



Seeking conceptual clarity in the study of elite professional coaches and managers in rugby union and association football

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Research Questions



1. What is the difference between a 'coach', 'head coach' and 'manager' in professional football and rugby union?
2. What constitutes towards defining an expert coach at the elite performance level? (Côté, Young, North & Duffy, 2007)
3. How do coaches acquire coaching knowledge and attain expertise status? (Cushion et al, 2010)



Literature's Sample Critique



Becker & Wrisberg (2008)

Carter & Bloom (2009)

Becker (2009)

Nash, Sprague, the Mayo, McDonnell

& Cassidy (2009)

experiences of great
Werthner & Trudel (2009)
coaching.

Young, Jemczyk, Brophy & Côté
(2009)

To define coaching
expertise, research has
sampled the coaches
Athletes sampled
themselves



Literature's Sample Critique



- Have past studies been sampling appropriately?
 - Nash, Martindale, Collins & Martindale (2012)
- Ericsson, Prietula and Cokely (2007) define expertise as;
 - Measurable - outcome
 - Performance is consistently performed
 - Generated over a prolonged period of time



Sampling Critique

- Ericsson, Prietula and Cokely (2007) define that attaining genuine expertise status requires;

- Individuals engaging in deliberate practice
- Eliminating weaknesses with deliberate thinking

- Expert's decision making can become;
- Automatic – *habituation = routine practice*

- 'Intuition biases'
- 'Ineffective to explain what makes them experts'

'Anecdotal, selective recall, and one-off events all can present insufficient, often misleading, examples of expertise'(ibid, p.3).



Theoretical Sample

Employers of elite coaches



Job Title	Club Level Competition	Sport	Pseudonym
Managing Director	Premier League	Association Football	Oliver
Director of Football Operations	Championship	Association Football	Eric
Chief Executive	League One	Association Football	Samuel
First Team Manager	Premiership	Rugby Union	Shaun
Chief Executive & Performance Director	Championship	Rugby Union	Kirk
Chief Executive	Championship	Rugby Union	Tony
Director of Rugby	English National League One	Rugby Union	Ron
Director of Rugby	Championship	Rugby Union	Keith

Results

What is the *difference* between a 'coach' and 'manager'?

What constitutes towards defining an expert coach at this level?

How do coaches acquire knowledge and attain expertise status?

Roles and responsibilities

Director of Rugby (DoR)/Manager –
Head Coach

1. Philosophy
2. Recruitment of staff
3. On field results accountability
4. Team selection
5. Performance plan and review
6. Budget expenditure

Coach

1. Athlete development

Head Coach/Coach development

1. 'Substantial' playing background required
 - sport specific knowledge
 - tactical and technical appreciation
2. Credibility but is not perceived to last long. Respect important.
3. Same club fast-tracking – socialised into club culture.
4. Coaching qualifications not universally highly regarded.
5. Maturity – life experiences

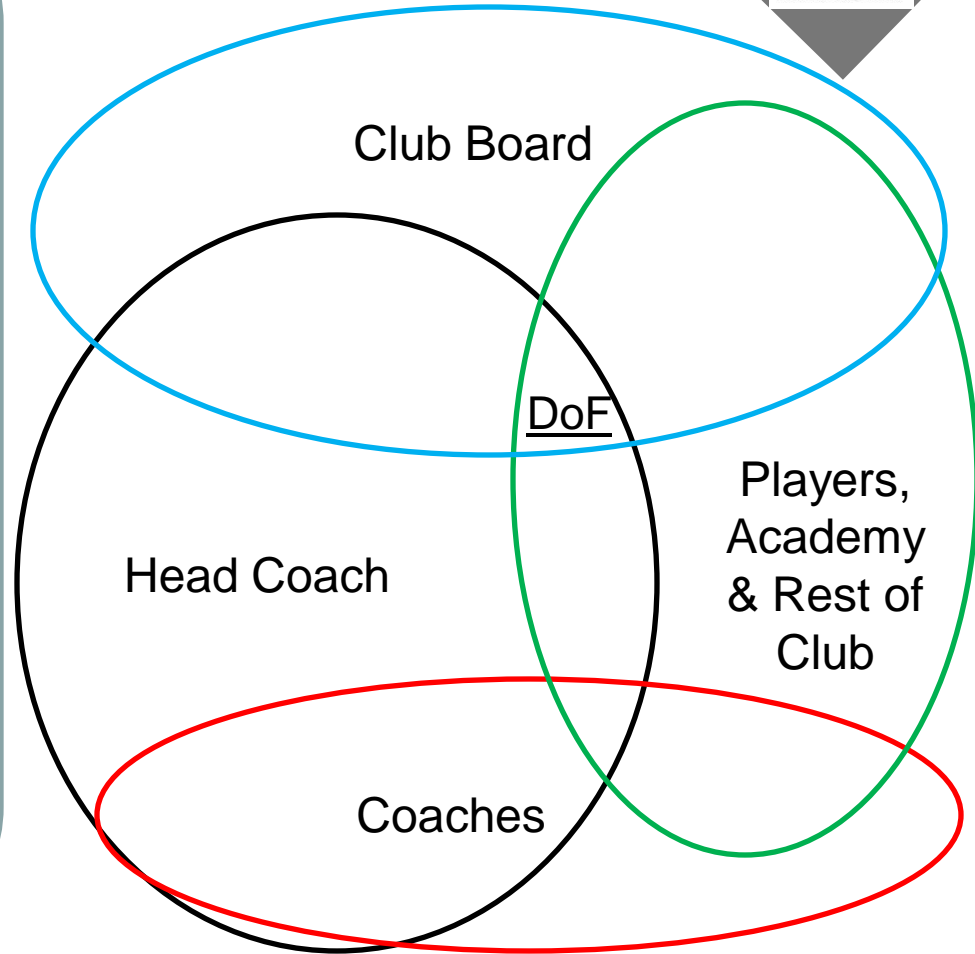


Role dynamics

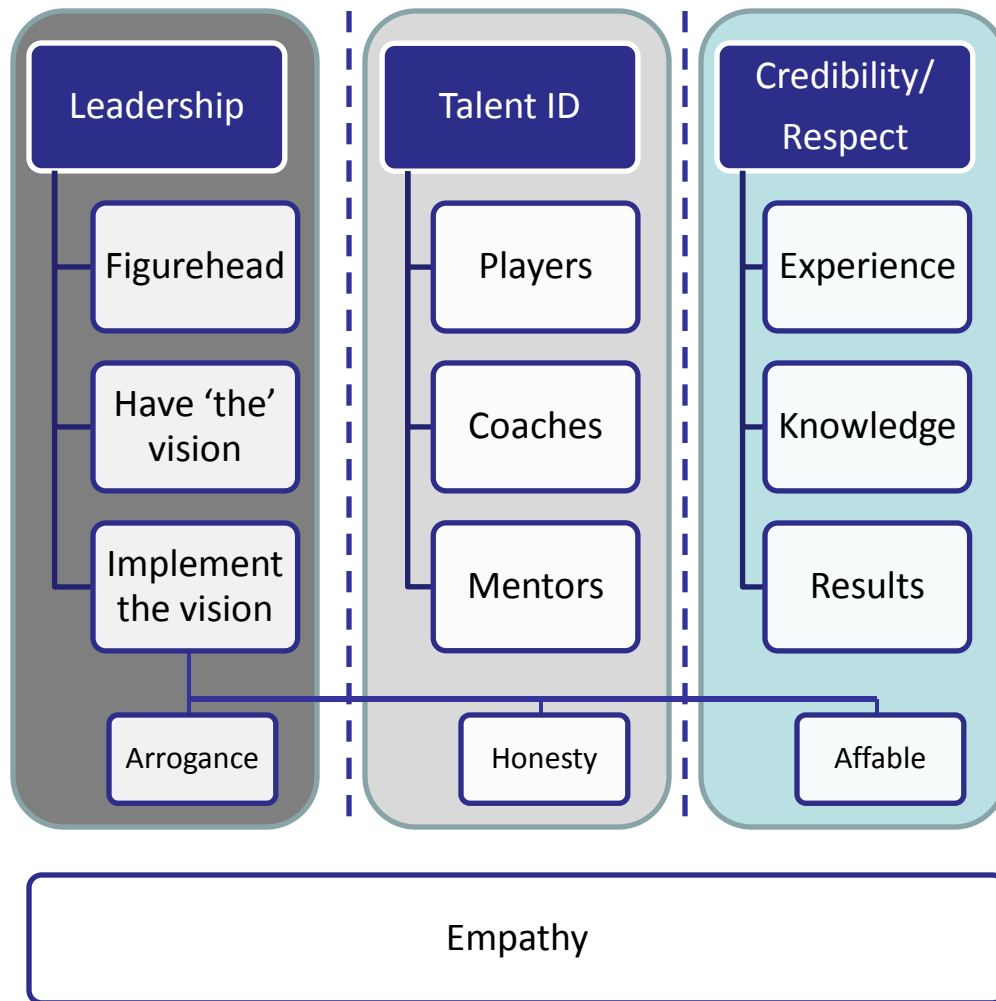


No, no we are not going to take someone who just says we'll hook it up the pitch... again it's a 'small world' we know who works hard and football must be attractive... who is there just purely for the money which we think is important for the club... possible. They've got to have that same yeah... so that's what we would ask to coach...

Samuel (First Team Manager, League One)
 Shaun (Chief of Exec, Operations, Championship)



Head Coach Expertise Constructs



Leadership

Figurehead

Have a
vision

Implement
the vision

Again it's that leadership... leadership, it's the ability to get the vision... It's that ability to enrol people you know, to have a vision...

Oliver (MD Premier League Football Club)



Credibility/ Respect

Experience

Knowledge

Results

Oh Christ yeah you have had to have played the game I would have thought. ...in terms of being a great manager and knowledgeable and had the *contacts* and he was an *affable character* he was going to get on well with the fans and he had that arrogance that sort of successful side to him you would have had to play first team rugby, erim you know he'd be an ok for us
team rugby in the national divisions, I think.
Samuel (CE League One Football Club)
Ron (Director of Rugby Nation League)



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 managerial appointments with the candidate being required to **embody** the club values = *Hexis*
 - Managerial and coach appointments largely remain within the field which facilitates perpetuating a **fast-tracking** culture of appointing elite athletes to elite coaching positions
 - = *Doxa* → *Symbolic Violence (BME, females??)*



Theoretical Discussion (Bourdieu, 1977)



- Why are elite athletes considered pertinent candidates for direct entry into elite managerial/coaching positions?
 - Cultural capital developed through playing career = credibility
 - Symbolic capital earned from playing and coaching tenure = respect



Selected References

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

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Christensen, M.K. (2009) "An eye for talent": talent identification and "practical sense" of top-level soccer coaches. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 26, 365-382.

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Nash, C., Martindale, R., Collins, D., & Martindale, A. (2012) Parameterising expertise in coaching: past, present and future. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 30(10), 985-994.





Thank you for listening.



Grounded Theory

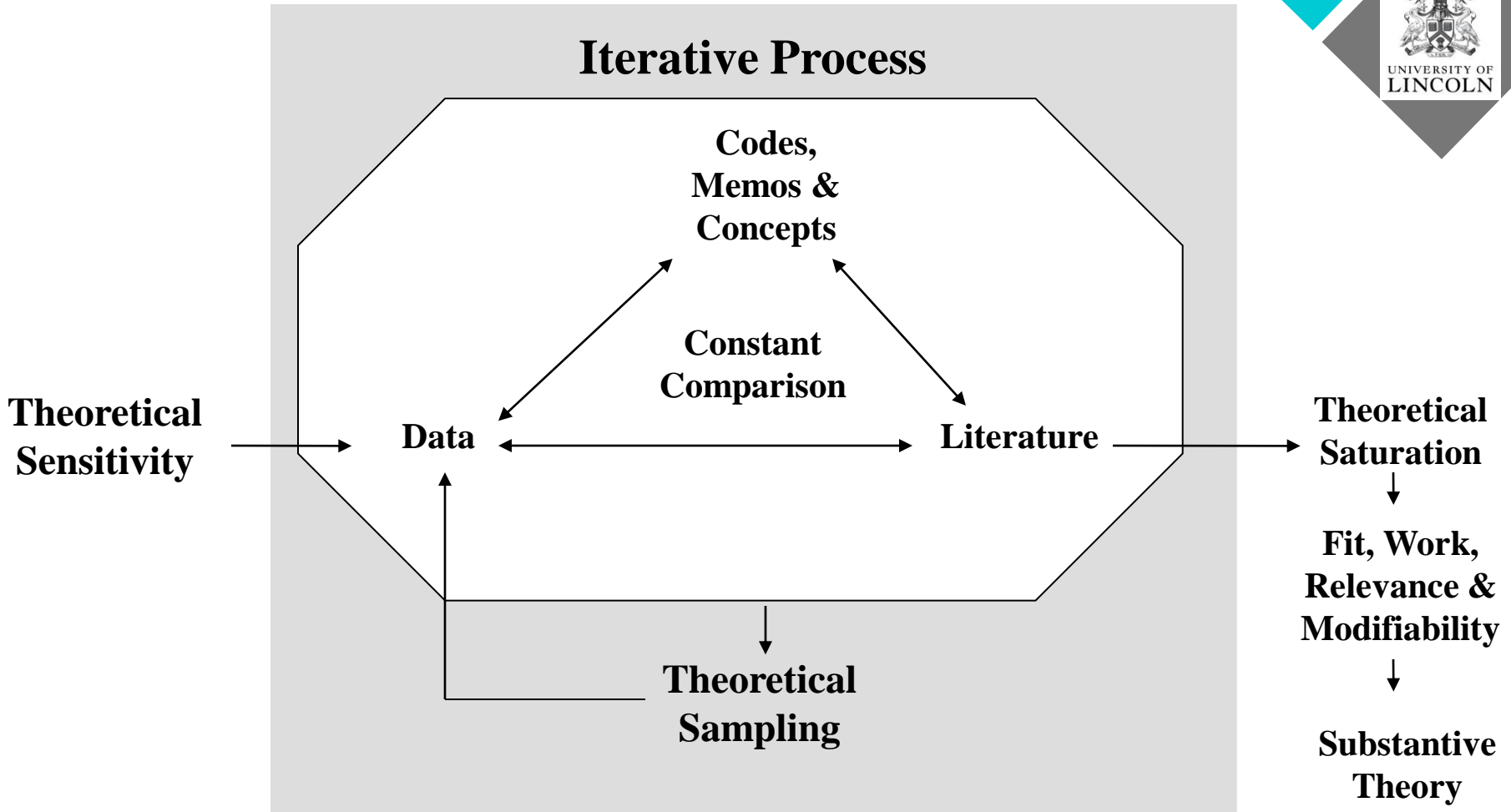


Figure 1. The grounded theory process (Weed, 2009).

