‘Becoming’ an elite coach: a longitudinal study examining elite players’ transitions into elite coaching

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Phenomena under investigation

Martin Johnson – Rugby Union

Ryan Giggs - Football
Context - literature

Meilke (2007) 60% - EPL, MLB, NBA, NFL

Schempp et al. (2010) - MLB, NBA, NFL = no statistical relationship between head coaches with playing experiences and professional coaching success

Elite coach pathways (Gilbert et al., 2006, 2009; Irwin et al., 2004; Nash & Sproule, 2009; Saiz et al., 2009; Schinke et al., 1995, Werthner & Trudel, 2009)

‘Fast-tracked’ (Rynne, 2014)

Apprenticeship (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003)

Socialisation into club culture (Blackett, Evans & Piggott, in review)
‘Carrying (our) values through’: Club directors as arbiters of taste

“I often look up at senior players who for me *extol the values* of what it’s like to be (local area name). I *offer* them jobs within the community team that if they delivered in there then they can one day move into the [senior] coaching team.”

(Kirk, Championship Director of Rugby)
Theoretical Discussion (Bourdieu, 1977)

- Coaches = *arbiters of taste* when identifying playing talent (Christensen, 2009)

- Arbiters of taste = the club hierarchy
  - Board members act as *‘cultural custodians’* of club values when making head coaching appointments with the candidate being required to *embody* the club values = *Hexis*
  - Head coach appointments largely remain within the field and *in-house* which perpetuates a *fast-tracking* culture of appointing elite athletes to elite coaching positions

= *Doxa* → *Symbolic Violence*

*(the cultural norm) → (discriminates - BME & women?)*
Study design

1. Longitudinal cohort design (Johnson, Plumridge & Holland, 2003)
   - Level 3 ‘senior professionals’ formal coach education qualification
   - 2x Semi-structured interviews

2. Data Analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)
   - Open Coding
   - Axial Coding
   - Theoretical Coding
Sample characteristics

Athlete

Coach

Billy
Premiership Rugby
Scrum Coach –
senior team
Ex-int. player

Keiran
Championship Academy
Coach
Ex-EPL player

12 months
Results

ACCULTURATION PROCESS

Transition Commencement

Coaching Pathway Access Routes
- ‘Aspirational’
- ‘Reluctant’
- Club values - drawing athletes through

Refinement of a Coaching and Playing Philosophy
- Direct or Indirect Coaching Experiences
- Significant Others

Coach Identity
- Personal Values/Character
- Output/Practice

Output
Discussion – Clubs drawing athletes through

13 / 15 participants attained their first coaching role with either their first or last club they represented as athletes

“Well I retired in the summer through injury, so May time, and (current Championship Football Club 1) have offered, well they offered me a coaching role, because my contract was expired with them…”
(Kieran, interview one)
Discussion – Philosophical development.

• Conflict between ‘club coaching habitus’ and ‘individual coaching habitus’

I’m trying to still stay true to the way I want to play the game and the way I think is the best way, obviously you now at certain times you are compromised by pressures of people… but also you’ve got pressures from your squad. (Billy, interview 2)
Discussion – Coach identity

“Players are smart, players will see through you if you aren’t honest with them...” (Conrad, interview 1)

Knowledge of self the most important feature

Necessity of gaining player respect (Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002)

Future considerations...

- How much impact do structural mechanisms (e.g. ideological, cultural and political) have on individual coach development?
- How are coaching philosophies ‘negotiated’ over an extended period of time?
- When does a coaching philosophy become a coaching ideology?
Thank you.

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