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Article

Learning from the Past; a Freirean Analysis of FA Coach Education since 1967.

Abstract

Formal coach education has been described as an activity which promotes conformity from course attendees. To date, however, few studies have looked at how coach education has been socially constructed over time. The present study addresses this gap and provides a Freirean account of English Football Association (FA) coach education since 1967. Specifically, this study focuses on coach education in the participation domain (grassroots football) where many participants first experience football. Data were collected through an analysis of forty-seven documents including coaching materials and FA policies. In addition, an oral history of sixteen participants whom had all experienced FA coach education were conducted. This paper presents five findings which explain the development of pedagogy over time. The findings illustrate a move away from oppressive, dogmatic pedagogical methods *towards* a more liberating form of coach education policy. For example, FA formal coach education policy now embraces in-situ methods to situate learning in the lives of coaches. The paper supports the trajectory towards liberation by advocating for more humility and critical-consciousness between tutors and coaches, thus rejecting the concept of *banking* education. In doing so the paper makes three novel contributions by; (1) describing the development of FA coach education over time; (2) introducing a Freirean theoretical perspective to coach education research; and (3) prompting course tutors to consider how they can enhance their practice to be more liberating. These lessons may benefit educators both in football and other contexts.

Keywords: Coach Education, Pedagogy, Paulo Freire, Oppression, Liberation, Humility, Football.

Introduction

Circa 30,000 individuals per annum, participate in grassroots coach education that is organised by The English Football Association (FA). Thus, although the FA may not be widely recognised as an education provider, it nonetheless engages with a significant number of learners. The rationale for this educational activity is that the FA see coach education as a mechanism to improve coaching practice (Allison, Abraham, & Cale, 2016). Subsequently, it is hypothesised that improved coaching practice will lead to increased and sustained positive playing participation. To achieve this aim, the FA implement a variety of learning methods, including formal (e.g. FA level 1 course), informal (e.g. watching peer coaches' practice) and non-formal (e.g. mentoring) education (Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2006). Formal FA coach education, the focus of this paper, is typically delivered over a series of a short contact sessions, at a centralised local venue. Such courses include practical and classroom-based sessions led by FA tutors. During practical sessions, learners (i.e. coaches), are often asked to participate as both coaches and players.

Formal coach education has been subject to much academic scrutiny with previous courses described as decontextualized (i.e. divorced from the coaches own coaching context), inadequate (i.e. failing to meet learners' needs), and bureaucratic (Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009; Sawiuk, Taylor, & Groom, 2016). Furthermore, Chesterfield, Potrac, and Jones (2010) state coaches merely abide by strict rules on courses to gain certification. While studies have been critical of formal coach education, designing and subsequently delivering formal coach education is nonetheless a complex and challenging process (Nelson et al., 2006). Indeed, formal coach education courses are neither static nor uniform, but are socially constructed and subject to a myriad of economic and political influences (Griffiths, Armour, & Cushion, 2018). Research has, however, rarely accounted for the changing nature of coach

education policy within National Governing Bodies (NGBs). Indeed, evaluations (e.g. Townsend & Cushion's (2017) critical analysis of cricket coach education) have tended to discuss single, episodic courses as opposed to considering how courses develop over time. To build on this research, we need to consider how past policy and practices influence the learning experiences of today's football coaches (Day & Carpenter, 2015). For example, Paquette and Trudel (2018) studied golf coach education and concluded that reflecting on previous coach education programmes helps course designers to appreciate previous successes and failures. Indeed, understanding past courses in their social and economic context can potentially elucidate the social construction of today's courses. At present however, there are no longitudinal accounts that analyse the development of FA courses, materials and policies. Thus, to learn lessons that inform future courses, there is a need to critically analyse the pedagogical policy and practices across the history of FA coach education.

To learn lessons from the past, this study analyses FA coach education for grassroots coaches (Level 1 and 2 courses) from 1967 to the present. To consider English football prior to 1967 readers should consult the work of Taylor (2008). In this text, English football is considered in a chronological fashion. The influence of the English schooling system on football, the introduction of the FA (as an authoritative body) in 1863 and the booming period of football post war are described. However, in 1967 the seminal text, 'FA Guide to Teaching and Coaching' (Wade, 1967), was published. This text heralded a new emphasis on coach education. Thus, 1967 is an apt time to begin this analysis. Moreover, grassroots coaching is an important domain to study because many participants first experience football or indeed coaching in this context (Lyle & Cushion, 2016). The study will also consider political, cultural and societal influences that have impacted FA coach education. To this end this article proceeds by presenting a theoretical perspective (Freirean pedagogy).

Paulo Freire and Coach Education

Learning, such as that occurring through coach education, should not be viewed in an a priori fashion (Cushion, Griffiths, & Armour, 2017). Instead, coach education should be considered as a complex process, with social, cultural and political factors that influence what and how coaches learn. From this perspective, a corpus of papers have advocated that coach education should utilise constructivist (Douglas & Carless, 2008), social constructivist (Townsend & Cushion, 2017; Stodter & Cushion, 2014) and humanist perspectives (Nelson, Cushion, Potrac, & Groom, 2014) to engage coaches as part of their own learning process. The work of Freire, which is introduced herein, relates to these perspectives and has potential to inform coach education (Nelson, Potrac, Groom, & Maskrey, 2016). Researchers within sports development and peace have used Freire's principles to inform social change (Spaaij, Oxford, & Jeanes, 2016) and to encourage the sharing of power and critical-consciousness amongst trainers and trainees (Wright, Jacobs, Ressler, & Jung, 2016). Similarly, Freire's work has been used within physical education to examine how critical pedagogy is conceptualised and practiced by educators (Luguetti & Oliver, 2019). That said Freirean theory has rarely been considered within coach education (except Nelson et al., (2016), and thus this study provides an original contribution by empirically connecting Freirean theory with coaching research.

The relevance of Freire's work to coach education can be traced to his 1973 seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Within this text, Freire accounts for how he pragmatically used literacy as a tool to liberate people in Brazil. Influenced by Marx, Freire promoted education practices, which are dialogical, situated and empowering, as a means for working class individuals to be liberated from oppressive social contexts. Oppression can be defined as an act that unjustly uses force or authority to supress and remove the voice of others. In contrast, liberation, is a political concept, which rallied against institutions that imposed oppressive

conditions on individuals. Taking note of Dewey's (1897) beliefs around intrapersonal growth through experiential learning, Freire moved away from the 'often witnessed' banking education concept. Specifically, Freire (1973) dismissed the view of 'filling empty vessels' as a means of education and advocated for shared critical-consciousness and collaborative dialogue as a means of emancipating students. Freire referred to this type of education as problem-posing education. In moving towards such an approach, liberation is conceived as the sharing of power with all actors within society. Thus, Freire's early work was not concerned with coach education specifically, but is an important critical assessment of how powerful social influences can suppress individual agency, and how education can restore this agency. Freire's concepts can manifest through revising the roles of the teacher (e.g. course tutor) and student (e.g. coach) to shared roles (i.e. teacher-student, and student-teacher).

Freire (1998) suggests a series of acquired attributes are necessary to enable the teacher-student (tutor/coach) to ensure education liberates rather than oppresses learners. These attributes include but are not restricted to; humility, courage, decisiveness and tolerance (Nelson, et al, 2016). Humility and courage appear as two interesting areas that course tutors may need to consider. Humility argues that; 'no one person knows all and therefore no one person is ignorant of everything' (Freire, 2005, pg. 72). Courage, for Freire, means to metaphorically fight any fears when considering the power dynamics between coaches and tutors on courses. Previous studies of formal coach education (e.g. Piggott, 2015) suggest that humility and courage have been absent, because some tutors are seen as knowledge holders and the student is sometimes seen as an inactive member of the process whose voice is suppressed. This further relates to power struggles discussed in coach education literature where it has been reported that some coaches neglect to contest and challenge tutors for fear of not achieving certification (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003). Theoretically, such coaches could be construed as

oppressed and therefore Freire's work is an appropriate theoretical framework. That said, we do not draw equivalency between the challenges facing English football coaches and the persecuted individuals in Brazil who are described as oppressed by Freire.

In sum, a Freirean lens sees the role of education as a means to empower individuals within their own society. Education, and in turn coach education, should be emancipatory. Coaches should have control over their own personalised learning, within a context that is relatable to them, and where dialogue is consistent. This approach refutes the typical transfer of knowledge from tutor to coach but instead encourages tutors to provide coaches with voice, opportunity, and freedom to construct their own knowledge. This change in approach would see existing structures challenged by liberating against dogmatism (e.g. rigid, tutor-focused approaches). Indeed, Freire (1973), may advocate both agents becoming jointly responsible in the praxis of personal growth where not one person holds a greater share of power than the other. To that end, Freire expects openness from tutors to enable skills relevant to the lives of learners to be acquired. Openness, as an act, would encourage learners to individually consider what it means to be a critical citizen (Giroux, 2010). This would encourage learners to think beyond what they have been told. Instead learners would reflect upon history, consider personal biography, and imagine their future through dialogue with others. In formal coach education, this would suggest that tutors should facilitate opportunities for coaches to reflect upon their own practice and prioritise what coaches want to achieve from the course.

Critically, it is important to note that Freire discusses the 'problem' with openness suggesting that many misinterpret its meaning. Openness should not be considered as allowing all information that is presented to be accepted. Rather, openness is accompanied by a shared critical-consciousness, and thus is a means to critically embrace change and co-construction of

learning (Roberts, 2016). Within formal coach education, this would suggest that once coaches have identified their own priorities and tutors have shared course curricula, both coaches and tutors should work cohesively towards agreed aims. For Freire this change in approach would enable coaches to be more critical on course, as opposed to simply accepting predetermined information.

Methods

An interpretivist and subjectivist philosophy (Sparkes & Smith, 2013) were adopted to examine historical FA grassroots coach education. This was appropriate because presenting a realist account would not be viable, nor desirable given how coach education is experienced subjectively within given contexts (Stodter & Cushion, 2014; 2017). Rather, the interpretivist approach undertaken allows for narrative accounts to be considered from course tutors who have experienced coach education. To explore these experiences, two methods (document analysis and oral history) were used over a twelve-month period.

Data Collection – Document Analysis

Document analysis enables printed social resources, which influence future practice and policy, to be considered (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997). Forty-seven documents, totalling in excess of 3000 pages (including; policy documents, course materials, published FA books, and course videos/DVD's) were collected (Appendix 1). Additionally, extracts from *FA minutes* (1967-1972), and *FA news* (1967-1974) were collated and reviewed at the National Football Museum. Nineteen editions (1,188 pages) from seven volumes of the *FA insight magazine* (1997 - 2007) were also analysed. All selected artefacts discussed aspects of FA formal coach education. The forty-seven documents were collected in keeping with the eligibility criteria;

- FA developed/approved documents (1967-2019).

- FA specific documents (from 1967 – 2019) related to FA level 1 and 2 courses or grassroots football.

- FA insight magazine because it explicitly reports on research commissioned to inform coaching practice.

Documents related to the UEFA B course (NGB level 3 formal coaching qualification) were also considered. These documents are important because the UEFA B is level 3 of 5 coaching qualifications within English football, which is the minimum qualification needed for coaching in a professional academy. Therefore, it is an important course, and the FA level 2 could be considered as a form of preparation for the UEFA B course. Documents were considered inclusive of gender, ability/disability, and specialist positions on the pitch (e.g. goalkeeping).

Data Collection – Oral History

An oral history method was justified because it aimed to address the 'hidden from history' experiences of those involved in coach education (Skillen & Osborne, 2015). To explore the 'hidden from history' experiences, sixteen participants (each assigned a participant number) were homogenously purposefully selected (Teddlie & Yu, 2007) or snowball sampled (Patton, 2002). Participants were purposefully recruited to ensure they had a minimum of one year's experience as an FA tutor/designer. The sample was subject to an eligibility criterion (Appendix 2), which included people who work/previously worked within FA coach education between 1967-2019. Participants spent much time coaching (mean: 30.3 years) and working within The FA (mean: 19.9 years). To enable a critical perspective, participants whom are male and female, from within the men's and women's game, position specific courses, disability game and varied ethnicity were included.

One-off, semi-structured, oral history interviews with the participants were undertaken to explore the initial observations from the documents collected. Interviewees were encouraged to share *their* experiences from *their* time at the FA and within football (Day, et al., 2015). The interview schedule therefore included open questions such as; When designing the courses what were your primary aims?

One interview was conducted with each participant and lasted between forty-five and one-hundred and five minutes (mean: sixty-nine minutes). Reminiscence techniques (Kovach, 1990) were used to encourage the retelling of events and personal achievements (Afonso, Serrano & Postigo, 2015). For example, documents from each decade were shown during interviews to allow participants to reflect upon their experiences. This approach somewhat addressed Skillen and Osborne's (2016) concerns of hindsight and false memory during interviews.

Data Analysis

Nowell, Norris, White and Moules' (2017) work was consulted when selecting an appropriate analysis method which included the identification of positives and negatives of using thematic analysis (e.g. theoretical flexibility). Embedding an interpretivist approach, data underwent a process of abductive thematic analysis whereby themes were initially inductively identified. This process involved adopting the six stage principles of thematic analysis (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2019). The first author collected data, became immersed within it, and composed relevant themes. The flexibility of thematic analysis enabled historical documents and interview transcripts to be analysed coherently, where codes and themes were interlinked and constantly refined.

The abductive nature of the analysis facilitated some aspects of researchers' existing academic and professional knowledge. For example, as themes were being refined the researchers' interpretation of the data throughout the coding process resonated with the work of Freire. Therefore, Freire's work influenced the analysis. The application of this theoretical lens was managed rigorously (outlined within the ethical considerations). Day and Carpenter (2015) acknowledge no researcher considering the past can view the events without a personal frame of reference, and therefore an abductive analysis was appropriate. This understanding is consistent with the relativist and interpretivist approach of this study.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the study commencing, institutional ethical approval was received. Consistent with this, some participant information has been obscured for confidentiality purposes (i.e. specific job titles). Relational skills including listening, ensuring empathy and showing sensitivity to emotional contexts were utilised throughout the data collection process (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005). Furthermore, it is important to recognise that this study was conducted with the support of the FA, who acted as a gatekeeper by enabling access to some non-publicly available documents and some participants for the interviews. The access provided by the gatekeeper (e.g. access to documents at St George's Park), does not mean that the sample is definitive nor exhaustive. Indeed, given the length of time examined, there may be documents and other narrative accounts that are relevant that we as a research team are unaware of. However, to our knowledge all documents that are relevant have been sourced. In response, internal reports that share some of the findings have been presented to the FA education department.

Rigour

A critical friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993) who understood existing coach education and coach learning literature was utilised to challenging trustworthiness and transparency. This process attempted to mitigate the researcher's own subjectivities from displacing the reflections of the participants.

To manage my (first author) subjective analysis, positionality statements were produced that acknowledge my footballing and teaching experiences. The statements challenged my assumptions during the data analysis process. For example, I reflected on my own pedagogy as I engaged with Freire's work. Indeed, the statements prompted me to read beyond Pedagogy of the Oppressed to Freire's later work. This process challenged my earlier assumption that Freire's work was wholly student led. Further ensuring credibility, transparency and trustworthiness, an audit trail (Nowell et al., 2017) and reflexive diary were recorded throughout the study. The combination of a positioning statement, reflexive diary and audit trail allowed the critical friend to challenge my conclusions effectively (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

In the study saturation was aligned with Starks and Trinidad's (2007) suggestion that enough data has been collected to elucidate the themes, and Grady's (1998) opinion that new data becomes redundant to the old once no new comments present themselves. Data saturation was therefore reached when researchers, adopting a relativist stance, no longer saw new themes in the new documents or transcriptions

Finally, when considering this study, we encourage readers to refer to the relativist and interpretivist nature of the work. This study considers the accounts of sixteen participants and forty-seven documents and therefore is not representative of every football coaches'

experience. Instead readers should use their naturalistic attitude when interpreting the findings (Smith, 2018).

Findings

This section provides a chronological discussion from 1967-2019 of the development of pedagogy within FA coach education. Five themes are displayed that describe the perceptions of interviewed participants and FA documents. Each theme is accompanied by a brief Freirean interpretation.

Theme 1: Attempting to Maintain Standards through Certification

The year after England's best performance at a world cup saw the publication of the earliest text considered within this study, *The FA Guide to Training and Coaching* (Wade, 1967). This seminal document eluded to a changing future and Wade 'began to open minds' (P4) and attempted to avoid 'stagnation and complacency' by 'provoking thought and enquiry' (pg. vii). Wade's text encouraged coaches to use games-based approaches (e.g. '3 v 3, 2 v 1') to help players understand the principles of the game (pg. 169). This text may be useful for today's coaches who wish to develop their understanding of the principles of the game with much information still appropriate today. Indeed, this would begin to address P7's concerns around today's courses where 'the technical and tactical detail (of courses) has been diluted'. Wade's text however, portrays football as a male dominated game by not using female pronouns, and using few neutral analogies. Similarly, one participant (number obscured for confidentiality) described how the 'first time there was another female on my course was the first part of the A Licence'. This suggests that on a minimum of three prior courses (i.e. 'Junior Team Manager,

FA level 2 and UEFA B' courses) this participant was the only female coach. Such language and lack of female representation is not appropriate to an inclusive game.

Within abstracts of Wade's text, 'must' and 'should' are the presiding verbs. Much of this terminology is consistent with the cultural norms of the era where public perceptions of coaching during this time were not particularly collaborative (Day, et al., 2015) and perhaps reflects the military background of many educators of this era. In practice, participants in the present study experienced repetition and reinforcement techniques on coach education courses during this time. Participants reported that courses had a '30% pass rate' and tutors were 'looking to fail you' (P1). In response coaches sought to conform to the educator's preferred behaviours to pass the course;

> Some of the behavioural mannerisms of the candidates mirrored the behaviours of the coaches. In effect, you can't fail yourself. Stop, stand still, do some work, step back. You dare fail me because you've just shown me how to do it. (P1)

P1 continued and explained how 'unwritten rules' existed in what was perceived as a 'closed shop' environment (Piggott, 2015). This depicts tutors as powerful gatekeepers who controlled certification. The power imbalance between course tutors and coaches bred conformity as no candidate 'wanted to cause waves or say to the tutor no, you're wrong there' (P4). The participants in this study suggested these approaches were necessary to ensure that candidates met certification standards. Some participants, when retrospectively recounting their experiences, argued that the pedagogical approach of courses was influenced by the notion of qualification prestige and therefore courses needed to be difficult to pass. To this end, P2 explained how 'the Director of Coaching had to watch your final assessment' and P4

commented that 'everybody wanted (to pass) it, it was highly sought-after'. The prestige and low pass rates of courses were evidenced in 'FA News' and 'FA minutes', which actually reported the names of those who passed courses.

A Freirean Interpretation

For us as researchers, this era could be characterised as a time where tutors imposed themselves upon the coach through oppressive tactics (certification, routine). This may have been in a bid to improve coaching standards at a time coaching was held 'in low regard' (Day & Carpenter, 2015). Nonetheless, the language in coach materials of this time suggests that coaches should conform to the concepts of tutors (e.g. 'must' and 'should'). Similarly, participants who had experiences of this education suggested that there was limited authentic dialogue between tutors and coaches. For Freire, dialogue is an activity that genuinely seeks to understand and appreciate the voice of fellow humans and is essential to a liberating view of education. In contrast, the participants in this study who experienced this era, described being reluctant to challenge tutors or engage in meaningful dialogue. In the absence of authentic dialogue, some coaches during this era may have experienced coach education as oppressive.

Theme 2: Instrumental Assessment of Learning

'In the 1980s, data showed football participation and people going to watch football were at their lowest' (P14). It was a time characterised by football hooliganism, national recession and unemployment (Taylor, 1984). P9 describes 'three distinct memories' of coach education courses. These memories included; 'running around a lot *(routines)* … how well you can almost replicate the tutors when it's your turn *(rules)* and … the need to demonstrate practical skills *(regulations)*'. These three memories are not directly referenceable within the course

curriculum, yet tutors made it explicit that 'If you don't do it this way, you won't get the qualification' (P9). This is reminiscent of Jackson's (1990) hidden curriculum and the 3R's concept; rules, routines and regulations. Continuing, P9 described this era of coach education as the 'bad old days'. P9 even described a scenario, when they were penalised for not demonstrating techniques during assessments even when severely injured.

P7 also emphasised the demanding nature of the 1980's courses and explained how courses felt like a 'marathon', whilst P16 described them as 'tough'. At this time, practical assessments were perceived to be daunting, and candidates knew 'on your final session, you had to get As and Bs' (P7), and 'you had to work for it' (P5).

> psychologically, to be on the pitches every morning involved in all the practices, then you've got your seminar sessions on top plus your evening sessions. It was physically and mentally really demanding. (P7)

A change in pedagogical activity was also witnessed at this time, because group discussions and case studies were reported by participants to be more common practice. However, P6 commented that such activities 'didn't actually get to the nuts and bolts of what coaches … really needed'. P6 continued, suggesting a large amount of tutor control was still embedded throughout the course delivery and further hinted at a hidden curriculum; 'the coach must have your socks pulled up *to pass*. It sounds prehistoric now'. Indeed, such comments, further describe the power dynamic between the course tutor and coach;

> the tutor at the front held all the power … There's lots of evidence of tutors saying, if you don't do it this way, you won't get the qualification… I'm the assessor, not a person

here to help you get better… So, very tutor dominated … very much that these are the right answers that you need to pass. (P9)

When reminiscing about their time as a candidate on FA courses, and working within the FA, P14 suggested that 'there wasn't much change in the Prelim and the Full Badge, between '78 and '96' and questioned the previous pedagogical approach used; 'Did it finish up being rather authoritarian?', concluding it 'probably' was (P14). This sentiment was supported by P2 who explained tutors 'were fairly dictatorial' (P2) and 'basically saying they were the boss' (P12). This is also seen in documents which were prescriptive (e.g. 'coaching 'should' be directed towards factors which the players 'must' perform' (Hughes, 1980, pg. 24). Readers are not provided with the opportunity to interpret meaning but instead are told how to approach every situation. For example, how many players should be in a 'wall' during a freekick (Hughes. 1980, pg. 206).

Beyond the pedagogy, this era also included an early attempt to inform coach education by using research data. Most notably, performance analysis of 109 matches between 1966 and 1986 led to the controversial development of Charles Hughes' Winning Formula (1990). This book has mixed interpretations with some viewing it as a useful insight into goal scoring via a low number of passes (P14), whereas others considered it as an overly prescriptive method of playing (P4). During this era English football became synonymous with the long ball game (P4) and this approach was advocated through explicit coach education materials. For example, The Winning Formula (1990, pg. 172) explains the 'cold light of fact' of how to win football matches. The text continues, explaining that 'as a matter of fact, patient possession football does not produce the goals that win football matches'. This statement could be seen to actively

discourage readers from playing possession-based football without providing opportunities for them to consider it themselves.

A Freirean Interpretation

On courses in the 80s, participants reported physically tough and mentally draining experiences that ultimately resulted in conforming to tutor expectations. For example, P6, P7, P9, and P12 reported that coaches copied the behaviours displayed by tutors to gain certification (e.g. 'they put on sessions, you had to copy… If you didn't, you would have failed' P12). These experiences are relevant to Freire's concept of banking education, where knowledge is perceived as a gift bestowed to others. The banking concept is further evidenced during this era because conformity was ensured through written exams and criterion referenced practical assessments. In sum, the coach education materials and the experiences reported suggest that some coaches were seen as subjects to be physically and mentally trained and tested. This could be construed as oppressive. For Freire, such a situation is the antithesis of liberating. Rather tutors should humbly see learners as active counterparts.

Theme 3: An Ontological Shift from the Game to the Person

In 1993, the FA took over control of the women's game and subsequently the language in FA *policy* indicated more inclusivity than previously witnessed (e.g. Insight magazine). This however, does not mean that *practice* was, or is more inclusive, and readers should consider the work of Williams (2019) to further explore this topic. Two of the most influential coach education policy documents, introduced during this era were; 1) A New Generation of Courses (1996); and 2) the Charter for Quality (1997). The Charter for Quality had the potential to have a significant impact on how football coaches think and deliver (Howie & Allison, 2016). The

charter tried to address social and psychological needs of players. This shift towards social needs is consistent with the UK Government's report, Sport: Raising the Game (DoNH, 1995), which advocated personal development through youth sport participation. The FA's efforts to move towards supporting the learner (player) were further recognised when Craig Simmons developed the four-corner model. According to P1 this model was supported by the international work of Balyi (2001) that enabled a clear multidimensional view of football coaching to be established. P1 explained 'The FA brought Istvan Balyi in as a consultant'. The four-corner model encourages coaches to holistically[1] develop players by improving their technical, physical, psychological and social skills. P6 commented; 'the socialisation of our children is so important that we're going to put it (four-corner model) front and centre'. The four-corner model now remains a central feature within FA coach education today. P3 added; 'it's brilliant, the four-corner model, because it gets coaches thinking about the holistic view with the players'.

The FA learning department was developed in 2002 to provide education for; 'coaching, medical, referees, child protection, ethics' (P14). Documents such as; 'The FA Out of School Hours Learning programme' (2000) also emphasised learning by providing coaches with 'help', 'tips' and 'support'. However, P8 still felt that courses were 'very rigid' and that practicing tutors still approached the course with a mentality that sought conformity. P10 described 'a bandwidth of what is accepted, and you need to deliver it, show that you can coach in this way, whatever detail we give you, (repeat that) to pass that test'. P8 supported this perception and explained that they felt the underlying messages were 'this is our interpretation of football and you need to know that'. The comments from P10 and P8 show the FA's attempt

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[1] See Kidman (2010) for further discussion of what this entails.

to change were slow when cascaded to tutors during the early 2000's. It is, perhaps inevitable that a change of policy would be challenging given the previous approaches to coach education from 1967 to this point.

A Freirean Interpretation

Three key changes occurred in FA coach education practice during this time; 1) the four-corner model recognised psychological and social attributes of individuals; 2) FA learning supported a range of roles e.g. referees; and 3) a more inclusive approach to female coaches was evident in documents. From a Freirean perspective, these are positive developments because it evidences a recognition that learners are complex and have their own needs, roles and social contexts. This understanding is consistent with Freire's critical-consciousness concept which argues that education should involve a shared understanding of perceptions between teachers and learners. Such understanding can only occur when learners are included in education processes through consciousness raising activities such as authentic dialogue. Additionally, tutors need to be humbly aware of their own role and be open to input from learners. Thus, inclusive coach education is a key aspect of liberating education. That said, as P10 and P8 explain, these developments were not universal nor quick to come to fruition. In particular, the inclusion of women coaches remains a challenge today and is an area for continuing research (Williams, 2019), as are the experiences of ethnic minority and disabled coaches.

Theme 4: New Content Affecting Candidate Learning

Learning from the past is imperative when seeking progressive change. This is the rationale for this study, and a point that P14 made when considering their time working within FA coach education;

The failing of the old FA Prelim was that you could go on a course on a Monday and leave on a Friday and you were a Prelim coach. The changes split up training and assessment, built in practice, so you had to go away and complete a portfolio. It also had some more rounded aspects of involvement, understanding how people learn.

P14 described the development and rebranding of FA courses from the Prelim and Full Badge to a level system (level 1, 2, etc.) in the early 2000's. Participants within this study discussed how these changes may have been influenced by the introduction of the National Vocational Qualification's (NVQ's). The NVQ's developed in the 1980's, were part of a government strategy to raise the standard of education courses, which met the needs of industry (Sims & Golden, 1998). According to P1, the FA's decision to align with the framework in the 1990's may have been driven by financial motives, as they stated 'income, income, income' was a concern. However, delivering more courses provided more opportunities for coaches to become qualified. The introduction of the NVQ's also applied a minimum standards framework against the FA's coaching qualifications. Therefore, courses were more accessible and were described as 'phenomenally successful' (P14). This era also saw 'mini soccer introduced' at a time where 'statistics from Sport England suggested that less than 1% of all youth teams in the country had a qualified coach at any level' (P5).

Several years after the introduction of level-based qualification, the FA Youth Award (FAYA) and its accompanying modules were also introduced within FA formal coach education. P7 described the introduction of the FAYA 'as a breath of fresh air'. These youth modules enabled coaches to experience a programme different to previous courses as assessment was now optional. This change to FA coach education, brought an increase in the amount of games-

based activities included within the course curriculum. This 'positive step' (P1 and P2) saw the 'crux of the stop, stand still' generation challenged with coaches now encouraged to 'help the players to solve it for themselves' (P2). This approach is consistent with a problem-based learning (PBL) concept previously evident in Wade's (1967) text but had been removed in the following eras. Indeed, the FAYA encouraged coaches and tutors to embrace a pedagogy, which used representative case-study scenarios. Similarly, participants reported that tutors sought to challenge coaches on courses by using question and answer approaches rather than tutor led instruction.

A Freirean Interpretation

The description provided by participants (particularly, P1, P2 and P14) explained how FA level 1 and 2 courses during this time demonstrated a move towards a focus on learning, rather than training. For example, FA courses were influenced by the NVQ framework, which embraced learning objectives. Additionally, the development of the FAYA somewhat aligns with Freire's concept of problem-posing education where tutors provide opportunities for coaches to engage in dialogue on courses. This example can be seen through the FA's decision to make assessment optional and therefore realigned the qualifications focus away from certification and towards learning. Freire described how education in this manner allows learners to critically analyse the way they exist in the world. For example; Freire described how other approaches see humans as spectators in the world, whereas a problem-posing approach embraces humans as part of the world. This explanation of problem-posing education relates to how FA coach education at this time attempted to enable coaches on courses to reflect and contextualise their coaching practice through case studies and questions. That said, during this era learning objectives were still centrally designed.

Theme 5: Pedagogy for Learning - an Attempt to Liberate

Over the last decade the FA have implemented a set of playing and coaching principles that aim to drive the development of England's national football teams. This approach branded the England DNA (The FA, 2019) sought to give an identity to English national sides. Now this identity is discussed on coaching courses by tutors to encourage coaches to embrace their own coaching principles. However, potential exists for this DNA to be prescriptive and limit critical discussion and the voice of learners. This potential arises from the delivery of the DNA principles on courses which were, in the opinion of P6, 'mis-sold initially, that you need to follow the DNA'. Should this 'mis-selling' occur then the DNA may become a policy which imposes practices on coaches and seeks conformity (e.g. ball rolling time), rather than prompting coaches to critically reflect and consider their own philosophy and practice. That said, in recent times, the FA level 1 and 2 courses have moved away from the didactic methods witnessed previously by P4, P2, P9 and moved *somewhat* more 'liberally' in their approach (P3). For example, a conscious decision was made to employ more education personnel (staff with backgrounds rooted within teaching) to deliver courses. According to P6 this change within FA education (2016), was necessary to develop grassroots coach education. Specifically, P6 commented; 'the whole thing needed a complete refresh, it needed a complete change, there finally seemed to be a realism that we were not meeting the needs of coaches'.

In response, FA coach education now espouse a social constructivist pedagogy, that more readily embraces the lived experiences and voices of coaches (Blinded, in press). When describing the introduction of this social constructivist approach, P8 claimed the FA now 'understand a lot more about learning', with courses now attempting to provide a 'more positive experience' (P9). P5 further explained how coach education with a social constructivist approach might involve; 'lots of opportunity to try and practice, and sometimes, just like when

you do math, the teacher, would have to come and say; What might help you there?'. P3 explained how tutors can now support coaches 'every step of the way' including in-situ support.

 A Freirean Interpretation

The introduction of a social constructivist pedagogy arguably encourages coaches to understand *their* coaching context and *their* coaching needs more explicitly. Freire's view of liberation is somewhat present in some aspects of current FA coach education. For example, coaches are potentially more empowered to develop skills, which are relevant to their lives (e.g. through the co-construction of a project on courses). Similarly, educators now visit the coaches own coaching context to collaboratively support coaches in their own world. This more 'liberal' movement (P3) has required courage from all contributing actors within coach education. Nonetheless elements of the current courses remain largely controlled by The FA and predetermined e.g. pre-planned workshops, a competency framework for assessment and a football philosophy (England DNA) (The FA, 2019). Thus, whether the current courses are truly liberating will be determined by the relationships between tutors and coaches on the ground. Future research should explore this.

Conclusion

This paper has provided an original discussion of FA coach education and the pedagogical developments witnessed since 1967. The Freirean interpretation provided has positioned recent FA coach education as a more (if not wholly) emancipatory process, which seeks more critical consciousness than previous iterations. For example, courses now include in-situ visits, which enable learning to be more personal, and include regular opportunities for reflection, in which coaches can consider the relevance of new knowledge to their own practice. This approach has

much in common with Freire's (1973) view of emancipation which occurs through reflection (critical awareness) that leads to action (an authentic change in practice). Therefore, through the in-situ visits, coaches *may* have the opportunity to feel more empowered, liberated and valued than previously. However, we recognise that this change in pedagogy may continue to be challenging (Luguetti & Oliver, 2019). For example, the required change in power dynamics (i.e. towards a more democratic pedagogy), the overcoming of historical pre-conceptions (i.e. a tutor must talk, and a coach listen), and facilitating opportunities for openness (i.e. activities that allow coaches to appreciate their realities, privileges and socio-political structures) are all likely to be difficult for tutors who are influenced by social, personal and economic factors.

During this paper, several influences upon the development of FA formal coach education have been cited including the military, education provision, government policy, and the FA's own desire to improve their formal coach education provision. Future research should further consider these historical, political and educational factors which have impacted FA course development.

Beyond these conclusions, this paper aimed to review the past to inform the future. To that end, questions are provided below to support course tutors, both at and external to the FA. These considerations are not prescriptive but aim to prompt tutors (NGBs, Universities, other education spaces) to consider how their practice could be more liberating. Specifically, educators should consider;

- Theme 1 - How could dialogue with coaches on courses and in-situ lead to a shared critical consciousness?

- Theme 2 - How can we humbly appreciate the prior understanding of coaches attending courses?

- Theme 3 - How can we further embed and embrace inclusive practice, so that all voices are appreciated?

- Theme 4 - How can we further adopt a problem-posing approach to coach education?

- Theme 5 - How can we empower coaches to explicitly personalise their own learning?

Finally, this rigorous document analysis and oral history has demonstrated some positive changes that influence today's courses. The results from any era are not, however, generalizable to all courses, all tutors, and all coaches' experiences. We are sure that some coaches and tutors will have idiosyncratic experiences that contradict the general evidence examined herein. Accordingly, future research should seek the voice of coaches who are currently attending courses to examine if their experiences are truly liberating. Additionally, the experiences of players should be considered as these are voices that are largely absent from coach education research. These voices are valuable because coaching is an intersubjective process and thus coach education is limited if it does not consider other agents within the process. Such voices could be gathered through interviews which attempt to mitigate hierarchy and power (i.e. 'shoulder to shoulder' interviews (Griffin, Lahman, & Opitz, 2016)) or by providing ownership to the players (e.g. allowing the use of video cameras to record their interpretations of a phenomenon). The voices/perspectives of players could help to answer a variety of questions (e.g. the player's perspectives of their relationships with coaches and the influence (if any) of coach education on such relationships). Researchers and course designers should therefore show humility (Freire, 2005) and recognise that learners and players are not empty vessels to be filled, but have valuable contributions to make. Significantly for

researchers, course designers and tutors, an openness and conscious understanding of their own

position (discussed within this paper) is firstly required in order to embrace further change.

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