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 Creating and disseminating coach education policy: a case of formal coach education in grassroots football

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Article

1   **Creating and Disseminating Coach Education Policy: A case of Formal Coach**

2   **Education in Grassroots Football.**

3

4   **Abstract**

5   By examining on-course pedagogical practices, recent research has sought to inform the

6   development of National Governing Body (NGB) coach education courses. Coach education

7   programmes are, however, social constructs, and are influenced by policies and socio-

8   economic factors. To inform future provision, there is a need to understand the construction

9   of policy and the influences affecting course design. This study examined how the English

10   Football Association (FA) redeveloped their coach education policy in 2016. The 2016

11   changes are pertinent because calls for educational provision to be informed by social

12   constructivism have been made. The FA's coach education policy (2016) claim to be

13   informed by such a philosophical stance. This study, therefore, reports on *what* policy was

14   created, and *how* it had been disseminated within the organisation. Twenty-eight interviews

15   were conducted with 14 participants (staff members with different roles within the FA) across

16   two separate points in time, 12 months apart. A thematic analysis identified three key themes:

17   1) Three Elements of Curriculum/Course Design (A learning strategy informed by social

18   constructivism; a body of content for courses; a coaching competency framework and

19   qualification specification); 2) Recontextualisation of the policy and some confusion during

20   dissemination; and 3) A restricted code when disseminating policy. The significance of these

21   findings extends beyond the case presented and policy makers who seek to inform course

22   design with learning theory may wish to offer elaboration throughout the workforce via text

23   and discourse. Future research should build on these findings and consider how knowledge is

24   selected and legitimised by policy makers, and how coach developers implement

25   recontextualised policies.

26

29

Introduction

Sport coaching is a complex social endeavour. To prepare for this activity, coaches engage in

a range of formal, informal, and non-formal learning opportunities (Nelson et al., 2006).

Formal coach education within the United Kingdom (UK), the focus of this study, has been

the subject of much critical research. National Governing Body (NGBs) courses have been

depicted as a flawed means of enhancing coaches' learning (Nelson et al., 2013).

Specifically, courses have been deemed ineffective, because content is 'isolated' from

coaches' contexts and therefore 'decontextualized' (Piggott, 2015). In response, some

research, including international studies have encouraged constructivist informed approaches

to formal coach education courses[1] (e.g. Paquette et al., 2014; Paquette & Trudel, 2018a,

2018b). In coaching literature, constructivism has been referred to as a broad epistemology

that suggests learning takes place through shared knowledge, meanings, and understanding

(Ciampolini et al., 2019). This epistemological position has developed from philosophers

such as Kant, Dewey, and Popper (Philips, 1995). Educationalists such as Piaget (cognitive)

and Vygotsky (social) have also advanced different forms of constructivist learning theory

(Jones et al., 2018). Today, a gamut of 'constructivist' perspectives exist including cognitive,

social, radical, and feminist (See Fosnot, 2013 for further details). To greater and lesser

extents, these variants proceed from the epistemological tenets that a) learning involves the

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[1] Terminology such as: social constructivism, constructivism, progressive or learner-centred is often used
interchangeably within research and yet there are differences between these concepts. For further details,
readers should see Philips (1995) or Fosnot (2013).

48 active contribution of humans; b) new knowledge is developed in relation to prior

49 understanding; and c) knowledge and learning is not independent of social context.

50 Paquette and Trudel (2018a) described coach education approaches informed by

51 constructivist epistemology as those that involve facilitation, group work, localised problem

52 solving and the sharing of ideas. Critically, in coaching, rather than coach education research,

53 it has been argued that practitioners are focused on methods rather than the underlying

54 philosophical positions of constructivism (Cushion, 2013; Nelson, Cushion et al., 2014). To

55 be clear, "constructivist approaches are not prescriptions for teaching. Instead they operate as

56 a general orientating framework for thinking about teaching and learning" (Culpan &

57 McBain, 2012, p. 99). Failure to understand this position may result in a naive form of

58 constructivism (Cushion, 2013), where dialogue takes place but ultimately, knowledge and

59 power remain the preserve of the educator. Thus, at a micro-level, coach education may

60 involve social interactions that support or thwart the construction of knowledge by learners.

61 Beyond courses, coach education is a wide system involving multiple stakeholders

62 such as knowledge producers, policy makers, course designers, and coach developers (Culver

63 et al., 2019; Williams & Bush, 2017). These key personnel have significant power and

64 control over course design, including the theoretical perspectives informing formal

65 educational provision (Chapman et al., 2019). Interestingly, in mainstream education

66 systems, Evans and Penney (1995) demonstrated how policy is an inevitable compromise

67 between inputs from different stakeholders involved in the creation and dissemination of

68 policy and materials. Related to this, Priestley and Humes (2010) demonstrate how

69 stakeholder interests may result in educational curriculums with different foci e.g. learner

70 focused, content focused, or assessment focused. Further, it has been suggested that

71 stakeholders can add or corrode coherency between objectives, content, and assessment

72 (Sullanmaa et al., 2019). Indeed, many NGBs now position their coach education and

3

73　preferred methods as 'constructivist'. Such claims need to be sceptically considered because

74　similar to the wider education field, policy making in coach education is a dynamic and

75　negotiated process. Accordingly, Culver and colleagues (2019) and Williams and Bush

76　(2017) encourage coaching researchers to consider how the dominant foci of stakeholders

77　within coach education systems influence formal coaching courses. Similarly, Griffiths,

78　Armour, and Cushion (2018) called for researchers to use Bernsteinian (2000) theory to

79　explore how 'upstream' influences on policy affect learners 'downstream' (i.e. on courses).

80　Thus, this study aims to consider *what* one NGB created as part of their policies and *how* it

81　was disseminated. The significance of the study lies in drawing attention to the social

82　construction of courses, opening up a discussion on the key influences on formal coach

83　education policy, and moving beyond on-course evaluation to provide a more complete, if

84　always partial, analysis of an existing coach education system.

85

The FA Context

87　The FA is an appropriate area of focus because their courses are experienced by a large

88　number of coaches (i.e. circa 30,000 per annum), within the participatory domain of coaching

89　(i.e. grassroots) (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). These coaches typically work with a team once a

90　week for training, plus a single game over a weekend in a range of communal environments

91　(i.e. local club, parks, youth centres). This often-voluntary coaching role facilitates

92　opportunities for young people and adults to play football. To support coaches in these

93　contexts, the FA mandate coaches attain a FA level 1 (introductory) qualification. They also

94　recommend carrying out a level 2 (intermediate) qualification within this domain.

95　　　Recently, Chapman and colleagues (2019) described gradual changes in FA

96　qualifications over a fifty-year period, from a perceived authoritarian approach, where

97 learners would replicate coach developers' behaviours in order to pass the qualifications, to

98 an approach, more, if not wholly focused on learners' needs. In keeping with this, in 2016,

99 the FA relaunched their formal coach education provision at level 1 and level 2. This change

100 was prompted by critical examination from the UK Government's Department for Culture,

101 Media, and Sport (DCMS) who highlighted issues with wider FA governance and a historic

102 weakness in coaching (DCMS, 2011). The Commission Report 2 (2014, p. 38) identified that:

103

104 the overall numbers of coaches holding B Licence level (level 3) and above need to

105 be increased substantially…in particular the Commission would argue that The FA

106 needs to provide the right encouragement to coaches below the top levels so that they

107 are motivated to pursue higher level qualifications.

108

109 This informed the FA's focus on learning at that time and was a response to much criticism

110 of formal coach education (Chapman et al., 2019). Therefore, multiple stakeholders including

111 the FA, UK Government (via DCMS), and other funding agencies committed to improving

112 formal coach education (The FA Chairman's England Commission Report 2, 2014; DCMS,

113 2014). Since then, the FA have made significant changes to their coach education courses,

114 including providing in-situ support for learners at level 2, where coach developers support

115 coaches in their own contexts (Chapman et al., 2019). Beyond this observation however, little

116 academic research has examined *what* exactly has been created, and *how*. Such consideration

117 has the potential to open up discussions and future research on how policy may best influence

118 coach education provision.

119

120 **Theoretical Frameworks**

121 In order to address the research objective of understanding *what* policy was created, this

122 study turns to Priestley and Humes' (2010) three models of curriculum development.

123 Subsequent to this, Bernstein's framework is also introduced to elucidate *how* education

124 policy is both constructed and disseminated.

125

126 *What policy is created?*

127 For Priestley and Humes (2010), curriculum development is an amalgamation of multiple and

128 sometimes disparate interests from within a wider system. In order to develop coherent

129 education provision, they advocate for curriculum development to be shaped by one of three

130 clear 'start points' or models. Firstly, Priestly and Humes describe a *process model*, as a

131 shared and co-constructed learning 'process' between educators and learners. This approach

132 prioritises the development of learners as individuals in their own right, with a focus on

133 understanding their individual needs, rather than a focus on predetermined content or roles.

134 The process model has much in common with learning relationships where teachers guide

135 learners through topics that learners deem meaningful within their own context. In contrast to

136 the process model, a *content model* prioritises the learning of predetermined content. Finally,

137 a *product model* (i.e. objectives to be achieved) prioritises what a 'competent' learner *should*

138 be doing. While a mixture of all three outputs is commonplace within any curriculum,

139 Priestley and Humes (2010) advise that for coherency, one model should be used as a starting

140 point to guide curriculum making by stakeholders, including educators. Accordingly, Priestly

141 and Hume's work is used to examine and explain what policy was created by the FA.

142 However, while Priestley's and Hume's models provide a description of *what* is produced, it

143 does not explain *how* policy is constructed by stakeholders. Here we turned to the work of

144 Basil Bernstein.

145

How policy is created?

In order to address *how* policy is constructed and disseminated, Bernstein "offers a language
to engage in a multi-level understanding of the impact of stakeholders on pedagogical
practices" (Griffiths et al. 2018, p.286). Specifically, Bernstein's (1990, 2000) 'Pedagogic
Device' (distributive and recontextualisation rules[2]) and his early development of language
codes (1964, 1971) are relevant to this study and are therefore introduced below.

The 'distributive rule' of Bernstein's pedagogic device involves identifying a body of
knowledge to be learned. For Bernstein, this often takes place in an esoteric fashion, whereby
select individuals (e.g. NGB staff) distinguish 'relevant' knowledge to distribute to learners
(Bernstein, 2000). Bernstein primarily recognises the role of higher education in producing
knowledge, but professions may also contribute to this. Selecting and disseminating
knowledge is a negotiated act between stakeholders and reflects wider social, economic, and
political influences, status, and priorities. The distributive rule, therefore, is a useful
analytical aid that prompts researchers to consider who is involved in selecting *what*
knowledge to develop policy.

Bernstein's (2000) second concept, the rule of 'recontextualisation', is concerned with
the decoding and recoding of policy. Policy is taken from those creating it during initial
production (through the distributive rule), and then recontextualised into a form of
meaningful and contextualised practice. Singh, Thomas, and Harris (2013, p. 469) comment
that the recontextualising rule involves "translation work that occurs when policy text moves
from the site of policy-making to local sites in which policy is enacted". In coach education,
this may involve the production of materials e.g., PowerPoint presentations/handouts, course

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[2] For those interested in the third evaluative rule please see Bernstein (2000)

168 handbooks, and verbal discussions that clarify syllabi, schemes of work, qualification

169 specifications. In other words, within an NGB such as the FA, numerous personnel will

170 influence *how* policy is constructed and disseminated through text and discourse.

171 To explain how relevant knowledge may be recontextualised, Bernstein introduced

172 the concept of elaborate and restricted language codes (Bernstein, 1964). An elaborate code

173 describes a language that is explicitly presented to the audience. Access to meaning is high

174 because understanding is not taken for granted and meaning is elaborated (Bernstein, 1964;

175 Moore, 2013). Bernstein (1971) explained that in an elaborating code, knowledge and policy

176 is explained and demonstrated in order to form meaning on a wider scale.

177 A restricted code suggests that a more localised and internal language structure is

178 already in operation. 'Restricted' refers to a shared understanding amongst actors (Moore,

179 2013). Language spoken here is predictable to the presenters and listeners. Nuanced concepts

180 and terminology are assumed to be understood by all individuals. In this case, knowledge

181 may be 'taken for granted'. Without elaboration however, access to meaning is restricted to

182 those people 'in the know', who may understand one message, while others have a restricted

183 understanding (Bernstein, 1971). A restricted code may mean that individuals are not exposed

184 to confusing information, but they may also have an oversimplified understanding of policy.

185 Thus, language codes are important concepts that enable us to examine *how* knowledge is

186 disseminated and understood by policy actors.

187 Bernstein, like Priestley and Humes, assumes that policy is a dynamic constructed

188 process. Both frameworks detail the influence of individuals, and organisations/institutions to

189 shape policy and in turn curriculum making. Indeed, both theoretical frameworks offer an

190 insight into examining policy, looking at 'what' can be created (Priestly and Humes), and

191 'how' it is created (Bernstein). Used together, these theories are useful for examining the

192 FA's 2016 policy at level 1 and level 2. More broadly, the models and concepts within the

193 frameworks provide important analytical contributions that shed light on the dynamics of

194 creating, interpreting, and disseminating policy.

195

196 **Methodology**

197

198 *Paradigmatic Positioning*

199 The research was underpinned by ontological relativism (i.e. reality is multiple) and

200 epistemological constructivism (i.e. knowledge is constructed) (Philips, 1995). These

201 philosophical positions recognise that prior knowledge (e.g. theoretical frameworks) inform

202 our sense making. As such, the findings of this study represent and value the temporal

203 interpretations of the individuals (participants, the research team, and the reviewers) involved

204 in this study.

205

206 *Sampling, Participants, and the Courses*

207 Following university ethical approval, a purposeful criterion-based sample were recruited

208 from within the organisation (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Bowe and colleagues (1992), 'policy

209 cycle' identified those who are influential, and those who produce/disseminate text as key

210 participants in policy analysis research. Accordingly, the following criteria were used to

211 select these participants: (1) active involvement in the creation of the FA level 1 and level 2

212 courses (context of influence); and (2) active involvement in disseminating the FA level 1

213 and level 2 courses (context of text production).

9

214   A gatekeeper from the FA facilitated access to the sample. An introductory email was

215   sent to the gatekeeper who provided contact details for the sample. Following this,

216   individuals who fulfilled the criteria above, were sent an introductory email with an

217   information sheet and consent form. These emails ensured the gatekeeper provided

218   permission and facilitated a purposeful sample and participant confidentiality. Fourteen

219   participants (twelve males and two female), aged 28-66 (M = 45.21) responded and were

220   involved in this study[3]. For the purpose of maintaining anonymity, participants were placed

221   into three classifications based on roles within the FA: Senior Staff (SS; N = 4),

222   Departmental Leads (DL; N = 3), and Coach Developers (CD). Coach developers have also

223   been split within this research as there are full time members of FA staff known as county

224   coach developers (CCD's; N = 4), as well as part-time coach developers (CD part-time; N =

225   3). With reference to the courses, Table 1 provides details on the structure of the grassroots

226   coach education courses under study. Further information, including learning outcomes,

227   content, and prerequisites are also available for level 1 (The FA, 2019a) and level 2 (The FA,

228   2019b).

229

230   *INSERT TABLE 1.*

231

232   ***Data Collection and Analysis***

233   This study utilised semi-structured interviews with individuals responsible for the courses

234   outlined in Table 1. The first author conducted all interviews and was a 'partial insider'

235   because of additional roles within the FA (i.e. as a part-time coach developer and coach

236   mentor). These roles brought valuable insight but also subjective perspectives to the study.

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[3] Participant information is kept purposely vague to protect the anonymity of participants.

10

237   Accordingly, the positionality of the researcher is discussed in the rigour section below.

238   Twenty-eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen participants from

239   within the FA. It was decided to conduct two interviews with each participant across two data

240   points in time, separated by a twelve-month gap between phase 1 and phase 2 interviews. A

241   twelve-month gap enabled policy to be further disseminated and experienced. All interviews

242   took place at either the FA's National Performance Centre, or within local FA facilities. This

243   was to ensure that participants felt as comfortable as possible within a familiar setting (Kvale,

244   2007). Interviews lasted between 40-115 minutes in length.

245

246   *Phase 1 Interviews*

247   Initial interview questions reflected 1) the context of influence - who influenced what, and 2)

248   the context of text production - who disseminated *what* and *how* (cf. Bowe et al., 1992).

249   Questions also reflected participants' roles. For example, schedule 1 for Senior Staff (SS) - In

250   your view/opinion, who have been the key people that have influenced this change?;

251   Schedule 2 for Department Leads (DL) - What control or influence did you have during these

252   changes?; Schedule 3 for Coach Developers (CD) - Can you tell me about the new direction

253   the FA has taken within coach education?

254

255   *Phase 1 Analysis*

256   After Phase 1 interviews, a Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to identify, analyse, and report

257   initial themes. Braun, Clarke and Weate's (2016) six-step protocol was used as part of a

258   deductive form of analysis. The data were analysed to identify who created what, and how.

259   To do this the first author began with a period of data familiarisation (step 1), being

260   immersed in the data through listening to the interviews, transcribing the interviews, and

261   reading back through each transcript multiple times. This presented opportunities for coding

262   data (step 2) that were relevant to the policy cycle (i.e., who created what and how). As codes

263   were developed, potential themes were identified (step 3) by mapping codes together to form

264   meaningful insights (e.g. key influencers generating change; good intentions; assessment

265   approach). Refinement and revision (step 4) of the codes and initial themes were then carried

266   out through further reading of transcripts, coding maps, as well as discussions with the wider

267   research team. The research team named the themes (step 5) in order to represent the data. In

268   the last part of phase 1 (step 6), these themes were organised and were relabelled.

269

270   *Phase 2 Interviews*

271   After a twelve-month period, phase 2 interviews were conducted. Questions were developed

272   from both the themes identified in phase 1 interviews (i.e. Theme 1 - Influencers generating

273   FA coach education development; Theme 2 - A pedagogic shift in FA coach education) and

274   Bernsteinian concepts (distributive rule, recontextualisation, and language codes). Bernstein's

275   pedagogic device was used in order to understand the social relationships that influence

276   policy and curricula. For example, because assessment was perceived as a potential issue,

277   questions explored how and why assessment may have been recontextualised. Again,

278   questions were amended to reflect the differing professional roles of the participants. For

279   example, Schedule 1 for SS - Why do you think people experience ambiguity around

280   assessment? Schedule 2 for DL - In your opinion, does the current course content, delivery

281   approach, and assessment process lend itself to the overall purpose of the level 1 and level 2

282   courses? Schedule 3 for CD - What guidance/support/training has developed your

283   understanding of these courses? These questions aimed to gain further insight into *what* had

284   been created and *how* these changes were being disseminated across the organisation.

285

286   *Phase 2 Analysis*

287   Braun, Clarke and Weate's (2016) six-step protocol was then repeated. Deductively, the first

288   author used Bernstein's 'distributive rule' (i.e. who decides what is to be known), and

289   'recontextualisation rule' (i.e. how is policy interpreted and cascaded to practice). Phase 2

290   analysis was either added to existing codes from phase 1 or new codes were generated (e.g.

291   new code: A 'learning model'). Development and refinement of themes continued through

292   the mapping of codes and discussing these with the research team (e.g. subtheme - confusion

293   around assessment). During these discussions, Priestley and Humes' (2010) curriculum

294   models were used to refine and support the final themes that we felt best represented the data.

295   This refinement process occurred all the way through and into the writing phase of this

296   present article, where the themes presented in this study offer a final product of a messy

297   analysis phase. Table 2 provides an illustration of the development of themes across the two

298   phases of analysis.

299

300   *INSERT TABLE 2*

301

302   **Rigour**

303   Member reflections were used post phase 1 interviews to enable participants consider

304   interview transcripts and the initial insights identified by the research team (Smith &

305   McGannon, 2018). This provided additional data. Ten participants engaged in the member

306   reflections, and these provided support and clarification (e.g. SS 'the themes felt really good.

307   I just want to make sure that we…'). A reflective journal was used by the first author to

308   manage his positionality and note down thoughts and feelings, that may influence further

309   processes e.g. data collection and analysis. This reflection led to discussions within the

310 research team that managed the subjectivity of the first author, without losing the enriched

311 perspective that a partial insider brings. To further manage subjectivity and provide a form of

312 credibility, data analysis were also read by 'critical friends' (co-authors and a colleague

313 outside of the research team) (Smith & McGannon, 2018). These processes were put in place

314 to enhance the rigour of this study. Nonetheless, being mindful of the epistemological stance

315 of the paper, readers should themselves consider to what extent the findings are relevant to

316 their own context.

317

318 **Findings and Discussion**

319 This section demonstrates three themes from the data. Theme 1 provides an insight into *what*

320 was created as part of the 2016 FA policy for level 1 and level 2. Theme 2 focuses on the

321 recontextualisation of the policy and confusion. Finally, Theme 3 describes a restricted code

322 when disseminating policy.

323

324 *Theme 1: Three Elements of Curriculum/Course Design*

325 The first theme identified three elements produced as part of the 2016 policy: 1) A 'learning

326 strategy' that was informed by individuals' understanding of social constructivism; 2) a body

327 of content for courses (e.g. PowerPoint slideshows, unit specification); and 3) a coaching

328 competency framework (CCF) and qualification specification. These changes came from a

329 number of key stakeholder inputs.

330

14

331   *The First Element - A Move Towards a 'Socially Constructivist' Informed Pedagogy*

332   The first element produced was an explicit written learning strategy used to inform the

333   development of the level 1 and level 2 courses. This strategy was reportedly designed by a

334   small group of staff at senior levels, who consulted with individuals in different roles across

335   FA education.

336

337   We set up a coaching learning group and we began to develop a learning strategy. In

338   that learning strategy that I eventually wrote was in two parts really. The first part was

339   the how and why. Basically, the philosophy behind why we do what we do, so [social]

340   constructivism. That was what we have nailed our hat on in terms of basis for our

341   learning philosophy. (SS)

342

343   If you look at the official line from the FA education strategy, it is a [social]

344   constructivist approach to learning. (CCD)

345

346   Consistent with the participants above, the learning strategy, which is detailed through an

347   internal document, explicitly refers to social constructivist principles. The strategy recognises

348   "learning as an active constructive process" (The FA, 2015, p. 6), where coaches build upon

349   their prior knowledge, and make sense in relation to their own social context. Such principles

350   are broadly consistent with the tenets of constructivist epistemology (Fosnot, 2013). Further,

351   the internal FA document encourages coach developers to embrace problem-based learning

352   and "other active methods as they challenge learners" (The FA, 2015, p. 6), which again has

353   been associated with constructivism (Pacquette and Trudel, 2018a). The approach also echoes

354   Priestley's and Humes' (2010) *process model* that advocates for a collaborative process,

355   involving both learners and educators to inform future knowledge.

356   The creation of the learning strategy reflects Bernstein's (2000) distributive rule as

357   those in powerful positions were able to provide direction from knowledge producers.

358   Without detailing specific sources, in interviews, participants acknowledged that Higher

359   Education (HE) research had some influence in the group's decision to take a social

360   constructivist approach.

361

362   What do we feel is the latest research in terms of how you could and should design

363   and deliver learning? Constructivism came as a result of that. (SS)

364

365   While not explicitly identifying coach education research, the strategy document does

366   reference Knowles' (1973) work on andragogy, which characterises adult learners as self-

367   directed and focused on learning from personal, situated experiences. This view of learners is

368   consistent with the social constructivist epistemology espoused in the strategy, but the

369   inclusion of this solitary reference does raise a future research question of why certain

370   research might explicitly influence policy (Lyle, 2018). Nonetheless, the strategy provides a

371   clear starting point for the construction and dissemination of curriculum, and materials

372   (Priestly and Humes, 2010), but is just one part of a larger coach education system (Culver et

373   al., 2019).

374

375 *The Second 'Element' – A Body of Content for Courses*

376 Illustrating how different stakeholders can influence policy production as part of Bernstein's

377 (2000) distributive rule, another group at the FA developed a second element within the

378 policy; The content that made up the level 1 and level 2 courses. This second element

379 emphasised subject matter knowledge considered useful to learners. This included the

380 England DNA, which is the FA's position on how they view the game, and how they prefer

381 the game to be played (e.g. intelligently dominate possession), and coached (e.g. use games

382 whenever possible) (The FA, 2020). This content was deemed important to inform coaching

383 practice and is an integral part of the seven workshops on the level 1 course (The FA, 2019a),

384 and twenty workshops on the level 2 course (The FA, 2019b) (see Table 1.). Within these

385 workshops, predetermined topics, learning outcomes, and resources/materials were created

386 (e.g. schemes of work, PowerPoint presentations, videos, posters, session plan ideas). Those

387 participants who deliver the courses met this revised content with some positive perceptions:

388

389   Session plans, the PDF's, the videos, I think the candidates are now getting much

390   more value for money and they're getting better resources (CD part- time)

391

392   I feel I've got much more information to give to them, so I feel more knowledgeable

393   personally so I can talk to them about what St George's Park [National Performance

394   Centre] is, what the England DNA [Organisational football philosophy] is, and what

395   the coaching fundamentals are, but I feel like I've got more stuff to back it up (CD

396   part-time)

397

398   The data does, however, reflect a tradition of coach developers 'giving' content to learners, as

399   opposed to learners constructing knowledge meaningful to them and their context. The data

400   also continues a trend where knowledge lies with coach developers.

401

402   [We are] trying to make sure that you're [the coach developer] on message with the

403   workshops and delivering the outcomes and not deviating too far from the

404   truth…(DL)

405

406   The quotation above, for example, encourages coach developers to stick to the 'truth'. This

407   somewhat contradicts the constructivist learning strategy designed by the first group, which

408   advocates for a more personalised 'process model' (Priestley & Humes, 2010) to meet the

409   relevant needs and context of the learners. In doing so, the content demonstrates how

410   different stakeholders may shape the development and dissemination of coach education

411   policy (Bernstein, 2000).

412

413   *The Third 'Element' – The Coaching Competency Framework (CCF) and Qualification*

414   *Specification*

415   The third element produced during the development of policy was the CCF. The CCF is a list

416   of 16 competencies for coaches from level 1 (introductory) to 5 (elite). This was created to

417   provide constructive alignment where coach developers build on the prior experiences of

418   learners. It was reported that the CCF was developed by senior members of FA staff. One

419   declared:

420

421   We developed a cross football group of people to help design that and, eventually,

422   developed a set of coach competencies (SS)

423

424   Throughout the interviews, participants associated these competencies with the assessment

425   process at level 2:

426

427   At level 2, there are no tasks; it is the project. So, the project has to wrap around

428   something that aligns with the standard and the standard is the competency

429   framework. (DL)

430

431   The competency framework is a reference point for assessment (DL)

432

433   The CCF appeared to be treated somewhat akin to Priestley and Hume's (2010) outcome

434   driven approach where learners achieve a predetermined set of competencies. That said, the

435   FA and an awarding body (an external stakeholder) also collaborated to produce the

436   qualification specification including predetermined aims, learning outcomes, mandatory

437   content, and grading criteria to be delivered as part of each course (1st4Sport,

438   2017a;1st4Sport, 2017b). Such documents are typical of QA processes regulated by the

439   government that aim to ensure consistently high standards of education provision. Once more

440   illustrating how different stakeholders provide different inputs into a large coach education

441   system. These publicly accessible documents are reminiscent of narrow predetermined

442   competency-based assessments that have a long history in football (Chapman et al., 2019;

443   Twitchen & Oakley, 2019). The use of predetermined criteria and methods is potentially in

444 contrast to the sharing of knowledge and power and the notion of self-directed learners as

445 advocated in other parts of the learning strategy (Element 1). Interestingly, none of the

446 participants interviewed explicitly referred to the qualification specification from an

447 assessment perspective. Instead, participants tended to focus on the CCF. This demonstrated

448 that policy continued to develop as discourse, despite the text developed with an external

449 party (i.e. awarding body).

450   In sum, different stakeholders, each with their own experiences, perspectives,

451 knowledge, and wider social, economic, and political considerations (i.e. HE research;

452 industry knowledge; quality assurance procedures) influenced the new policy. Although the

453 learning strategy relates to Priestley and Humes' (2010) process model, other stakeholders

454 appeared to emphasise content (workshops) and outcome (assessment criteria) models. Thus,

455 the FA coach education policy is, like others (Evans & Penney, 1995; Bernstein, 2000;

456 Culver et al., 2019), the result of complex negotiated acts between internal and external

457 stakeholders.

458

459 ***Theme 2: Recontextualisation and confusion of policy***

460 Throughout the interviews, participants also reported challenges with the 2016 policy. To

461 greater and lesser extents, the policy was recontextualised (Bernstein 2000). For example, the

462 learning strategy argued for knowledge that is relevant to the learners' contexts and

463 experienced through problem-based approaches. This appeared to be clear to some

464 participants:

465

20

466   Social constructivism… it's explicit in all our course material…how we intend to

467   interact, how the courses are made up. That wasn't clear at first, but hopefully, it is

468   now. (SS)

469

470   I think it's trying to tailor how you can plan to meet the needs of the individuals on the

471   course. So where is each learner at on that particular journey, what do they need?

472   What have they got? Is there anyone that can help them? Can they help anyone else?

473   (CCD)

474

475 In contrast, some coach developers commented that the key point of the 2016 policy was the

476 transmission of predetermined content and 'organisational messages':

477

478   With the scheme of work, we had PowerPoints and the instructions were that we don't

479   alter the PowerPoints, which means we use the PowerPoints we were given… I just

480   feel there's almost an influence on how we'd [the FA] like you to deliver…. (CD –

481   part time)

482

483 These different approaches reflect the influence of multiple stakeholders (theme 1) as policy

484 is disseminated. Griffiths and colleagues (2018) commented that policy develops via

485 discourse, as stakeholders select and share information across education systems to inform

486 pedagogical practices. During this dissemination recontextualisation occurs, and potentially

487 causes confusion. For example, participants reported confusion about the use of the CCF and

488 its primary function. Staff members commented the CCF was:

489

490   Only to lead the design of the content of the courses (SS)

491

492   People who were driving the review of the Level 2 project made a call that the

493   competency framework [CCF] shouldn't be shown to learners because they wanted to

494   get away from the idea of tick sheets and they also made the call that the word

495   'assessment', essentially, should be banned (DL)

496

497 Another senior staff member, however, described how the CFF was a good learning

498 development tool and should be used collaboratively with learners:

499

500   The competency framework is a developmental tool that you can go, "yeah, I think we

501   can develop you in these areas…we can work on that" and I can chart the progress.

502   (SS)

503

504 Through recontextualisation other participants suggested that individuals have used the CCF

505 as a means of assessment:

506

507   Individuals have taken that [CCF] and created almost a competency-based assessment

508   on some courses, others not. (SS)

509

510 Recontextualisation and confusion can occur when policy makers, course designers, and

511 coach developers relay messages that have been interpreted in relation to their own

512 biographies, experiences, and subjective understandings (Bernstein, 2000). For example, the

513 historical dominance of competency-based assessment within the FA (Chapman et al., 2019),

514 may mean that individuals interpret the CCF in relation to assessment. Moreover, the extent

515 to which a recontextualised message is further cascaded may reflect the power, vertical and

516 horizontal network, and perspectives of individuals, rather than the completeness of their

517 understanding. This has previously been observed in coaches (Stodter and Cushion, 2017),

518 but the study herein finds a similar process amongst policy makers and coach developers.

519 Thus, when disseminating policy, confusion can be enabled by a myriad of dynamic social

520 factors such as the power of different stakeholders, and the prior experiences of individuals.

521 Of course, confusion can also occur if policy makers and course designers do not fully

522 understand theory, such as constructivism, prior to dissemination.

523

524 *Theme 3 – A restricted code when disseminating policy*

525 When considering the three new elements produced, coach developers reported a desire for

526 more training:

527   Just all new stuff and then no real training, I would say' (CCD)

528

529   I don't think training really told us about it [the changes]' (CD part-time).

530

531 The desire for further training is understandable given the complex philosophical tenets of

532 social constructivism, which require education to avoid a naïve form of implementation

533   (Cushion, 2013; Nelson et al., 2014). That said, the learning strategy, which details how the

534   FA conceive social constructivism, was somewhat restricted from large parts of the

535   workforce. The learning strategy remains an internal document and has not been widely

536   disseminated to the part time workforce. As a result, full-time FA staff seemingly

537   communicate via a restricted code, which offers a particularistic understanding to those 'in

538   the know' but offers limited understanding or elaboration for those across the wider

539   workforce (Bernstein, 1971). Furthermore, one department lead claimed:

540

541   The content that underpinned the theory, and research that underpinned the content of

542   the courses was never shared. And, therefore, there is a gap between the full-time staff

543   who designed the learning strategy and part-time tutors running around on the ground

544   making it happen. (DL)

545

546   From a Bernsteinian (1990) perspective, effective recontextualisation requires elaboration of

547   policy. In the absence of elaboration, policy may be subject to multiple (mis)interpretations.

548   To examine this further, future research should explore how educators on the ground practice

549   the policy.

550

551   *Some Additional Considerations*

552   The themes above illustrate that, policy makers need to elaborate the underlying

553   philosophical assumptions of constructivism. This may lead to considerations about what is

554   conceived as social constructivism within a specific NGB, how stakeholders may thwart or

555   enable policy informed by this epistemology, and how content and assessment processes can

556 support coaches to socially construct relevant knowledge. The findings also illustrate that

557 coach education is not an easy task, limited to on-course provision. Rather, policy makers

558 operating within this system are faced with some complex challenges that researchers may

559 wish to support. Firstly, while advocating courses meet the needs of learners in local situated

560 contexts, NGBs such as the FA are also concerned with the consistency and quality of

561 courses across large geographical areas. Secondly, as evidenced above, NGBs need to work

562 with external stakeholders such as awarding bodies, who may have different perspectives on

563 content and assessment. Thirdly, elaborating to a large, part time workforce can be difficult.

564 Indeed, one participant summarised the challenges facing NGBs:

565

566   We're talking about learning, which is complex. We're then talking about it in the

567   largest NGB in the country, which is even more complex. We're then adding in 600

568   people being involved in delivering it, even more complex. Then we're adding in staff

569   changeover, there's more complexity. Then we're adding in digital platforms that work

570   and how we want them to work, so there's even more complexity. (DL)

571

572 **Conclusion**

573 This study offers an original contribution by exploring *what* components made up the policy

574 created by the FA. Secondly, the study examined *how* the current policy was created and

575 disseminated. This is significant because research has called for formal coach education to be

576 examined as a system (Culver, 2019), which in the context of the FA, is influenced by

577 Government, senior NGB members, policy makers, course designers, department leads, and

578 coach developers. Therefore, this study contributes by detailing how stakeholders interact to

579 influence coach education policy.

580   Findings suggest that:

581   1) A small group within the FA have produced a learning strategy informed by their

582   understanding of social constructivism. Further internal and external stakeholders have also

583   contributed to elements of the policy (e.g. content and assessment) and thus policy creation is

584   not a simple act, but a negotiated and dynamic process.

585   2) Notwithstanding the guiding learning strategy, recontextualisation had inevitably occurred

586   and some confusion was evidenced in relation to areas of the policy (e.g. the CCF)

587   3) This confusion may be confounded by concepts such as a social constructivist

588   epistemology, which would benefit from further elaboration by sharing texts and adequately

589   timed dissemination events.

590

591   The organisation has continued a clear move towards coach education informed by social

592   constructivism (Chapman et al., 2019), but understanding of the learning strategy and indeed,

593   the theory that informs it, remains varied. Policy makers, who may have different economic,

594   social, and political perspectives, including and beyond the FA, need to share an elaborate

595   code with each other, to ensure that there is coherency between learning strategy, content,

596   and assessment (Sullanmaa et al., 2019). Appropriately timed dissemination events may help

597   elaborate key concepts throughout the workforce. This elaboration is particularly needed

598   when exploring concepts such as constructivism that have many variants (cognitive, social,

599   critical) (Philips, 1995), and are not simple prescriptions for teaching but complex

600   epistemologies (Culpan & McBain, 2012). This does not, however, require a top-down

601   approach to policy development and dissemination, but rather an iterative approach to sharing

602   knowledge between people across a NGB. This encourages decisions to be made at all levels

603   from positions of explicit, rather than assumed understanding (Sullanmaa et al., 2019).

26

604   Future research could support NGBs and wider educational institutions who seek to

605   implement a pedagogy informed by learning theory, such as social constructivism. Indeed,

606   social constructivism is an area that requires greater levels of clarity if it is to be used as a

607   central learning theory to develop coaches. Researchers could also explore which knowledge

608   is selected and legitimised by policy makers. To this end, immersive methodologies such as

609   ethnographic and collaborative action research approaches may provide analytical value.

610   Conversely, while this study has examined how policy has been created and disseminated,

611   there is a need to consider how coach developers and coaches experience the 2016 policy.

612   Related to this, pedagogical research may need to recognise that on-course practices are

613   likely to be recontextualised practices. Thus, coach education research should build on the

614   insights provided here and critically connect policy to practice in order to provide a more

615   complete understanding of coach education as a system.

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