rules and values to further assist in the creation of a progressive playing and training environment (Schroeder, 2010; Cruickshank, 2013b). Evidence provided by various club bosses confirmed a reluctance on the part of some Coaches to acknowledge or address potentially conflicting issues. These surrounded aspects of de-selection, punctuality, dress-code, contracts, recruitment and other matters, with Coaches preferring to leave issues unattended in the hopes that they would disappear, remedy themselves, or be dealt with by senior management in their club setup (LaVoi, 2007; Holt et al., 2012).

Initials problem stemmed from a lack of experience on the part of the Coaches in dealing with such matters, and was further compounded by their relatively young age

when compared to the players they were dealing with (i.e. similar age). Therefore, early training and exposure to concepts of conflict management would appear to be an important consideration in better preparing young Coaches for the inevitable issues and subsequent emotions that will arise (Campo et al., 2012; Holt et al., 2012). Education (section 11.3) and particularly police training (section 11.4) were professions highlighted by participants within this study as potential areas where relevant training could be found. Further investigation into these and other disciplines could unearth similar contextually relevant sources of expertise which could accelerate the learning process for Coaches (Cruickshank et al., 2013a).

(d) **Management Training** – Further evidence from the study suggests that the Coaches would benefit from exposure to specific aspects of management training, with bosses again confirming shortcomings in aspects the Coaches' personal organisation, internal communication, report writing, budget management and recruitment (talent identification). When one considers the limited exposure that these (and other) developing Coaches have acquired in respect to life and employment experiences outside of rugby, it is perhaps understandable why many fell short in specific management and clerical duties. Many lacking exposure to, and experience in, mainstream forms of employment because of their professional playing background, thus limiting their understanding of managerial and/or industrial systems.

The position is aptly summed up in an article by Fatsis (2009, p.14) about similarly placed Coaches within American football:

Coaches spend thousands of hours deconstructing video and diagramming plays. They become football experts. But they don't learn how to manage people or navigate the many issues and characters that beg for a Head Coach's attention. Turf, video, equipment, training, medical and travel operations. Salary caps and contract negotiations. The media onslaught and public relations. A racially, socially and economically diverse workforce. A chief financial officer. A billionaire owner.

Fatsis's (2009) comments further highlight the need to expose young Coaches to various components of management training so they are better placed to deal with the management and clerical tasks required of them. Finally, in keeping with the team culture theme and the Coaches inability to procure a mutually conducive team environment, another significant factor to come out of the study was the current lack of support and training for individuals undertaking the *Player-Coach role*.

12.3.3. Player- Coach Insight

With many employers attempting to reduce costs by appointing Player-Coaches within professional sport surroundings (Luckie, 2008), it would seem judicious for NGBs to make appropriate allocation in their training programmes to facilitate the Player-Coach transition. This point is further magnified in the context of this current thesis where the Player-Coaches involved also had to take on the role of *Head Player-Coach (H-PC)* with their respective club teams. Throughout the earlier discourse of Greg and Aiden (section 11.4) it became apparent that provision for the Player-Coach transition is currently absent within Coach Education, thus making any reference to good or bad practice difficult to attain.

However, It seems evident, based on the findings of this thesis, that the Coaches were unable to achieve an effective balance within their playing and coaching roles, often incapable of displaying the appropriate behaviours and emotional responses needed to deal with the expectations of both roles (Campo et al., 2012; Wagstaff et al., 2012). Furthermore, failing to delegate duties as a means of reducing or sharing their all-consuming H-PC workload, and instead attempting to be *all things to all men*, and ultimately failed in their attempts to do either job well. A standpoint which further added to their shortcomings in not being able to develop an effective team culture (Cruickshank, 2013a). As a result, some felt the Player-Coach position undermined their personal confidence and/or respect with the players, a point which the Coaches themselves felt was particularly evident on match-days. Here, many found it difficult to cope with the strains of pre, in, and post-match duties which included team management and organisational duties, warm-ups and team talks, as well as having to play and direct tactical affairs on the field of play. Although Coaches reported some improvements through the focus group discussions and subsequent interventions introduced (section 11.4), they still found a suitable overall balance of roles difficult to attain. My position on this matter as IAR was made equally difficult through the limited research material available in implementing recognised good practice guidelines, and measurable outcomes. This evidence further compounds the call for Coach Education to urgently consider the role of the Player-Coach, and the various components needed in carrying out that role successfully.

12.3.4. Contextual Relevance – Real World Issues

Underpinning all the evidence and recommendations made to date, lies the overriding need for future development programmes to become more 'contextually specific' in *all* aspects of current delivery (Cruickshank et al., 2013b, p. 321). For while there can be little doubt that current Coach Education programmes within Rugby Union provide important material and updates in attempting to keep pace with the game (Lyle 2002; 2007b; Potrac et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2011; Cushion & Jones, 2012), evidence provided by the participants support current criticisms that the content is overly theoretical and somewhat detached from real world issues in failing to grasp the contextual reality of the applied coaching world (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Kavussanu et al., 2008; Mallet et al., 2009; Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Cushion & Jones, 2012). To achieve this contextual specificity, and *real-world* significance, the benefits of informal and non-formal learning environments have been previously noted through the use of focus groups and practical workshops (Lyle et al., 2009 & 2010). These allowed the Coaches to discuss problems while taking into consideration the contextually relevant issues that confronted them (Cruickshank, 2013a). No matter the topic, whether it was tactical or technical, recruitment or finance, Player-Coach or team culture, the key for the Coaches lay in dealing with details and specifics from their world, much of which was inextricably linked to other micropolitical issues, making any decisions that had to be made, far from straightforward or clear-cut (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009a & 2009b).

Mention has also been given to the merits of external expertise and training resources in further assisting this process. For example, brief insights into the police training techniques surrounding leadership and conflict management added significantly to the Coaches' knowledge and expertise in these areas (section 11.4). Inference was also made to the continued benefits of teacher training (section 11.3) with its many organisational and managerial virtues ideal for Coaches who may have travelled through professional playing ranks, and therefore lacked exposure to more traditional employment-based training opportunities (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004; Wang, 2012).

It also seems likely that the different learning modes can prove beneficial to both Coaches and Educators with recent investigation purporting the parallel and reciprocal learning process that can be generated through such interactions (Vella et al., 2013). This suggests that Educators look at the feasibility of focus groups, think-tanks, practical and role-play workshops that engage players and Coaches from within the current professional game, to reverse the learning process. This would facilitate the implementation of current and contextually relevant (rather than theoretical and idealistic) information from the harsh and imperfect world of coaching to inform and update the current learning curriculum, and hence equip Coaches and Coach Educators with what they need to do the job effectively (Cruickshank et al., 2013b; Vella et al., 2013).

To summarise these findings, it is my recommendation that Coach Education begins to address the areas highlighted throughout this final chapter, seeking and integrating the contextually relevant knowledge into their award courses. Commencing the integration process within the intermediate level awards (Levels 2 and 3), and onward to the more advanced award courses (Levels 4 and 5) so as to

correspond with, and inform, the ongoing development of Coaches. It would seem evident from this study that the Coaches involved lacked relevant training and expertise even though they had all attained Level 2 and Level 3 coaching awards. This highlights the need for relevant information to be filtered into these levels of coaching as quickly as possible. Thereafter, continuing the integration process to the higher level awards (Level 4 and 5) to further cater for those more seriously minded and ambitious Coaches (Lyle, 2007b).

In light of this, it would seem timely for the various rugby NGBs to consider a different stance towards informing their Coach Education programmes at the intermediate and elite ends of the game. Primarily, NGBs should enhance the existing links with universities that have already been established through the formulation of Level 4 and Level 5 awards as highlighted in earlier sections (2.3), and then extend out to include professional rugby organisations as a means of providing the real world essence that seems to be currently lacking (Lyle, 2002; 2007b; Cruikshank et al., 2013b). Here, this potentially happy triumvirate can *tick all boxes*, in the production of a reciprocal learning environment at the relevant levels of the game (Vella et al., 2013) that fulfils: (a) the technical and applied educational needs of Coaches (Coach Education); (b) their educational/academic, business, clerical and management needs (university); all provided within (c), a contextually relevant learning framework (Professional Rugby organisations) that offers a parallel learning process whereby Educators and teachers/lectures can continually supplement their own contextual knowledge base on a more expedient level (Lyle, 2007b; Callow et al., 2010; Vella et al., 2013). A word of encouragement, or perhaps caution, for the happy triumvirate would be to ensure that appropriate and relevant information is integrated into each level of coaching accreditation, with the focus *context*, rather

than *text* based in their desired outcomes. That means a constant analysis, re-analysis and emphasis placed on the new trends and relevant contextual knowledge produced from the game (i.e. the Professional Rugby leg of the triumvirate), rather than focusing efforts on the production of suitable support literature, which in its protracted production for the various NGBs, means it is already potentially outdated and obsolete prior to its circulation (Lyle, 2007b).

12.4. **Study Strengths & Limitations**

While it is acknowledged that the multiple-role Researcher standpoint held the potential for aspects of role-conflict and losses in objectivity to contaminate and skew the final evidence, the safeguards implemented throughout have, I believe, added to the overall richness and internal validity of the data produced (Brustad, 2009). These included the utilisation of triangulation (section 7.7.1), reflective (section 4.6) and reflexive methodologies (section 7.5), and the implementation of flexible ground rules in conjunction with the appointment of both a critical friend and outside agent (section 3.4.2.2). All such safeguards facilitated a fuller 360-degree view on events from multiple levels of analysis including IAR, CDM, LM, and HC, while also taking into consideration the opinions of significant others (section 7.7.1.2), which further added to the multi-layered approach to data gathered (Gilligan, 2011). These safeguards were further complimented by previous experiences gained as a multiple-role practitioner (Jones et al., 2007) and through consultancy work undertaken as an accredited BASES sport scientist (psychology), adding to the overall credibility of the Researcher and work produced (Drake & Heath, 2011).

In meeting aspects of external validity, the study was of a longitudinal nature (two seasons), with data gathered across six club settings and various National Age-

grade and Senior international environments (Payne & Williams, 2005). This process was further enhanced by an eight month integration period gained in each of those team settings as CDM prior to the commencement of the study period (section 3.4.2.4). The prior integration and protracted study period greatly reduced the potential for my presence to upset the existing equilibrium within any of the team settings, and the possible contamination of subsequent data (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002).

Finally, while the sample size can be considered small, any potential shortcomings were mitigated by the longitudinal nature of the study and prolonged exposure at each of the respective study sites in the varying capacities adopted (Payne & Williams, 2005; Kavussanu et al., 2008; Dagley, 2010). This allowed a degree of saturation to be attained relating to the evidence produced within this particular sample. However, future studies should consider using larger sample sizes taken from a wider cross-section of Rugby Union cultures from which further comparisons can be made (Gray, 2009).

12.5. Closing Comments

In summary, I would like to finish where I began, by reminding readers of the personal aims and ambitions relating to this project. In their simplest form, the aims were to improve the practice of a selected group of aspiring Performance Coaches within a developing rugby nation, while analysing exactly what they did. Throughout the study, their on-going improvement and development as Coaches has been of paramount importance. However, during that process I have been able to meet some personal objectives, while also achieving others of a more professional and academic nature.

Personal objectives were attained by meeting my selfish need to *scratch that 20 year itch* (section 1.1). Professional aims were met by adequately meeting the needs of the Coaches while adding to the current body of knowledge related to Coach Education. Therefore, if on the evidence of the work produced it has met my initial requirements in being: (a) an intention or commitment to solving practical problems; (b) suitable interventions; (c) a cycle of critical reflection, action and evaluation; and (d) praxis (i.e., committed action giving rise to knowledge). Furthermore, my application as IAR has been: (e) systematic; (f) strategic; (g) collaborative; (h) empowering for participants; and (i) conducted within a mutually acceptable ethical framework, while: (j) employing recognisable research methods; (k) demonstrating a conscious partiality; while also posing the potential for (l) communicating findings to other Practitioners-researchers (Evans et al., 2000; Evans et al., 2004). I have achieved all I intended.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Candidate Acceptance Letter

June 29th 2010

Dear

I am writing to thank you for your initial acceptance in taking part in my PhD thesis, and provide written confirmation of your rights as a study participant. As previously discussed, the study will focus on your development as a Head Coach over the next two seasons, paying particular attention to the daily challenges and complexities you face in preparing your team. The aim is to examine the day-to-day issues you face, along with the various interactions that take place with fellow coaches, players and significant others within the team environment in attempting to progress the team and your own personal practice.

As well as aiding your own personal development and coaching practice, a major study objective is to unearth a range of the themes that could exist among the coaches to inform future coach development programmes through the formulation of additional training modules, which as yet, remain un-identified within current coach education provision.

Over the duration of the season I would like to carry out a number of in-depth interviews while also gaining access to your training environment to observe you in your role as Head Coach. As agreed in previous conversations, this should not prove problematic, with my role as coach educator already necessitating a similar level of access and observation. Therefore, any disruption regarding my presence within your team environment would be minimal, as access has already been established in my role as coach educator.

I also feel it important to once again reassure that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or reprisal. Also that while any information you provide will be treated in the strictest of confidence (with any identifiable data removed to maintain your identity), there remains potential for your identity to be compromised because of the nature of the study environment. All interviews will be transcribed with copies of the final transcript(s) provided to verify authenticity and accuracy. Finally, the name and contact details of my Research Director will be provided should you need clarification on any aspect of the study.

If you are still interested in taking part in the project, I would be grateful if you would ring to confirm (+852 93614000), after which I will provide you with a consent form to formally confirm your participation.

Regards,

Leigh (Jones)

Appendix 2 – Informed Consent

Participant Consent Form

This study project is designed to investigate in greater depth the challenges confronting aspiring professional coaches as applied practitioners, in the field. The aim is to examine the day-to-day issues you face as a coach, and the various interactions that take place with fellow coaches, players and significant others who may be influential within the team environment while you are attempting to progress the team and your own personal practice.

My aim is to unearth 'exactly what it is Coaches do' with a view to informing future coach education programmes regarding additional training that could be considered. The other objective is to provide advice and/or guidance throughout the course of the study as a means of developing your own practice.

Be assured that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and that any information you provide will be treated in the strictest of confidence with any identifiable data removed to maintain anonymity. It should be noted however that complete anonymity may be difficult to maintain due to the nature and location of the study and that participants should be aware that the potential for recognition does exist. However, all measures will be taken to avoid this.

Finally, you will be able to read copies of your interview transcripts to verify authenticity and accuracy.

I have read the letter/information provided describing the nature and purpose of the research project and agree to take part in the study

Yes No

I understand the nature of the research project and nature of my involvement in it.

Yes No

I understand that I can withdraw from the research project at any stage.

Yes No

I understand that I will be interviewed as part of the study project but reserve the right to terminate interviews at any time and/or review and amend comments made.

Yes No

I understand that information I provide in the study may be used for publication, but that my identity will not be revealed.

Yes No

I understand that I may contact the Research Supervisor should I need information or clarification about the research project, and that I can contact the Research Ethics Coordinator at University of Wales, Newport if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the study project.

Yes	No
-----	----

Signed (Research Participant).....

Print Name:..... **Date:**.....

Signed (Research Director).....

Print Name:..... **Date:**.....

Research Director:

Name -Dr Nicky Lewis, Head of Social Sciences

Contact Details:

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Research Ethics Director:

Name - Professor Phil Cole, Associate Dean Research & Enterprise

Contact Details:

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Appendix 2(a) - Informed Consent (HKRFU & Club Executives)

Interview Agreement (PhD Study – Leigh W. Jones)

March 16th 2012

Dear

Firstly, let me take this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to take part in the interview process. In addition to offering valuable study data pertaining to development of (*Head Coach at your club*), the information you provide will offer a deeper level of personal understanding regarding his current role within your club setup along with any perceptions you have in respect of his current strengths and weaknesses in that role as well as the complexities that he faces.

Be assured that any information you provide will remain confidential, with my overall aim as Researcher is to unearth a range of common themes, issues or complexities the coach faces within his current coaching roles which could help to inform future coach education and development programmes. You are aware that my role also includes that of National Coach Development Manager for the HKRFU with your comments also assisting me in that capacity.

It is important you understand that you are free to withdraw from the interview at any time, or stop in order to seek clarification on matters discussed. I should also warn you that while every precaution will be taken to assure your anonymity, it cannot be guaranteed due to the nature and location of the study environment. However, every caution will be taken to maintain confidentiality throughout.

Finally, you will be able to read transcripts of your interview(s) and final transcripts to verify the authenticity and accuracy of information you have provided.

Interviewee Name:

Interviewee Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3 - Semi-structured Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

During this interview I am interested in the many and varied roles you undertake as a Coach'. I would like to gain an insight into the highs, the lows and the many complexities that confront you in your daily role. Your experiences, both good and bad; the support you receive from significant others; and the barriers that hinder both your team(s) and your own personal development as an aspiring Coach. In addition, I would like to explore the thoughts, feelings, emotions you experience and how they may affect your personal and professional life.

I am going to ask you specific questions in relation to your experiences as a Head-Coach and then probe further to investigate the detail surrounding your role when interacting with superiors, fellow coaches, administrators, players and anyone else who may influence your thoughts and the decisions you make.

In addition to offering valuable study data, the information you provide may prompt a deeper level of personal understanding regarding your current role in relation to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that presently exist, and how you currently identify and deal with many of those issues.

Be assured that any information you provide will remain confidential, with my aim as 'Action Researcher' to unearth a range of the common themes that might exist among other coaches involved in the study, and to assist in providing advice or direction where possible as a means of developing your own practice.

It is important you understand that you are free to withdraw from the discussion at any time or stop the interview in order to seek clarification on matters discussed. Finally, you will be able to read your interview(s) and final transcripts to verify the authenticity and accuracy of information you have provided.

Q1. Can you tell me what attracted you to coaching as a possible career path?

Probes/Prompts

Ambitions?

What do you think will be the barriers to achieving those ambitions?

Q2. I know it early in your coaching career but could you describe your coaching philosophy?

Probes/Prompts

How would you like to be remembered - players, fellow coaches, administrators?

What type of 'ideal game' would you like to develop?

Q3. Regarding your current coaching practice, what would you highlight as your personal strengths and weaknesses?

Probes/Prompts

- How much time and effort do you put in to developing those strengths?
- Overcoming, or improving weaknesses?
- Have you highlighted any specific areas to focus on this coming season?
- Do you use outside support mechanisms to assist you in developing/correcting strengths/weaknesses?

Q4. Can you provide a little background on how you thought last season went for you?

Probes/Prompts

- Relationship with the team, management, superiors, supporters?
- Significant issues within any of those relationships?
- High Spots, Low Spots of season – Why so?
- Resource/Facility Issues?
- Selection/De-selection Issues?
- Retention/Recruitment?
- Financial constraints?
- Cultural issues?

Q5. What issues did you personally find the most complex to deal with?

Probes/Prompts

- How did you deal with them?
- Why did you adopt that approach?
- How much of your time did they take up, practically & thoughts (pro-rata)
- How did it make you feel?
- Did it affect you outside the rugby environment (i.e. family, friends)?
- Did these experiences hinder your effectiveness as a coach? Why?

Q6. Have you and the club set any objectives for the coming season? If so, what are they and how do you expect to achieve them?

Probes/Prompts

- How were the objectives arrived at? (Individually, as a team, senior players)
- Possible barriers?
- Possible solutions?
- How often will you assess and re-evaluate these objectives?

Q7. In respect of your coaching career (ambitions highlighted earlier), what would be the ideal progression plan for you over the next five years?

Probes/Prompts

- Possible barriers?
- Progression plan?
- Does the future hold any concerns for you and/or family?
- What are they & how do you cope with these concerns?

Q8. How supportive/informed is your partner/wife/family in respect of your coaching ambitions?

Probes/Prompts

- How influential/involved is she in your coaching career?
- Are you the type of coach who brings his work home or are you able to park it/switch off?
- What types of things do you do to take your mind away from rugby
- How often throughout the day when away from the team environment do you think about rugby?
- What aspects are you thinking about? Which do you seem to focus on most?

General Prompting Questions

- The outcome, was it favourable or unfavourable?
- What Happened?
- What was that like?
- What did you do to cope?
- Can you tell me more about it?
- How did this make you feel?

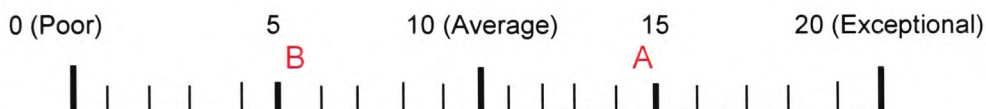
Appendix 4: Reflective Sheet (Exemplar 1)

Reflective Performance Sheet

Name:???? Opposition: CWB Sharks Date: 27th Nov 2010

1. Referee/TJ Performance

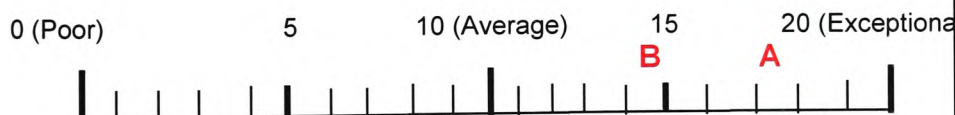
Perceived Rating after game & pre analysis (WHY): Difficult to build relationship with- lack of communication
 Some completely random decisions throughout- never remember play getting over 3 or 4 phases.
 Seemed that he felt he should be blowing for something all the time as appose to managing the game
 Players had little confidence in decision making



Actual Rating – **Post Analysis** (WHY): Inconsistent with breakdown- was a mess all day which hampered the game but was not as one eyed as I thought. Actually let us get away with quite a lot. Penalty count also pretty equal, so all in all I was a bit harsh in my assessment

EQ Rating – Coach Perception of Self Management on Game Day

Key Messages Sent/Elicited (Verbal/Non-Verbal):
 Msg I sent verbally- Concentration, Do not react to refs poor decisions (had previous issues with same ref so was aware), focus on win rather than bonus points,
 Non Verbal- body language (head/shoulder high), focused, I wanted to create an intense atmosphere



Key Messages Received/Elicited (Player Perception): **Feedback from 4x senior players (for scale I took average score from all players) breakdown- Pre Game-17 During- 16 After 17**

Strength

- Clear key points pre game
- Adapted warm up after player feedback
- Post match assessment good
- Spoke to individuals pre game about roles
- Maintained focus of players well although CWB turned up 15 mins late
- More attention to tactical instead of just passion

Positive Aspects of Weeks Coaching

- I coached instead of played which allowed me to concentrate on one role. Very positive feedback from players as they enjoyed the session due to it flowing well and educational.
- A few lower division players trained with 1st team and did well

- Can get upset with players who do not join in for chat
- Body language came across as slightly pissed off with CWB turning up late
- Glimpses of frustration when players were trying to much on the pitch to force the game

Coaching Review of Weeks Performance

Key Objectives as passed onto Team:

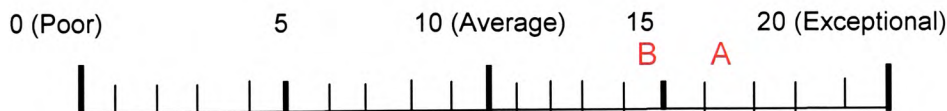
1. Effective clear out to create quick ball
2. Clean lineout ball and steady scrum
3. Play a fast paced wide game

Perceived Effectives Post Game (WHY):
 Frustrated we did not get bonus point but accepted the win. Our clear out was not up to scratch and we did not dictate rucks. Scrum was void as CWB went for uncontested. We attempted to play wide game but contact skills let us off and often lost ball through poor technique and silly offloads. Felt that we were trying to hard.

Tactically I think we played it right but a combination of forcing the game and a distinct lack of momentum was an issue.

Very happy with defence to keep them at nil.

Very happy with players temperament. Even though some awful decisions they simply shut up, accepted it and moved on.



Actual Effectiveness (Post Analysis)
 After seeing video game was not as bad as first thought. The referee did kill the game completely which was a big reason for the lack of momentum . When we had the wind in our sails we looked an exciting attacking team.

Contact skills let us down due to spilling the ball too much. Did not deal very well with CWB sending many players into the ruck. The ruck turned into a bit of shit fight which slowed our ball down. Looking after ball and a dynamic clear out would have settled that.

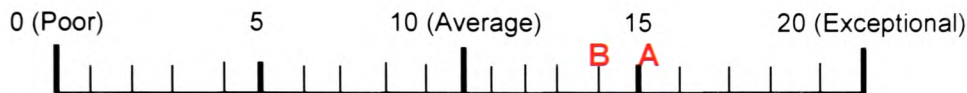
Defence was great. The back three put in some fine last gasp tackles but most pleasing was ABC work from the bigger men. Did not get caught napping and were more often than not in right position.

Appendix 4: Reflective Sheet (Exemplar 2)

Name:???? Opposition: Valley 2 Date: 16.10.10

2. Referee/TJ Performance

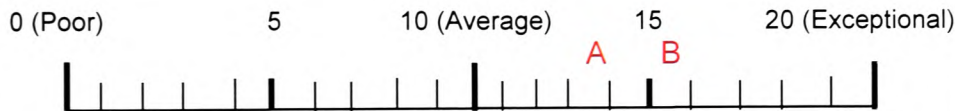
Perceived Rating after game & pre analysis (WHY): (15) Was consistent with rulings, Controlled the breakdown well,



Actual Rating – Post Analysis (WHY): (15) AS above: Red Card offence – Dangerous play. Should of gone to straight red card for Valley 13 foul play (2nd instance), Good manner on the field

1. EQ Rating – Coach Perception of Self Management on Game Day

Key Messages Sent/Elicited (Verbal/Non-Verbal): (15)
 Individual responsibility to get mentally ready for kick off
 Ruck situations – Low body position, strong over ball, win space
 Wide channel discipline



Key Messages Received/Elicited (Player Perception): (15)
 Good start to game – intensity good.
 Ruck/contact – Much improved on the week before.
 Wide channel – still not holding depth – Timing issue, lazy realignment

Positive Aspects of Weeks Coaching

Throughout week – hammered home personal responsibility for getting mentally ready for kick off- Started very well in match so pleased with this.

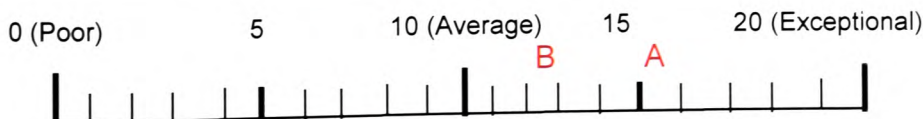
Heavy work load on Tuesday night, contact session. Contact in game much improved

Won 49-14. 7 Tries. Bonus point victory.

Feel pretty good about weeks work

2. Coaching Review of Weeks Performance

Key Objectives as passed onto Team
 Evasion, Body position, leg drive – ATTACK SKILLS (offload – continuity)
 Accuracy at ruck
 Play outside 13 channel as he likes to spot tackle
 RE-Alignment off the ball (work rate) 12



Actual Effectiveness (Post Analysis)(15)
 Good continuity – played to game plan (mix of direct and wide)
 Game plan worked first half. Individual errors 2nd half ruined momentum

Appendix 5 – Formal HKRFU Coach Assessment Criteria

1. Aims –Overview of Session	5
2. Progression & intensity	12
3. Adaptability	6
4. Creating the environment	14
5. Goal setting	12
6. Decision Making/Game Sense	12
7. Tactical Appreciation	12
8. Technical Input	12
9. Management of Resources & Coaches	4
10. Session Evaluation	5
11. Self Reflective Process	6
TOTAL	100%

Tutor's Name(s): Date: Venue: Coach:	Max % Actual
1. Aims of the Session Add Comments & assessment mark. Based against the below evaluation criteria	5~
2. Progressions	12~
3. Adaptability	6~
4. Creating the environment	14~
5. Goal setting	12~
6. Decision Making/Game Sense	12~
7. Tactical Appreciation	12~
8. Technical Input	12~
9. Management of Resources /Coaches	4~
10. Session Evaluation	5~
11. Self Reflective Process	6

N. B. Criteria and rationale based on revamped version of research carried out by Cote & Gilbert (2009). An integrative definition of coaching effectiveness and expertise, *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 4(3), 307-323 and Kavussanu et al.(2008). Coaching efficacy and coaching effectiveness: Examining their predictors and comparing coaches' and athlete reports, *The Sport Psychologist*, 22, 383-404.

Assessment/Evaluation Criteria

1. Aims –Overview of Session	5
2. Progression & intensity	12
3. Adaptability	6
4. Creating the environment	14
5. Goal setting	12
6. Decision Making/Game Sense	12
7. Tactical Appreciation	12
8. Technical Input	12
9. Management of Resources & Coaches	4
10. Session Evaluation	5
11. Self Reflective Process	6

Key Performance Indicators for each of the above

<p>1 AIMS (1 mark for each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use & application of a session plan. b. Clear concise outline of session Objectives. c. Player engagement to ensure players' understanding of intended Objectives. e. Game context drawn from the players. d. Explain fully why these skills/practices are necessary.
<p>2 PROGRESSION (2 marks for each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Logical and sequential progressions (both intensity and skill progression). b. Organised use of space and equipment. c. Evidence of knowledge pertaining to the key elements of each practice. d. Use of positive reinforcement to build confidence & understanding. e. Balance of Observation and Intervention during session (use of remedial coaching). f. Method of intervention (what? when? how? why?)
<p>3 ADAPTABILITY (2 marks for each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Evidence of adaptation regarding ability of players, conditions and content of session. b. Ability to adapt drill where necessary to achieve intended outcome. c. Able to isolate good and bad technique and develop both
<p>4 CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT (2 marks for each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To communicate effectively and confidently in everything you do. b. To encourage two-way communication/interaction (& listening skills) during team sessions & reviews. c. To be clear & simple in all communications (chunk downloads to 2, 3, 4 clear objectives). d. Build confidence through communications & actions (create short victories, use good examples, positive reinforcement). e. Use of meaningful & searching questions to prompt thought, not 'just' answers. f. Build team & individual character through communication, practices & prompted reflection during sessions. g. Build respect between player/coach and player/player via empowerment, delegation and trust.
<p>5 GOAL SETTING (2 marks for each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The reinforcement & constant encouragement of individual, unit & session objectives (where appropriate). b. Use of team/unit/individual review of objectives and implementation of team/unit/individual

problem solving.

- c. Use of effective probes in search of response to problem solving (& re-evaluation of objectives in needed)
- d. Evidence of confident and positive approach to goal/objective setting (positive delivery & appraisal of objectives).
- e. Appropriate and positive identification of process breakdown and repair to ensure accurate execution of skills/practices and game situations.
- f. Empathetic approach to players' efforts.

6 DECISION MAKING/GAME SENSE (2 marks for each)

- a. Activities that ask questions of the players relative to the demands of the game (time & space).
- b. Evidence of games to achieve session/season outcomes.
- c. Use of games to develop & build understanding (progressive).
- d. Activities to be conditioned to ensure success and understanding is achieved.
- e. Ability to translate theoretical understanding into meaningful and relative (game related) practices.
- f. Progressions build to produce game related pressure

7 TACTICAL APPRECIATION (2 marks for each)

- a. Evidence of 'process' breakdown and understanding (applicable to area of delivery)
- b. Understanding of how each component part/segment of the session fits in to overall tactical strategy of the team
- c. Practices - closely aligned to intended outcomes and demands of the game.
- d. Appropriate identification and correction of both good and bad techniques (micro detail) with relevant correction evident
- e. Use of whole part whole
- f. Relevant number of progressions in one session

8 TECHNICAL INPUT (2 marks each)

- a. Evidence of whole game understanding & personal philosophy.
- b. Understanding of how components parts of the game come together to formulate effective practices.
- c. Management of 'team' during team practices with relevance to the 'game'.
- d. Relevant use of micro game sessions to build learning.
- e. Use of involvement & ball time to build implicit learning.
- f. Appropriate identification and correction of both good and bad techniques (macro detail) with relevant correction evident.

9 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (2 marks each)

- a. To exhibit sound control of whole session.
- b. To involve and manage coaching assistants during session (when necessary)

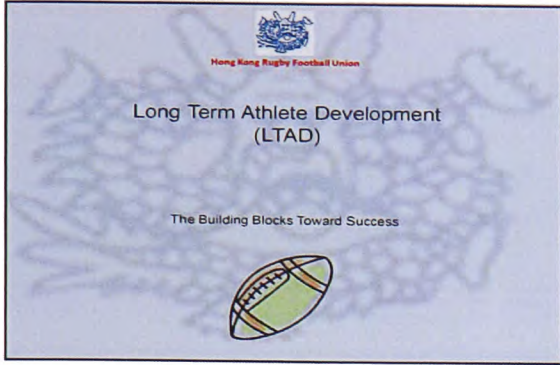
10 SESSION EVALUATION (1 mark each)

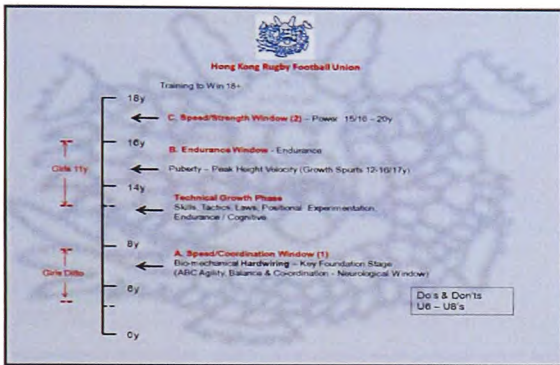
- a. To encourage team recap on session objectives.
- b. Seek group understanding of the areas worked on during session.
- c. Emphasise competencies exhibited during session practices.
- d. Encourage team identification of possible future developments based on outcomes of session.
- e. Joint re-goal setting.


11 SELF REFLECTIVE PROCESS (2 marks for each)

- a. Use of joint reflection during team down time (between coaches) & at the end of session.
- b. Identification of player concerns and 1-1 player requirements.
- c. Evidence & use of the reflection data & fold into the next session.

Appendix 6 – Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) (Presentation & Discussion).

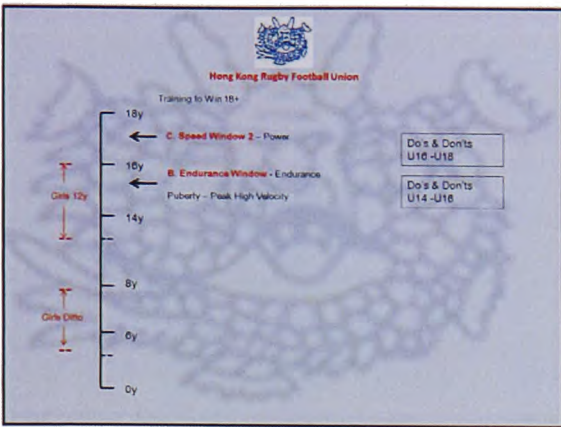





 Hong Kong Rugby Football Union

- 1 Young children have poorly developed spatial perception. They are poor at judging speeds and distances. This improves with age and training.
- 2 Until biological maturity children are more vulnerable to injuries around the growth plate of developing bones and also at the insertion of tendons into bones. Excessive plyometrics and high-volume and high-intensity work on hard surfaces must be controlled. This is important in Hong Kong when many of our young rugby players will be involved in numerous sports and cross-country often involves running on concrete.
- 3 During the growth phase bone grows more quickly than muscle and children become less flexible this increases injury risk especially around tendon insertions and areas of rapid growth.
- 4 Again during the growth phase centre of gravity changes and skills often need to be re-learned.

Dr. D Owens (HKRFU Hon Medical Director)



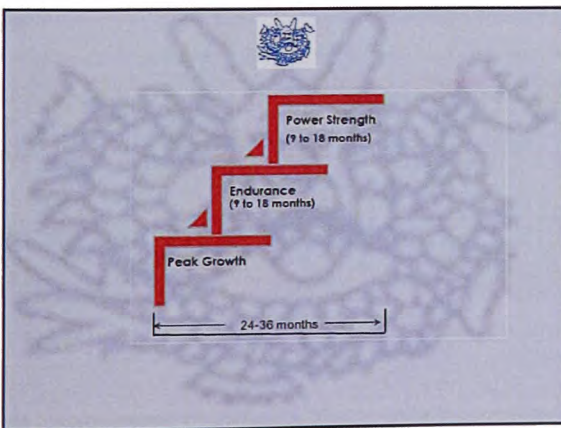
Do's & Don'ts U16's 18's - CHALLENGE 2 (Team) WINDOW
Coach - Challenges - Facilitates

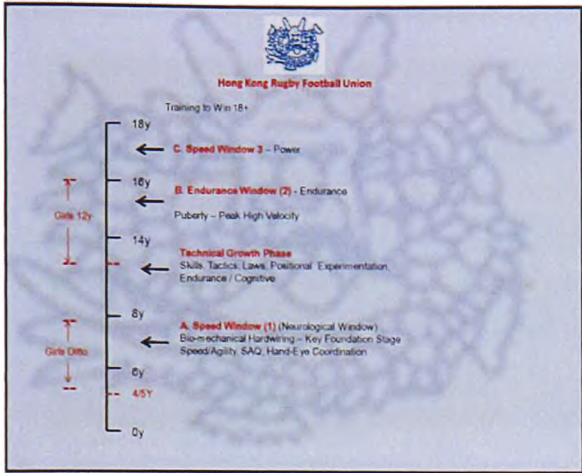
Do's -

- Mastery of some skills
- More complex decision making activities
- Individual & Unit understanding (attack and defence)
- Game Plan, Patterns of Play (attack & defence)
- Select appropriate tactical options
- Concepts of periodised training, recovery & pre-hab
- Understanding outweighs application.....Middle Band

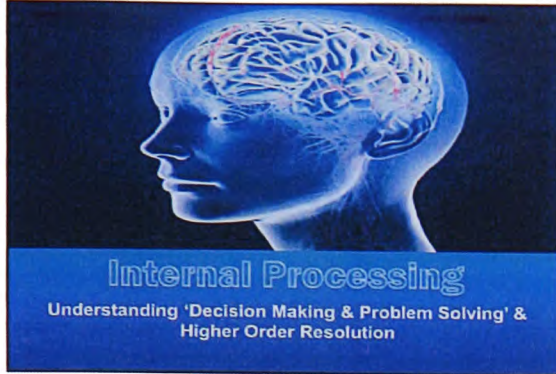
Don'ts

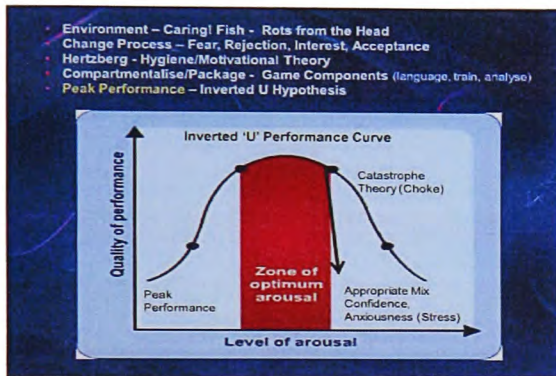
- Remember - still young adults, fun, games and challenges are important





Appendix 7 – The Brain at Work (Presentation & Discussion)





- Catastrophe = Brain Overwhelmed? When **?**?

Stressed /Threatened /Emotional/Euphoric Situations

Dual Task Interference – New Destination /Phone

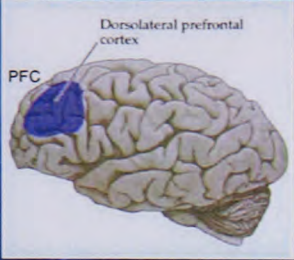
- Make daily lists
- Automate habits (driving/juggling/walking/maths tables/rugby skills)

AIM - Underpinning Neuroscience / Neurobiology behind why happens & why we 'sometimes shut down', AND **Solutional**

Understanding of Self & Others Cognitive Function → Physical Function

ARE – Product of our upbringing/experiences. Why – Different Conclusions

Brain - 2% of total volume...consumes 20% daily energy



Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex

PFC

Only hold/deal a few pieces at a time

Prefrontal Cortex (PFC) – Rational Resource of Brain – Higher Order Thinking & Goal Processor. Deals with daily Intentions/goals.

- Prefrontal Cortex - Noisy Area - Electrical Activity – Creating neurological pathways, memory maps
- "Caretaker" – Connected to ALL Other Parts (Energy Hungry) Glucose & Rest – Short Supply

Thinking, Understanding, Deciding (I need to buy, eggs, ham, tea, then into the bank, etc)

Goal-setting

Control Impulses/Inhibits irrational (Lie in the sun, go for a swim, fight/fight)

Recall/Memorise.....(link)..... Emotional responses (Left Hemisphere)

Linked Imagination (visualise, white lies) – (Right Hemisphere)

Likes to work sequentially/novelty.....Hardwired in a logical fashion

ALL ENERGY HUNGRY FUNCTIONS

PFC Capacity, Size & Function

- 1 Grain of Sand.....Beach
- 1 Star.....Galaxy/Milky Way

• 4-5% - Physical volume rest of the Brain (20%)

Not Responsible


Automated States

Innovations / Insights (Eureka / Epiphany moments) done elsewhere.

PFC – Certain state to facilitate that & attain peak performance (Dampen Noise)

③ Numbers/chickens, fox, hunting hound (novelty/reality)


Engagement PFC involves Effort...Challenge....Threat.....(Stress / Emotions)!
Hard Wired to Minimise Effort



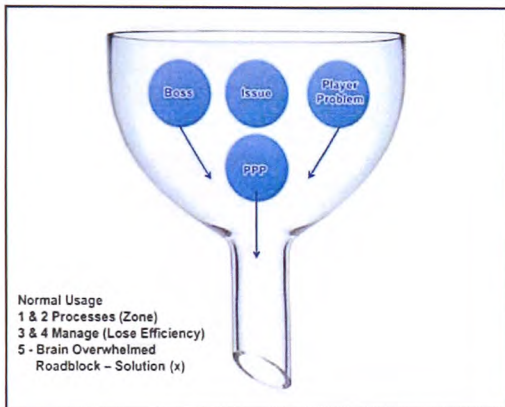
Descendants Vigilant Ancestors

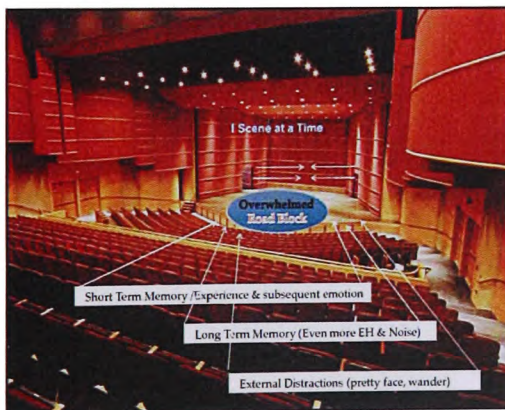
After

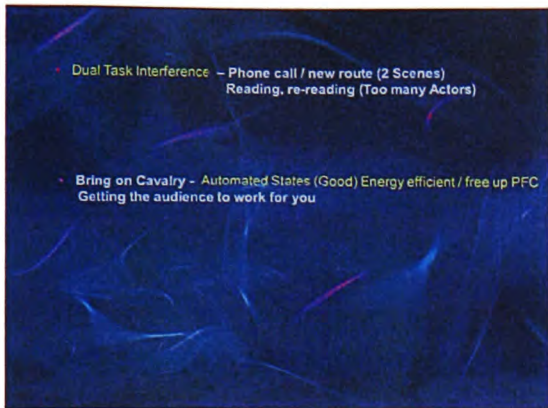
- Save Rational Resource – Food, Drink, Survival.
- Too much:
Thinking/Effort PFC = Increased Energy Consumption & Electrical Activity
Narrows Function/Productiveness (PFC)
- Evolution - Modern Life..... Conflict & Confusion
- Design

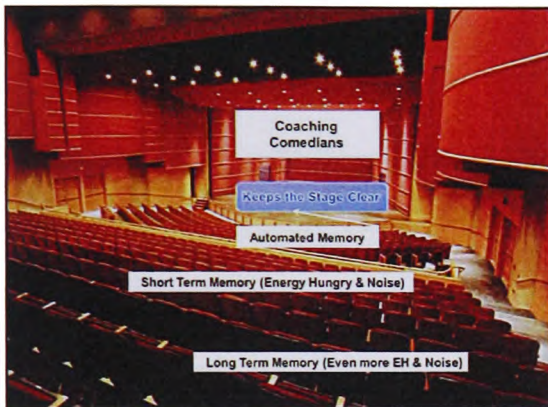


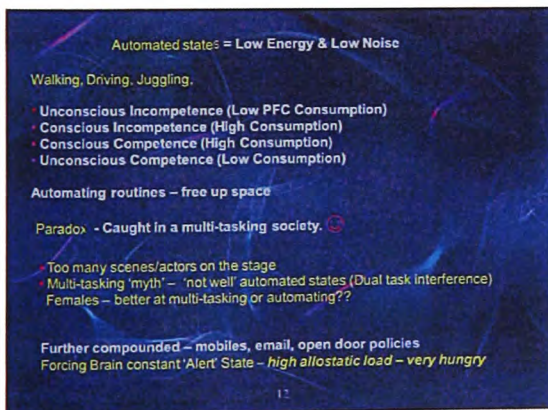
- Noise Created (Trying to produce maps/pathways - memories) Save Energy









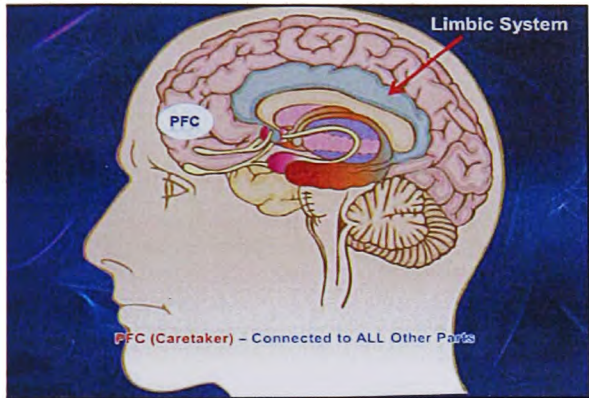


Summary:
Each day with a limit amount of 'thinking/organising energy'

PFC – Our internal processor, goal/intention organiser
Noisy part of the Brain (Electrical activity – map making)

- Lazy - 1 Scene at a time
- More Processing (actors) = More Effort (challenge/threat/stress)
More Noise, Inhibited PFC (high allostatic loading)
- More use of our rational resource = Higher Glucose Consumption
- (Rational Complexity Studies) Fewer variables mind holds – More effective decision making capabilities
- Automating processes – free up PFC Space
- Modern life (conflict) – demands constant 'Alert State' (Rock, 2009)

• Your daily routine?



Limbic System (Survival System) – Descended from vigilant ancestors - Fight or Flight System
Tracks emotional relationships to thoughts, objects, people, events
Drives behaviour.....to an extent!! (Gorden et al., 2008)

Threat Dangerous	Reward Helpful
---------------------	-------------------

<p><i>Primary Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bear/Tiger Hunger Thirst People 	<p><i>Primary Rewards</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Money Sex Familiar/Friendly Faces Babies
--	---

• Hardwired towards pessimism - Threats & Unfriendly's- (Position/Upbringing)
Control – Fight (React negatively) or Flight (React positively)??
• Right/Left PFC Braking System.....0.4 sec
Cheat / Mirror neurons – (Suppress)

15

- Hard Wired Towards Threat/Danger.....Keeps us Alive!
- Greater Limbic Activation Occurs –Threat or High Reward'
- Threat Response - More Severe & Longer
- Chemical Production Threat - Dopamine/Cortisol (steroid) Adrenalin
Reward - Dopamine/Oxytocin.....Serotonin/Endorphines
- Dopamine - Happy drug (Cocaine, Depression, Parkinson's), drug of interest or novelty/curiosity and desire

SEE-SAW EFFECT – Equal & Opposite Effect

- PFC (Noise/Chemical Reaction)
- Stressing already over-loaded stage/actors
- Further narrowing PFC function

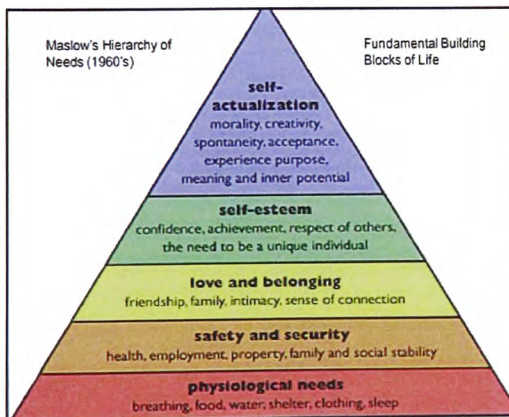
As stress heightens processing in the brain may result in impulsive actions generated to alleviate/cope with the sources of stress. This downshift in cognitive function is fuelled by cortisol which can irreparably damage hippocampal cells (memory). This also seems to occur with activities that fail to stimulate interest and restrict personal autonomy (Afan et al., 2012)

Direct experience

- Individuals – Cope 1 Scene & 4 pieces/issues/actors (non-pressured)
- Paradox – See most things as a threat, initially foes!! intensifies 'noise'narrowing PFC
Bad chemical response
Hampers learning & decision making, no insights/eureka moments

(Individuals) Demands /Promotes multi-tasking, (email, phone, work, family)

- Social Interaction - Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Teams/Groups) SCARF Model



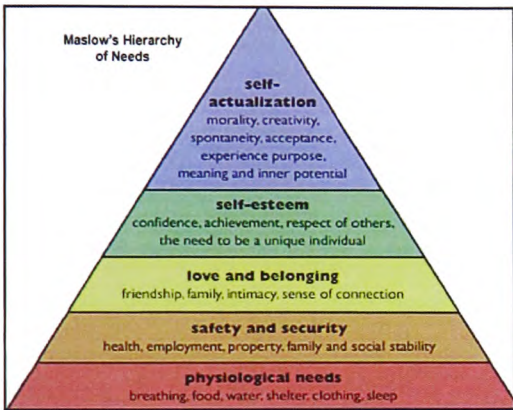
GRIEF – Denial, Anger, Depression, Resolution/Bargaining & Acceptance (death)
CHANGE – Fear, Rejection, Interest, Acceptance

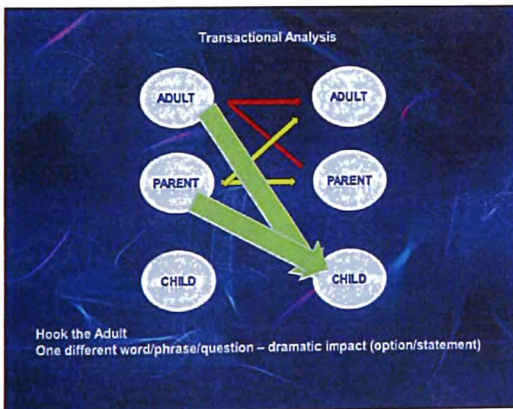
Potential for all 5 domains to be threatened

SEE-SAW EFFECT
 Activation of Limbic (Threat/Reward)

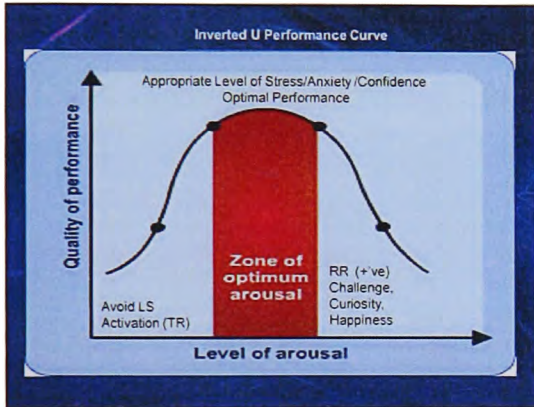
PFC (Noise/Chemical Reaction)
 As with Too Many Actors on Stage
 PFC Shuts Down (Moment)

Better at analysing how 'change' affects us relate to others
 Packaging 'change' very important (phrases/words very important)





- Understand Consequences – Providing Challenges, Expectation & Rewards
- (2004)
- SMART Goals - (unattainable goals – dysfunctional, de-motivational) Task/Ego Orientation. Challenge & Failure Goals
- BRAIN - FAILED challenges – dramatic & negative effect on LS
 - - more severe & lasts longer
- Change Perceptions → 'Fear of Failure' or Ego Mindset,
- Challenge & Task = RR
- Some → Negative associations exercise ()
- Some → Low Self-efficacy - specific issues aspects work/playing
- Successful Challenges – promote dopamine production
- Rewards Attached – promotes more dopamine production
- Unexpected Rewards – promote significantly higher dopamine
- Expectation – Not meeting it!
- Moving goal-posts. Broken Promises/Agreements double/triple (-ve)
- Challenge/expectation met – large +ve whammy



Recent Studies (2012)

- Physical activities increase dopamine production
- Experiences of 'awe'/'ah' more productive than 'd...ah' moments (empowerment/discovery learning)!
- Positive challenge based activities (success is attainable)
- (Allan et al., 2012)

Challenge (thrive) based activities i.e. activities that the learner sees as interesting and personally challenging – RR evident

Positive Emotions – Lubricate Pathways/Positive Cycle of Brain (muscle) growth
Commit LT Memory

- Golden Ratio – 3 positive emotions/experiences to 1 negative to optimise human function.
- Can you experience +ve emotion from constructive/negative feedback??

Sweet Spot – Right of Centre

<p>Dopamine /Cortisol Production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress/Threat invokes survival response Produces dopamine inhibits access to (nucleus accumbens) pleasure centre of brain Cortisol – positive response (steroid) under 'real threat' condition, but over exposure damages memory cells, inhibiting learning/memory capacity Narrows PFC Function & our ability to rationalise, problem solve, memorise, automate 	<p>Dopamine/Oxytocin Production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attain - food, sex, money, friends Aided - humour, funny film, motivational clips Aided - novelty/new Attainable challenges/rewards/met expectations +ve attentional capacity /insights Drug of Desire – feelings of enjoyment Enhances (lubricates) learning networks of the brain Bolters memory storage (LTM & STM) Broadens PFC function (restrict noise) positive muscle growth (hippocampus - memory)
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Finding Right of Centre for YOU/THEM – Reward

- Best Performance

Regulating Emotions/Reactions – Free-up PFC to limit shut-down/overwhelmed state

- Maximising PFC Energy stores
- Automating/Prioritising
- Labelling
- Re-appraisal/Framing (Cognitive restructuring)
- Introduce the Director (The Art of Mindfulness)

Automating / Prioritising - Your Day?

Maximise energy consumption (PFC Glucose)
Keep Stage Clear

Sequence of day/habits:

- Phone off, emails off/when?
- Lists
- Pictures
- Door Closed / Open
- Meetings – Environment
- Daily routines – automate?
- Recognise certainty, autonomy, status, relatedness, fairness in our dealings with others

Labelling / Reappraisal

Emotional Regulation – Suppress our Emotions!
(Males more prone)

- Body Language
- Blood Pressure (self/others)
- Heart Disease
- Relationship Problems
- Work/Family Strife
- Noisy / Narrowing Process in it's own right

Emotional Exhibition - Inappropriate (child reaction)

Labelling – Emotion (noticing, thinking, written, verbalising), reduces TR.
Acknowledging I'm confused, angry, sad, frazzled, being treated unfairly!
This is tough! There must be a better/simpler way.

Environment/Culture – Either facilitates or stifles emotional expression

Many a true word said in jest! - Humour a good way of labelling

Relatedness/Status Threat - Packaging Important
Cheat / Mirror neurons (lost in email/text)


Re-Appraisal/Framing

More Robust – Stronger emotional breaking effect (Labelling)

Strategy – Larger Emotional Hits – provides conscious control of LS
by changing the interpretation of the initial (threat based) experience.

- Silk Purse out of Sow's Ear
- Every Cloud has a Silver Lining

Perceived Threat Big 5 Domains – Certainty, Unfairly, Status etc –
Avoid negative hits LS (shutdown PFC)



Brakes on Quickly

Reconstruct situation - See Small Rewards

4 Methods of Reappraisal

- Reinterpretation
- Normalising
- Reordering
- Repositioning

Reinterpretation – You decide a potential threatening event is no longer a
threat, even perhaps an opportunity (Traffic jam)

Normalising – Understanding the potential for being Overwhelmed.
(New job, interview, presentation – difficult challenge). What can I do to
reduce those threats?

Reordering – All possess a personal organisational chart, natural order
Family - children, husband, parents
Friends – close, colleagues
Work – team/individual player,
Material belongings – house, car, jewellery, clothes

- **Prioritise, store & retain** information in that order
- **Identify** circumstance threatened order – skewed/imbalanced
- **Acknowledge & re-prioritise** on a temporary/ permanent basis

◊ *Reordering how you value the world, changes the hierarchical structure of how the brain stores information and therefore how your brain interacts with the world (Shelton & Ewart, 2010)*

- ◊ Business trip – important game/meeting – Away family/friends, pressure meeting
- ◊ Lonely, isolated, inadequate (Domain threats) – Negative effect on PFC Function
- ◊ Low priority / more effort–disassociate and/or unable to attain clarity (Why?)
- ◊ Schadenfreude syndrome – Does this 20 times per year. Surrounded poverty/deprivation..... tum scenario around.
- ◊ Label – “I have to prioritise this for the next hour”
- ◊ Utilise situation/surroundings – reinforce – (Big 5) TR to RR

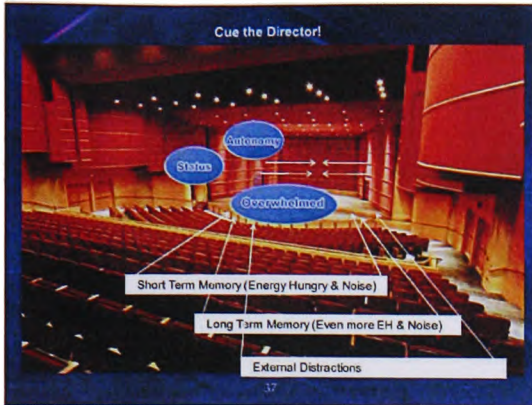
Repositioning – Seeing through the other person's eyes, changing perspective.

- Currently – Fixed thinkers (values system). Their position encourages new thinking & perspectives (Job/interview/coaching – I must, I need to.....I think they would like to see.....)
- Friends/Colleagues great repositioning/reappraisal tool – different perspective
- Better seeing/inviting friend/player/colleague/spouse perspective

Bad Loss – Cave (suppress) - Male reaction
 Woman network/chat/express – gain support & reassurance

- Who's promoting dopamine production?
- Who's likely to see problems/solutions in accurate/true light?
- Who's more likely to produce Insight/Eureka moments?
- Links – multi-tasking proficiency (empty stage – reposition more often???)

PROCESS ASSISTED BY OUR DIRECTOR (MANAGE OUR STAGE)



The Director

- Actors/Scenes – 'Conscious' information, an intentions or goals
- Too many - Overwhelm, PFC Shutdown, LTM/STM Inhibited, Innovations
- The Director – Executive Function of the Brain
Can stand outside the experience, analyse and make decisions about how your brain will respond.
- I can't believe I just said that, That didn't make sense, Can't stop statements.
- Part of Brain – understands others (empathy) understands self (Introspection)
- Ability – 3rd person perspective on 'self'. Interact with 'self' as another - Control

The Director

- Focusing Main Actors – erasing/narrowing out other peripheral interference.
- Train Director – To Come on Stage.....The Science of Mindfulness (Being mindful of one's thoughts and actions - Listening to Inner signals)
- Tsang 2007 (MASS Inventory) - healing properties, overcome depression, immune systems, overall physical & mental health.
- Training the Director - Understanding Narrative Experiences & Direct Experiences

The Director

Narrative Experience/Network

- Brain full Memory Maps – Coaching, family friends, work,
- Natural drift into mindlessness – default state when not under threat/pressure (washing-up / beer).
- Where we go during presentations/seminars/meetings – 100% focus difficult
- Don't see, feel, sense or anything as much (beer's shit)
- Low energy system / Auto pilot
- Evidence - Insights/Innovations available – new ways of doing old things (joining maps)
- Part of the Brain - activated large parts of the day

Direct Experience/Network:

Wide to Narrow Focus - ActorsWhat's Important.....Narrow to Wide – PFC
Cognitive Behavioural - Flushing Mechanism/Technique

As stress heightens processing in the brain may result in impulsive actions generated to alleviate/cope with the sources of stress. This downshift in cognitive function is fuelled by cortisol which can irreparably damage hippocampal cells (memory). This also seems to occur with activities that fail to stimulate interest and restrict personal autonomy (Allan et al., 2012).

NARRATIVE to DIRECT

- TRAINING IT –
- Here & Now - Feel glass coolness, taste the flavour, sun, breeze skin
- Facial movements, Mouth, shape of words
- Here & Now Meetings – Chair, Speaker, (3-4 breaths, enough clear stage)
- Traffic Lights/Meeting People – Angry (Narrative to Direct Training)
- Overwhelming Situations - More Direct / Less Narrative
(Reversal SEE SAW EFFECT) Reduce Limbic Activation.....PFC Function

Direct Experience – Practical Context

- Pressure meeting/presentation, interviews, New people, New information, un-familiar surroundings (Big 5 threat)

♦ Train Director (on stage)– Direct Experience (listen, watch, focus), more likely reduce actors, accept immediate cues & invite insight/solution.

- ◆ Director 1 – Understand narrative / direct experiences networks
Switch into Direct - overwhelm/shutdown -
Narrow focus 'what's important'
- ◆ Director 2 - Develops acute awareness (bodily cues) – Big 5 Threat
Brakes On - Invoke - Labeling & Re-appraisal.
- ◆ Director 3 – Problem Solving NOT Problem Dwell (What's the Problem?)
 - ◆ Look for answers – not dwell on problem
 - Hard wired – 'Solve Problem' (Left Hemisphere – Memories, Certainty)
 - Softer – Unchartered waters (Right Hemisphere- Imagination)

Meeting ran over , Hotel, Flight (Stress, Anger...shutdown)
Director – Reappraise /Challenge

At best – revisit/connect old maps – unlikely TR

Dealing with Others – See Problems (uncertainty /empathy/memory)
Providing Solutions (Status/Uncertainty/Autonomy)
Encourage – Solution seeking

What's the problem?
Can I ask some questions so we can find a solution.....I think we should?
What do you need to solve this?

Change Process – Not doing a good Job TR (Big 5)

It's all about protecting the Big 5 as best we can

Key Aspects :

- ◆ Safety (Status) - Make someone feel safe
- ◆ Autonomy – Give them choices
- ◆ Provide Information - Certainty
