Insights into Experiences: Reflections of an Expert and Novice Coach

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ABSTRACT
Coaches in sport are given many opportunities to embrace new practice with the ultimate aim of developing team or individual performance. Problems arise as the coach attempts to make sense of all the available information. Two coaches, one expert and one novice, were interviewed and provide a strong contrast on the ways in which coaches construct their knowledge. Our study evidences that the expert coach adapts her practice to the emerging situation by synchronising a number of pertinent variables, while the novice coach mimics perceived good practice during her sessions. The developmental process from novice to expert status within coaching adheres to certain principles formulated within other domains, but is perceived in this case to be due to the interest and application of the coach rather than the formal coach education input.

Key words: Coach Education, Expert-Novice Differences, Reflective Practice, Swimming

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In the UK, the Coaching Task Force [1] recently highlighted the importance of the coach within not just performance sport, but also the wider social agenda of healthy living [2]. The recommendations of this document are to develop coaching to a professional level by investing in coaching and coach education [1]. Although the coach is integral to the development of performance, many studies concentrate on the performers. This suggests a mismatch between research and practice in coaching, although this is being addressed [3]. In order to allow coaches to develop their coaching skills and ultimately achieve effective coaching, more attention needs to be paid to the developmental pathway followed by coaches.

The purpose of this study was to examine how two coaches construct their knowledge and to provide an insight into the practical application of their learning experiences. Much of the

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available research focuses on expert coaches and there is a need to examine how coaches move through the continuum from novice to expert. This study purposefully samples two female swimming coaches at opposite ends of the coaching spectrum. It aims to highlight where each is in the process of coach development as well demonstrating how responsible each is for managing their own learning.

COACH EDUCATION PROVISION IN THE UK

Within the UK, the coach education provision is jointly offered by National Governing Bodies (NGB) and Sports Coach UK (SCUK), formerly the National Coaching Foundation (NCF). Generally, the model utilises a sport specific delivery by the NGBs with the more generic skills offered by SCUK. This model is not favoured by a number of other countries, noted for their coach education provision; e.g., Canada, Australia. These countries have adopted a more integrated model organized and administered by a central body; e.g., Coaching Association of Canada (CAC), Australian Sports Commission (ASC). This integrated model involves the coordinated delivery of pedagogical knowledge, technical knowledge and a period of practical assessment [4]. Research has indicated that this mode of delivery is more effective, so it can be asked why the UK has not adopted a similar mode of delivery [5, 6]. Following recommendations from the Coaching Task Force Report [1], the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) is presently being endorsed in a number of sports. It is anticipated that the UKCC will become similar to a 'driving licence' within coaching and people will not be allowed to coach without it, comparable to the current requirements in Australia and Canada. Research undertaken by Abraham and Collins [7] suggested that merely attending a coach education course will rarely improve the overall effectiveness of a coach. In contrast, claims have been made that coaches who attended a 12-hour coach education course significantly improved their coaching efficacy [8]. This claim was based on the coaches' beliefs in their own ability rather than objective criteria.

The UKCC is developing slowly, bearing in mind that a governmental objective calls for mandatory certification of all coaches by 2012 [9]. The Bologna Declaration [10] has stressed the importance of a cohesive coach education structure across Europe. However, evidence has suggested that there are four distinct coaching roles which are: Apprentice Coach, Coach, Senior Coach, and Master Coach [11]. There is debate as to the level of competency and the ability to develop performance, and in some opinions, is the level at which someone should be designated "a coach". Examination of these criteria of competence indicates that the knowledge, experience and craft of the coach are crucial and is intended to develop the 'expert coach' [11-12]. It must be assumed, however, that competence does not equate to effectiveness.

The concept of apprenticeship is still prevalent within sport coaching – learning from a more experienced and effective exponent. This viewpoint may have merit in the early stages of career development but much depends upon the 'master coach' and their ability to pass on relevant information. Equally critical to this is whether the apprentice understands and processes the relevant information. According to experienced coaches, learning from successful coaches is still considered an effective method of achieving the development of expertise [13]. Vygotsky's [14] sociocultural theory proposes that a more knowledgeable coach provides scaffolds or supports to facilitate the learner's, in this case the performer's, development. However, this does assume that the coach has the knowledge to be able to appropriately challenge the learner in a productive manner. The view of Siedentop [15] is that recently qualified Physical Education (PE) teachers are skilled in delivery methods; i.e., pedagogy, but lack sufficient subject content to teach activities past a basic level. Judging by

the content of many initial level NGB awards this would be the opposite to coaching, where subject content is considered paramount but many coaches lack the pedagogical skills and techniques to deliver the content effectively; i.e. content knowledge is not enough to be an effective coach.

According to Collins et al. expert practice "rests crucially on the integration of cognitive strategies" and can be taught through methods that have traditionally been employed in apprenticeship to transmit complex physical processes and skills" [16, p.2]. This reinforces the notion that to develop expertise, the apprentice coach must work independently utilizing all the sources and resources at hand. Clearly this relates to their self-determination, self-regulation and motivation strategies, but could be influenced by their individual coaching environment [17-18].

THE COACH DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Experienced, knowledgeable and educated individuals require the appropriate education and training to meet the needs of all participants in sport at all ages and stages. As coaches progress through various stages of development, research suggesting it could be four [19] or seven [20] stages to progress to elite level, their role changes to match their changing coaching environments and performers. Much of the coaches' ability to adapt comes from their exposure to different sports, different coaching styles and competition [21]. Formal coach education courses generally tend to be organized to attract large numbers of coaches and the content ranges from novice to expert [22]. Coach learning is comprised of a mix of formal sources, such as coach education provision, non-formal sources, such as CPD and informal sources [23]. These informal learning mechanisms could be learning from experience through reflection and/or mentoring, but ultimately learning should be undertaken with the express purpose of enhancing practice; to develop athletes or teams.

The coach may be involved in a multitude of distinct tasks, but the basic task is to develop and improve the performance of teams and individuals. Traditionally, the coach has to develop a season's plan, improve techniques, skills and tactics for participation/competition, enhance all aspects of mental and physical preparation and manage the individual or team in competitions. In order to do this effectively, the coach must utilise many different types of knowledge in order to solve problems and ultimately make decisions. As competitive success becomes more important, this ability to make fast and appropriate decisions becomes crucial. A successful coach is considered to be confident [24] and a key source of instilling confidence in coaches may be their education courses. The Canadian system (NCCP) recently changed to a competency based approach and subsequent evaluation has shown this to be successful at developing confidence in the coach education process [25].

How coaches develop through the coaching continuum and progress from novice to expert should be studied in more detail. There is no guarantee that novice coaches will necessarily progress to more advanced levels as coaching knowledge does not accumulate in the linear manner suggested by some literature [22, 26, 27]. It is imperative that the role of the coach is studied throughout their development, specifically to discover what skills and competencies they acquire at different stages of their career.

This developmental approach infers that coaches need to be aware and have knowledge and understanding of learning theory, self-reflection, motivational climate and knowledge construction as well as the technical detail of their sport. They also need to develop communication and decision-making skills along with management and analytical proficiency, which challenges existing learning environments. It requires that coaches are familiar with the construction of knowledge, a principle where learners make sense of their

knowledge with emphasis on a quality-supporting environment, reliance upon scaffolding, necessity for self-organization and promotion of deeper learning structures, reinforcing the concept of apprenticeship in coaching [28]. How some coaches construct their knowledge would appear to be a determining factor in their development. This would be very difficult to include within existing coach education programmes for a number of reasons, namely the length of the courses and the delivery methods. Should these areas be deemed essential for coaches, this would require much more structured and lengthy initial coaching certificates as proposed by Nash and Collins [29]. This proposition necessitates the appraisal of the coach educators along with the current coach education provision. The UKCC would appear to be addressing this but ultimately there are a considerable number of changes that need to be made over a very short timescale [12]. The success or otherwise of this re-alignment of coach education programmes will have to be evaluated as part of a longer-term process. Specifically they need to address the contextualisation of content, the methods by which coaches are enabled to develop and the monitoring of practical experience and/or assessment, key issues in coach education [30, 31].

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Two purposefully sampled British female swimming coaches participated in this study, one considered to be expert and the other novice. These specific coaches were chosen as they had both started coaching at the same age, in the same type of coaching environment and with access to similar coach education opportunities. The selection of the expert coach was based on the following criteria, which have been used in other expert studies [32, 33]. First, the expert coach had to hold the highest level of coaching certificate from the UK Amateur Swimming Association (ASA). Secondly, the coach had to have accumulated at least ten years of coaching experience at a national level and finally, had to be coaching at a representative level, developing national swimmers over a number of years. The novice had undergone an initial coaching certificate one year previously and had accumulated just over a year's experience. At the time of the interviews both coaches were working within established swimming clubs, where there were a number of coaches, assistant coaches and support staff.

COACH INTERVIEWS

Due to the exploratory nature of this study a semi-structured interview approach was adopted. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit both coaches' views on their developmental experiences, the importance they placed on coach education courses, and the subsequent impact on their coaching practice. The researchers concerned have previous experience conducting interviews as well as a significant background in coaching. The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed the researcher to guide the discussion, while at the same time enabling the participant to highlight the areas they felt were important without necessarily agreeing with the interviewer. An interview guide was produced for this study and to begin with both participants were asked to describe their initial involvement in coaching. The interview questions needed to be broad enough to cover a wide range of experiences, but also to capture the vast differences between the two participants' individual experiences. The questions associated with each area were then given to a second researcher for discussion. Both researchers agreed that the questions were appropriate in terms of their potential to elicit responses to the topic under investigation. This resulted in questions and discussion around issues of coach education experiences, and how they interpreted these experiences, in the context of utilising these within their own coaching.

PROCEDURE

Both individual interviews were carried out and digitally recorded in an area free from distraction. At the end of each interview, the researcher provided a transcript of the coach's response to verify understanding and accuracy [34]. This transcript afforded the lead researcher the opportunity to highlight the most relevant points raised by the coach in the interview and to ensure congruence between the researcher's interpretation and the coach's intention. The interviews lasted 48 minutes for the novice coach and 110 minutes for the expert coach. The discrepancy in time reflected the depth to which each coach was able to engage with the questions and answer using their coaching knowledge and experience.

DATA ANALYSIS

These interviews were inductively analysed, based on the principles of grounded theory. This allowed for depth and 'richness' of response to be reflected in the results. Each transcript was read repeatedly and significant statements relating to and illustrating the various dimensions of the essential theme were identified and marked [35]. Within each transcript, themes were examined for their inter-linkages, then comparison across the two transcripts was undertaken to highlight linkages across both participants. The lead researcher's interpretation of the themes was then reviewed by the second researcher, which generated a discussion allowing both researchers to agree on the key features of each script within the context of this investigation. This resulted in the identification of three key themes, value placed on NGB coach education courses, course content and other learning experiences.

The trustworthiness of the data extracted from the transcripts is contingent upon the audit trail being complete, comprehensible and systematically related to methodological approaches [36-38]. To ensure the integrity of the subsequent categorization of the inductive construction of the coaches' meaning and their collective voice throughout the study, the interviewees were progressively given opportunities to review the researchers' interpretation of the data from their interviews [36, 39].

RESULTS

BACKGROUNDS

The expert coach, Hazel, had started coaching while she was still competing in swimming. She did not compete at a national level and felt that this had helped her decide to stop competing and concentrate on coaching. Initially she coached part-time with the younger age groups and then progressed to assisting the head coach, while attending various coaching courses. She has been coaching for 17 years, developing swimmers to national level over a period of years and has been involved in coaching national squads for over 10 years. Aside from swimming, Hazel also holds an undergraduate degree in a completely unrelated discipline.

Ruth, the novice coach, was still competing at Masters level, which she felt helps her rapport with the swimmers. She was in the very early stages of development in coaching, working to a programme designed by the head coach. She had been coaching for approximately one year and during that time attended the initial level coaching course. She wanted to attend more coaching courses and develop her coaching skills and techniques. Educationally, Ruth had attended college, completing a Diploma course in Sport Science.

There were a number of key findings highlighting differences between the two coaches, especially with reference to their experiences of coach education courses and their associated usefulness. These differences are discussed below and encompass the value placed on coach education experiences, the significance of learning experiences and the construction of an inter-relating knowledge base relevant to coaching.

VALUE OF NGB COURSES

Hazel (expert) has not attended a coach education course for at least 6 years, as she feels that they are not relevant to her current coaching role. She does, however, feel that:

> "*Coach education courses are valuable, especially at the initial stages. I would recommend all coaches start with them, but they also need to know they have to contribute to their own learning – make it work for them. Perhaps they should be told this up front"*

At her present level of experience, 17 years coaching swimming, she has a differing viewpoint, stating *"I have a very busy schedule, training, competition and work – I do not feel that coach education courses are useful enough to make time for"*. Ruth (novice) has the opposite opinion, as she found her level 1 course very informative. She felt that she gained a lot of knowledge and the course helped her to understand the mechanics of the strokes as well as the ways to organise a session. She thought that it helped her to structure practice and gain control of the swimmers, declaring *"each session follows a plan now, that makes it easier to keep order in the lane and I know that helps me remember what I've done in the last session."*

She had just recently completed the course and was still full of enthusiasm regarding the coach certification process, saying: *"I want to go on other courses – my Level 2 is next – that will make me a much better coach"*. When asked in what ways she thought the level 2 course would advance her development as a coach, Ruth replied: "*Well, it means I have another qualification – that's important because I'll be able to do more with my swimmers and I'll know more."*

Ruth did not think that she needed to address any specific issues within her coaching practice and considered the developmental process to equate to a simple linear process of collecting awards, saying "*Well, I know what I'm doing now and if I need to do anything else I'll go on another course. I think that as you get more coaching qualifications, you learn how to be a better coach, it's as simple as that."* It appeared that the two coaches have diametrically opposing views of the value of coach education in their current practice. Hazel did reflect on the value of her coach education courses in the initial stages of her development and Ruth was very enthusiastic and accepting of the worth of her experiences.

NGB COURSE CONTENT

When questioned regarding content of NGB courses, Hazel (expert) was of the opinion that she thought they were useful at the time but now really did not apply to her individual coaching circumstances and environment, saying:

> *"The information presented seemed fine and I had no problems with it at the time – just when I went back to coaching at home, it just didn't seem to fit. It didn't seem as easy or straightforward as it had done on the course. It took ages before I saw the relevance of what they were saying and how I could use it"*

She continued to add that many of the NGB courses presented technical information that she was familiar with and thus reinforced her belief that she was coaching the correct techniques with her swimmers. Looking back, she felt that she did not gain additional knowledge from these courses other than validation of her coaching of swimming technique. The scientific information presented dealt with training theory, especially lactate testing and training, in

what she felt to be a very prescriptive manner.

Hazel reflected that at the time she undertook her initial coaching courses she did not realise how little they equipped her for her current role; for example, situations that she has encountered in her coaching, dealing with individual swimmers' needs, coping with poor results in competition and individualizing programmes, were not covered. She considered *"the courses looked at the science of swimming, whereas now I'm more of a counselor or a psychologist or even an agony aunt in some cases"*. She believes that she has been self-reliant for a considerable number of years.

As mentioned previously, Hazel had not attended a coach education course for some years and when asked what topics would benefit her, she replied:

> "*I'm not sure – looking back, the level that some were presented at was laughable but things may have changed now. I know that there has been a big push to develop awards. I'm not sure I want to take that risk.*"

Ruth (novice) was very enthusiastic about the information that she acquired on her course and how she had used all of it immediately when she got back to her club. She stated: *"Actually I'm still using some of the session plans that I got there."* When asked if she had changed or adapted any of this, she questioned why she would have done this, saying: *"as they were such good sessions and I know exactly what comes next now"*.

When questioned on her approach to learning and incorporating new information into her session, Ruth believed that referring to her course material and her book on coaching swimming would provide the answers she sought. She was still not happy asking other, more experienced coaches at her club for guidance, stating:

> *"I don't like them to think I don't know things. I want to show them how good I am, how much I've learned and how my swimmers are improving. I don't want to be bothering them all the time."*

Both these coaches have opposing views of the appropriateness and usefulness of the course content. This could be related to the level of acceptance and reflection of each coach, perhaps developed by Hazel over a longer period of years.

OTHER LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Hazel's memory of her initial coaching experience was one of constantly asking questions such as why, remembering: *'I must have driven the other club coaches to distraction – asking why all the time'*. Now as head coach, Hazel finds herself relying on a network of coaches as a mutual support network, still feeling the need to ask questions. This has developed over a number of years, mostly from speaking to coaches at competitions, going for coffee during the breaks and gradually leading to a forum where each coach feels comfortable discussing training schedules, technical issues and problems with individual swimmers, environment and support. She considered:

> *"I feel comfortable talking to these coaches, we all share our difficulties and also solutions. I wouldn't feel happy doing that with every coach though – there are some I just couldn't share this level of doubt with. I think that for this to work, you have to respect and trust each other – that comes with time."*

She found this especially helpful when she was making the transition from an age-group coach to the head coach, adding *"the pressure of being the coach that everyone comes to, takes away the safety net. It's hard, especially at the start, to have all the answers."* She has continued to make use of this informal network, but now this is not confined to competitions; the coaches concerned feel comfortable phoning each other to discuss specific issues. This also highlights Hazel's level of autonomy, her willingness and drive to find answers to coaching challenges as well as her level of self-determination and self-regulation. She considered that:

> *"I have experienced lots of different situations and solved some of my problems – perhaps not always in the best way. I think about issues more now, perhaps because I know that it (coaching) is complex – what worked in one situation doesn't always work in another. People are involved – young people and they are complicated and very different."*

Ruth enjoyed mixing with other coaches on her Level 1 course, feeling that they were at a similar stage of their development and experiencing similar difficulties. Interestingly enough it appears that the coaches attending this course discussed difficulties and problems, but did not actually try to find solutions or call upon the expertise of the course instructor to ask for guidance. Ruth (novice) felt:

> *"I didn't want to ask the tutor – he may think I don't know the answers, so I don't understand. That means I'm not a good coach, anyway the others didn't understand either so why should I be the one to ask."*

Although Ruth stated that she valued her NGB courses and makes use of the course content, she apparently is unwilling to ask questions. It is unlikely that she will be able to make full use of the information presented and use it to construct new knowledge to help her develop if she continues with this approach. Perhaps a realisation that the practice of coaching is often haphazard and ill-structured would help Ruth's future development

Ruth would not consider asking any of the other coaches in the club for help, even though they have more experience than she does. She considers that would be admitting that she could not handle situations – the sign of a bad coach (in her opinion). Ruth thinks that she does not need to spend time gaining both knowledge and experience as she has attended a coach education course and believes that this is all she needs. She feels that because she was a competitive swimmer and still competes in Masters competitions that she has access to all the information she needs, stating:

> *"I've swum all my life, I still swim. I know all the techniques because I swim the IM. I've got my Level 1 and some good session plans, I like working with the kids and they like me – that's important. Maybe when I take the next squad I might need to know more, but I'll do my Level 2 before that."*

Ruth's acceptance of her limited coaching knowledge and apparent unwillingness to ask for help confirms her insecurities about coaching. This is not unexpected in a novice coach with limited practical experience but when asked if there were any learning opportunities that she felt would help, she stated: "*I am going to do my Level 2. I just need a bit of practice."* When questioned about what she needed to practice, she thought: "*I don't know, but I'm sure I'll*

find out on my next course. I don't think anything else would be any use."

This demonstrates the passiveness of Ruth as a coach at this stage of her development. She does not display any of the independent, self-directed qualities ascribed to Hazel. At this stage, Ruth is not learning from either her coach education experiences or her subsequent practice, but coaching in a rote manner. Whether or not she develops the self-determination displayed by Hazel is dependent upon her questioning her coaching actions and making an effort to learn from a variety of available sources.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the construction of knowledge and subsequent practical application by two female swimming coaches. These two coaches had very different backgrounds and outlooks on their coaching practice and the methods by which they accumulated and utlised their knowledge and experiences. Many of these differences may be a result of their approach to situations, their length of time in the sport of swimming, or a combination of both.

Expert coaches, such as Hazel, apparently gain more from experiences, both explicitly and tacitly, than novices, consistent with the development of expertise in other domains which has been confirmed by the two coaches in the current study [42, 43]. Issues of learning are generally based on the assumption that it is an individual process, separated from 'the real world', which apparently is the coach education model that both coaches in this study have experienced. This concept of situated learning, which recognises the contextualisation of practice, is considered central to coaching according to both Sullivan [44] and Nelson et al. [23]. In the present study, Hazel has established her own support network, consisting of coaches with similar backgrounds, coaching contexts, experiences and problems to be resolved. This has occurred over a period of years, mainly through both chance and opportunity, but has not been formalised or endorsed by any regulatory body. This supports the findings of Gilbert and Trudel [40], where coaches interacted to construct solutions to coaching problems. However, Hazel's reflections contradict Culver and Trudel [41] as there is no facilitator involved and the ad hoc nature of meeting is seen as a positive aspect in this learning environment

Conversely, Ruth has demonstrated insecurities about asking questions both in the coach education and club context. Perhaps this key concept of questioning should be introduced at coach education courses in the form of group-work, for example, where coaches are encouraged to solve coaching problems in groups to encourage discussion [46]. If questioning could be reinforced at an early stage and shown to be a developmental coaching tool, the insecurities demonstrated by Ruth could be overcome. A questioning approach has long been identified as a skill demonstrated by expert coaches [47], albeit it asking questions of their athletes. More recent research has suggested that although North American research has championed the use of questioning, UK coaches still have not adopted this approach [48]. In order to make coaches more receptive to learning experiences, self-determination should be encouraged, promoted, facilitated and developed within courses.

Perhaps NGB qualifications should not be expected to provide all the answers, but to provide a framework within which coaches can continue to develop. From the cases illustrated above, it would appear that they are of more importance in the early stages of development as a coach. Certainly in the case of the expert coach, Hazel, the view expressed is the irrelevance of the NGB course content throughout the levels to her current role. Delivery of coach education programmes tends to be very focused in nature, concentrating on sport-specific content. This approach may encourage a narrow perspective from the

coach, who is either unable or unwilling to see the bigger picture. If expert coaches are to be developed, a longer-term developmental pathway needs to be encouraged by all NGBs and coaching organizations. This needs to include more than the technical skills approach and examine some of the 'softer skills', such as delivery approaches and contextualisation for individuals, as well as developing self-determination skills.

Hazel was unaware of the importance of her own enquiring character in her development and how this has enabled her to construct and make sense of her experiences, both directly related to coaching and outwith sport in general. Traditionally, coach education courses have operated within a formal structure, which Ruth, at this stage of her coaching development, appeared to welcome. Perhaps Ruth will develop the ability to question, as her role as a swimming coach progresses, but Hazel seemed to ask questions throughout her career as a coach. This could be related to their educational experiences as well as their own motivations to develop and find their own answers. This suggests that moving along the coach development continuum is dependent on a continual quest for knowledge and solutions to problems as exemplified by Hazel.

A number of researchers; e.g., Cushion, [48], Lyle, [49], Gilbert and Trudel [50] have identified coaching as a complex activity. If this is the case, coaches must be motivated to engage and develop in such a complex and challenging area? From the reported experiences above, it seems that the coaches may have to provide the impetus for their own development. In the case of Hazel, this appears to have been ongoing over a number of years, suggesting a long-term approach to coaching development is as necessary as a long-term approach to athlete development. Schempp [51] suggests that expert coaches often rely on themselves during the development of expertise but as the background of coaches differs significantly, the extent to which they can develop would also differ. The ability to view coaching practice from a variety of perspectives appears to be an important aspect for development.

CONCLUSION

Young and enthusiastic coaches, such as Ruth, should be encouraged to consider coaching within a wider construct of learning. The initial swimming course raised her levels of confidence and encouraged her to believe that undertaking more qualifications will improve her coaching effectiveness. She did not feel challenged by the course, but found it reinforced her existing practice and beliefs. Evidently, she currently lacks the questioning approach of Hazel and does not appear able or willing at this stage to examine her coaching practice more deeply. This study lends some support to Galvin and Ledger's [52] findings that coaches have difficulty applying knowledge gained from coach education courses to their coaching environment. Many situations (e.g., skill practices and adaptations) need a well-developed knowledge base and an understanding of how to contextualise them appropriately before they can be effective. Coaches should be introduced to wider educational concepts of knowledge development, problem-based learning, decision-making and reflective practice early in their coaching career, rather than merely skills and techniques of the specific sport. For example, during a practice session Ruth may perform a standard demonstration of a stroke to assist the swimmers. If this does not appear to work, she repeats the demonstration, as she has no other methods of presenting the information. Hazel, on the other hand, has a number of different options in her repertoire and tries to understand why the swimmer is having the difficulty. Unlike Ruth, Hazel views this as a failing of her coaching practice rather than a failing of the swimmer.

This study only considered the views of two coaches, in single case studies. Therefore the findings may not be applicable or generalisable to all sports and contexts. However, it does

serve to highlight differences between expert and novice coaches, as would be expected. It also identifies an enriched perspective of a novice and expert in sport whereas many expert/novice studies have used more quantitative measures, for example, observation and survey [8, 20, 27, 53]. This perspective may provide further information regarding the knowledge base and subsequent practical application of that knowledge by differing levels of coaches. From the results of this study, Hazel demonstrates many of the characteristics of expertise, but presently insufficient information exists to make a similar comparison with Ruth. More work needs to be undertaken to understand the stages of development between novice and expert, especially with the aim of making the process more explicit, and self-determined, therefore easier for coaches to achieve.

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