Less may be More: How do Coach Developers Reproduce 'Learner-centred' Policy in Practice?

Introduction

The recent introduction of Bernsteinian concepts into coach education literature has offered a wider perspective of policy that explores how internal stakeholders, including policy makers and course designers influence coach education policy (Dempsey et al., 2020; Griffiths et al., 2018; Williams & Bush, 2019). These policies, which are often devised by National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport, also reflect the priorities of a wider system of external influencers such as awarding bodies or government agencies (Culver et al., 2019; Dempsey et al., 2020). Further, these policies are delivered by coach developers who are trained, to greater or lesser extents, to support coaches' learning and may further recontextualise policy. This means that for coach developers, implementing any coach education policy in practice is a complex, fluid, and inherently contested process (Culver et al., 2019; Young et al., 2020).

Coach developers in the English Football Association (FA), the focus of this study, have historically been associated with traditional and/or authoritarian practices (Chapman et al., 2019). For example, the coach developer has been seen as the owner of football (soccer) knowledge, who has passed this down to coaches (Cope et al., 2020). In contrast, recent coach education studies (i.e., Paquette and Trudel, 2018a) have encouraged NGBs to empower coaches to take ownership of their learning so that content is relevant to them and their players. Such approaches are often associated with constructivist learning theory, which posit that learning is a social process occuring through interaction within a contextualised world (Paquette & Trudel, 2018b). This understanding is prevalent in the most recent coach education policy created by the FA that aspires for coach education that is a) 'learner-

centred', (b) a scaffold between what learners already know and new understandings they seek to know, and (c) uses problem-based and other 'active' methods to enable "mass individualisation of personal development" (FA Education, 2016, p. 6). These changes were part of a response by the FA to criticisms from Sport England and the UK Government, who highlighted the need to increase the quality and quantity of coaches (Dempsey et al., 2020). Critically, Dempsey et al. (2020) analysis of that policy process indicates that multiple stakeholders contributed to the creation of course materials including content and assessment. Further, during the policy process, recontextualisation occurred and policy makers and coach developers interviewed in the study highlighted some elements of confusion. That said, Dempsey et al. (2020) may have highlighted the complex nature of policy creation and recontextualisation, but they did not examine how the policy was operationalised in practice. Therefore, while recent research has shown how coach education policy, informed by social constructivism, is subject to multiple social influences, there is a need to examine how these influences and policies are reproduced by coach developers on courses.

The practice of coach developers is an important area of study because according to Stodter and Cushion (2019), coach developer training has traditionally been generic and its effect on coach developers' ability to support coaches is unclear. Rather, prior learning experiences may be a larger influence on how coach developers practice (Cushion et al., 2019). For example, Cushion and colleagues (2019) suggested that coach developers' practices were often ideological and reproduced current practice, as opposed to challenging it. This may include naïve claims to empower learners, but nonetheless impose the language and meanings representative of prevailing cultures. Such naivety stems, not from a Machiavellian intention by developers to ignore policy, but instead from their own experiential journey, where exposure to learner-centred methods may have been misrecognised, misused, or missing entirely.

In response to the observations above, this study explores how coach developers in the English FA reproduced 'learner-centred' coach education policy in practice. The English FA Level 1 course, is a pertinent case study because circa 20,000 learners undertake this qualification per annum. Further, the FA has gradually attempted to move from traditional tutor-centred courses towards learner-centred coach education (Chapman et al., 2019). Thus, consideration of the English FA level 1 in Coaching Football course is valuable as a means of understanding how a coach education policy, somewhat informed by social constructivism, is operationalised. The study therefore bridges the gap between understanding *what* policy has been created (in text and through discourse), and *how* it is reproduced in practice. By addressing this gap, the study builds upon recent Bernsteinian influenced conceptions of coach education, as a wide dynamic system (Bush & Williams, 2019; Dempsey et al., 2020). Thus, providing a more complete picture of coach education from policy to practice. Moreover, the significance of the study extends beyond the FA and coaching, by understanding how wider education systems may impact learning.

Theoretical Framework: Bernstein's Framing

In order to address the aim of exploring education policy in practice, the authors turn to the work of Basil Bernstein. Over a long academic career, Bernstein (1975, 1981, 1990, 2000) has demonstrated that education policy is socially negotiated by different stakeholders. Sadovnik (1991) recognised that Bernstein's early work "stressed the importance of structuralist enquiry" (p. 48). Bernstein's emphasis on structure reflects the influence of Emile Durkheim, on his work (Best, 2007). Specifically, Bernstein (1975) believed that "Durkheim…has shown us that the structure of society…reveals both distribution of power and the principles of social control" (p. 86), and thus structure, power and control are key features of Bernstein's work in education. Since then, Bernstein continually developed

concepts and terminology to explain the role of *structure* at the macro level and its impact upon *agency* at the micro level of pedagogic discourse.

Importantly, through a sociolinguistic approach, Bernstein (1975) also recognised how individual actors may use their agency to recontextualise knowledge and (re)frame education policy, inherited from powerful structures as part of a knowledge construction process. Here, agency could be seen from an ecological perspective as the resources and contextual factors that promote individual action, such as learner-centred practice, within a given situation (Priestley et al., 2015). Given the nature of previous coach education research (typically authoritarian), coach developers in English football may not have experienced much *agency* as learners (Cushion et al., 2003). That said, while individual actions may be influenced by the prevailing structures of the social world, coach developers, as professionals, do have autonomy to make their own choices and enact learner-centred practice (Hay & Hunter, 2006). Autonomy here is defined as "the quality or state of being self-governing…and the capacity of an agent to determine its own actions through independent choice…" (Ballou, 1998, p.105). Accordingly, although there is a body of evidence that suggests coach developers should use learner-centred methods (Paquette & Trudel, 2018a; Paquette & Trudel, 2018b), there is a need to understand if, and how, coach developers utilise their autonomy to reproduce such policies in practice, and what agency may be required to do so. To that end, the remainder of this section introduces the Bernsteinian concept of framing as a theoretical aid to examine how coach developers in the English FA reproduce policy in practice.

To our knowledge, no study has explicitly used the Bernsteinian concept of 'framing' (1975, 1981) to explore how policy is reproduced within formal coach education. This is remiss because framing is concerned with *who* controls *what* at the micro level of pedagogic practice (Bernstein, 2000). Indeed, Bernstein (2000) developed and explained framing as

control of the following pedagogic features: (1) Selection – who (coach developers or learners) chooses what is taught; (2) Sequencing – who chooses what is taught first, second, etc.; (3) Pacing – who decides the rate at which something is taught, for example, how long to allow for activities, discussions, debates, and practical demonstrations; (4) Criteria/Evaluation – what is used to determine success. Thus, framing is concerned with 'how' curriculum is taught and is a key concept to examine learner-centred courses.

For Bernstein (2000), framing can be considered as being either *strong* or *weak*. Such terminology should not be interpreted at the level of positive or negative, or as strong in relation to better, and weak in relation to worse. Rather, strong framing represents educator control over the selection, sequencing, pacing, and evaluation criteria. Through controlling these features, educators can influence how learners develop and demonstrate competency (Aldous & Brown, 2010; Aldous & Freeman, 2017). In contrast, weak framing sees the learner have more apparent control over the features by drawing upon knowledge gained from outside the education institution (Aldous & Freeman, 2017; Bernstein, 2000). Bernstein (2000) identified that each of the control features of framing can be strongly or weakly framed independently of one another. For example, a lesson could be strongly framed in terms of sequencing (i.e., controlled by the coach developer), but have a weak frame when it came to pacing (i.e., determined by the learners). This is important because a mixture of strongly and weakly framed features can lead to a collaborative 'learner-centred' course with insights from policy makers, course designers, coach developers, and crucially the learners themselves.

Traditionally, learners on football courses have had limited control over their learning because courses have been strongly framed by policy makers (Chapman et al., 2019). That said, Bernstein (1990) identified that educators do have the autonomy to frame knowledge, within the boundaries of the policy, and thus they can regulate communicative practice

between themselves and learners on-course. Therefore, the Bernsteinian lens of framing provides 'a rigorous framework to illuminate the mechanisms of power and control' within a pedagogic space (Badger, 2010, p. 515). For example, coach developers or learners may choose to include information from a particular presentation slide, while excluding another. In essence, framing is a useful analytical tool to examine the interaction of 'learner-centred' macro policy (structure) within the everyday practice of coach developers and learners.

Methodology

Paradigmatic Positioning

This research was underpinned by ontological relativism (i.e., reality is multiple) and epistemological constructivism (i.e., knowledge is constructed and therefore subjective) (Lincoln et al., 2018). These positions manifest within this research through the subjective interpretations of the authors, the views of coach developers, and the socially constructed policies of the FA. This is acknowledged, as the case study was conducted *with* the FA, as opposed to simply *on* the FA.

Context of the Case

Case studies, as used in this research, provide the capacity to develop an in-depth, holistic understanding of a particular issue, event, or person (Hodge & Sharp, 2017). Coach education courses are bounded milestones on a coach's journey and thus, are suitable for situated and temporal case study research.

The FA Level 1 in Coaching Football is an entry-level course that is developed by full-time FA staff and is accredited by a regulator in England (The FA, 2019). Part-time

coach developers, who are employed and managed by full-time FA staff, deliver most of these courses. Learners on FA Level 1 courses typically coach in the participation domain (Côté et al., 2010), with a focus on providing safe, fun, and engaging opportunities for players.

The course (The FA, 2019)

In 2016, the FA relaunched 'The Level 1 in Coaching Football'. The course is made up of seven workshops, and short online modules. These workshops include football-specific technical and tactical information and knowledge from a variety of disciplines such as physiology, sociology, and psychology. Each course lasts three and a half days. On course, coach developers engage learners with PowerPoint presentations, group discussions, individual planning, and evaluation of practical football sessions. Learners are assessed in four core areas: (1) completion of three online modules (introduction to coaching, long term player development, plan-do-review process); (2) attendance at all workshops; (3) completion of 11 workbook tasks in a 'learner journal'; and, (4) delivery of an accumulative 15 minute practical session.

Sampling courses

In order to examine the policy in practice, a purposeful and convenient case sampling approach was adopted (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This strategy enabled three courses, informed by the 2016 policy to be observed. Details of the participants (see Table 1.) have been kept vague. Each coach developer is part of a small community of circa 300 practitioners and may become identifiable should more information be provided.

173 *INSERT TABLE 1.*

174 **Table 1.** Coach Developer information.

Course	No. of par-ticipants	Coach Developer Age	Coach Developer Gender	Highest Coaching Qualification	Coach Developer Experience
1	18	50	Male	Level 3	18 years as a coach developer for the FA. Teacher.
2	14	45	Male	Level 3	4 years as a coach developer for the FA. Ex-academy coach. Teacher.
3	17	52	Male	Level 4	10 years as a coach developer for the FA. Ex-Academy coach. Manager. Teacher.

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176 **Data Collection Methods**

177 Subsequent to institutional ethical approval, data were collected on the coach education
178 policy, the coach developer's interpretation of the policy, and how the policy was reproduced
179 on course.

180

181 ***(Digital) Documentation***

182 To consider policy and curriculum, documents from the FA were examined. These included:
183 (1) The FA learning strategy; (2) scheme of work and qualification specification (accredited

by an awarding body; (3) FA course specific PowerPoint presentations (n = 7); (4) FA posters that represent key messages to be relayed to learners (n = 12); and, (5) a learner journal given to learners on the course. These documents demonstrate how the policy is recontextualised into resources that coach developers and learners use. Documents created by coach developers, such as individualised schemes of work, and worksheets given to the learners were also collected.

Semi-structured Interviews

To understand how coach developers' interpret policy in practice, a one-to-one semi-structured interview was carried out with each coach developer on each course (n = 3). A narrative form of interview schedule prompted coach developers to share their stories of current practice. All interviews were audio recorded, took place on the course site (e.g., clubhouse), and lasted between 28-47 minutes (total minutes: 111 minutes; mean: 36 minutes; S.D: 9.60).

Sensory Observational Field Notes

To examine policy in practice, the lead author recorded field notes based on 71 hours of observation on the courses. Palmer and Grecic's (2014) framework for field notes was used as a basis for structuring observation. The framework was amended to include a sensual approach to observations as the previous framework did not consider what may be felt by observers and participants including emotions, and nuances that 'make' the event what it is. Indeed, Morris (2017) encourages observers to move beyond the 'hegemony of the eye', and consider what we hear, smell, touch, and feel. Examples of this include: the smell of freshly cut grass, the touch of a football, and the sound of children playing.

Photography

To understand the context in which policy is reproduced, the first author took photographs of the course environments (n = 28). Photographs detailed the layout of classroom spaces, as well as work produced by coach developers and learners. Images were captured to invoke a 'feeling' for the context, and to enable co-researchers and readers to *see* the environment in which policy was reproduced. This was appropriate because visual methods provide an opportunity to illuminate the sensual experiences (Pink, 2013). In order to protect the anonymity of participants, photographs did not include people on the course.

In sum, the four methods enabled data to be collected on the policy, the people reproducing the policy, the environment, and the practice itself.

Analysis

Braun et al.'s (2016) six-stage approach to Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to analyse the data corpus. This process involved abductive TA incorporating inductive observation and deductive reasoning. Within Stage 1. initial inductive analysis occurred through the reading and re-reading of observation notes, interview transcripts, and documentation to generate intuitive codes. During Stage 2. data were inputted into NVivo 11. Codes were assigned to observation notes, interviews, and documentation. Stage 3. continued the inductive analysis through discussions with co-authors. Initial codes were challenged and debated. These initial codes were then clustered together to form provisional themes (e.g., initial theme development focused on learner-centred pedagogy, new content on the courses, and assessment). Stage 4. required the lead author to go back and review the dataset. The Bernsteinian concept of framing was used as a theoretical aid at this point to analyse the clusters of codes. Stage 5. further focused on a theoretical explanation as to 'how' and 'why'

coach developers carried out their practice. Finally, Stage 6. involved co-authors discussing the generated themes and their rationale (e.g., theme idea: an attempt to socially construct learning). During this stage, photographs were used to inform, and affirm the themes identified.

Creative Non-fiction (CNF) Representation

A composite CNF approach (Erickson et al., 2016) involving the amalgamation of data from three courses was used to report the findings. CNF involves narratives that are "fictional in form yet factual in content. It is grounded in real events and people's lived experiences that a researcher has observed in some fashion" (Smith et al., 2016, p. 59). Literary techniques such as storytelling, and imagery were used to describe scenes, characters, and plots, while representing the data and themes. Indeed, each theme is represented through a first-person account from a fictitious coach developer (Richard), and also learner coaches whose voices are delineated via *italics*. The CNF provides a level of confidentiality for individual identities (Erickson et al., 2016). The CNF also reflects the relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology of the study by including the voice of the lead author.

Rigour and Quality

The lead author is a practicing coach developer within the FA. To manage subjectivity, it was decided not to sample courses within the region where they work. A reflective journal that detailed the research processes was also maintained and formed the basis of critical discussions with co-authors. For example, the lead author often discussed the practical elements of course experience. In contrast, co-authors challenged this by focusing discussions on broader conceptual considerations.

With regards to the CNF, the findings should not only be a thought provoking read, but provide critical analysis (Denison, 2016). Accordingly, after each theme in the CNF, a Bersteinian interpretation is presented to address the research question. Given the nature of case study research, and the small number of coach developers observed in this study, we do not generalise the interpretations from the sample. Instead, we encourage readers to critically consider the theoretical transferability to their own context (Smith, 2018). When doing so, readers may wish to consider O'Malley et al. (2018) who appreciate how qualitative research in general can be judged (e.g., rigour, transparency, impact), but also provide criteria specific to CNF (evocation, authenticity, coherence).

Findings and Discussion

This study aimed to examine how formal coach education *policy* was reproduced by coach developers in *practice*. A CNF narrative of the data analysed is presented in this section, to illustrate the following three themes: Theme 1 – A course guided by a high volume of strongly framed assessment; Theme 2 – A wide range of strongly framed content on-course; and, Theme 3 – Attempts to weakly frame pedagogic practice. The CNF does not follow a logical order of day one, two, and three. Instead, each theme encapsulates moments that best represent the data.

Theme 1 – A course guided by a high volume of strongly framed assessment.

INSERT IMAGE 1

"I may not have been as specific or meticulous as I could have been, so can you turn to page 24 (task 2) and complete that page". I was surprised to hear Richard say such a thing. Typically, Richard was very structured, very organised. He had to be. There was no time to waste. Eleven tasks had to be done. Richard now paced around the room, but not in his usual enthusiastic and animated manner. Instead, the pacing said, 'let's get this done'. He bellowed, '*Those of you who do not coach, please sit with someone who currently has a team'*. There was a shuffle of learners as they searched for someone who had a team. Moving on from task 2, Richard briefly described task 3. Later he glided over to me, '*do you know what we have to do here?'* I sat and gave my interpretation of what I thought had to be done. Richard sarcastically commented; '*I would love to be in the meeting when someone decided this would be a good task three'*. I half agreed. The task is not the most fruitful for learners, but it had to get done. Richard went through stage-by-stage of how he wanted learners to complete task 3. The learners put their heads down. Continued to scribble. They sat, hot and sweaty from the morning spent in a learner-led practical session. The back door of the clubhouse slid open to allow the fresh breeze to fill the room and remove the stench of sweaty feet. The

atmosphere in the classroom felt different than the pitch. It didn't fill me with the joy and enthusiasm of the outdoor session. Richard swiftly moved to task 4.

Richard whizzed through each point on the slide before getting learners to discuss briefly in groups and bullet point their answers. Shuffling on seats, frantic pens on paper, the learners were 'getting it done'. I trotted over to Richard in my socks, minding the bags and the boots flung on the floor. I could feel black pellets from the 3G pitch seeping between my toes. Richard was continuing to pace, to observe, wide eyed at the learners to gauge who'd finished. I asked him what value he felt those three tasks across 20 minutes brought to the course. I wanted his feelings, his emotions.

> *it's an administrative task. I guess it's good for learners to complete because if they go back to their journal in six months' time, they may see one or two things. We are also told about, if an External Verifier comes in, it will cause some issues.*

Richard was familiar with verification formalities including quality assurance staff checking the standards of learners' work, his own marking, and the pass rates on the course. Tasks are important, but, wow, there was a lot of them!

Bernsteinian interpretation

Richard maintained control over the selection, sequencing, and pacing of all predetermined tasks, which subsequently limited learner input. From a Bernsteinian (2000) perspective, Richard's reproduction of policy could be shaped (intentionally and unintentionally) by other macro and meso level influences during policy creation. For instance, as a coach developer, Richard inherited a high volume of predetermined assessment that is monitored by an external regulator. 11 tasks are mandated to be completed. Thus, Richard could only partially

control and influence a process already relayed to him by a wider coach education system (Culver et al., 2019), which reflects Bernstein's recognition of powerful structures. This means that Richard's ability to frame assessment is bounded by decisions made during knowledge production (macro) and recontextualisation (meso) of policy as it is cascaded down to him. This process resulted in all learners completing 11 assessments that the FA and awarding body feel *should* be known in order to 'pass' or 'complete' a regulated qualification. This strongly framed approach to assessment may help achieve the strategic objective of increasing the quantity and quality of coaches but it does not necessarily build upon what individual learners already know, nor support the notion of what *could* be known by these learners. Rather, assessment on the courses were predictable, linear, uniform and plentiful.

Marking and verification processes also appeared to influence Richard and he interpreted them as wider ecological factors that encourage strongly framed assessment. Priestly et al. (2015) and Young et al. (2020) have observed similar effects in school-based education, where prescribed assessment can limit educator agency. This stems from a much wider system of education, where performance management techniques such as verification and quantifiable key performance indicators assume great importance as quality control mechanisms for ensuring consistency across learning provisions. Further, quality control processes may help coach education providers address strategic priorities, which in the FA's case, included increasing the quality and quantity of coaches (Dempsey et al., 2020). Nonetheless, it has been noted, that standardised competency-based assessment may constrain learner-centred coach education (Collins et al., 2015). This is because learners may become the subjects *of*, rather than dialogical collaborators *in*, assessment. Here, the predetermined and desired outcomes of institutions may disproportionately constrain the agency of coach developers and learners to co-create knowledge and assessment relevant to a

coach's needs (Cope et al., 2020). As Richard's story and other research (Collins et al., 2015) suggests, predetermined assessment may be viewed as performative, and may not impact coaches' long-term behaviours.

Within the boundaries of the pre-prepared material, it is important to note that Richard had a degree of autonomy and perhaps learners could have completed tasks a different way (e.g., at home in their own time). Richard, however, felt he could not deviate away from prescribed tasks and that these had to be completed in a specific order. He appeared to lack a suitable degree of agency (an environment that encourages his independent choices) to select, and sequence tasks with learners. Therefore, NGBs may wish to (re)consider how assessment orientated processes can encourage coach developers and learners to exercise their autonomy. To this end, those NGBs who desire individualised, learner-centred courses, may benefit from a less voluminous and more weakly framed evaluative process that assesses learners in relation to their own contexts, interests, and areas for development.

Theme 2 – A wide range of strongly framed content on-course

The calm transcended the early morning mist and fog. In the room, the heater was turned on. Richard sat back in his chair. We sat together and sipped tea, surrounded by tables set with flip chart paper folded, pens laid on top, and a PowerPoint presentation at the ready. We discussed the content that filled the course.

There's been loads of prep work to do because on level 1's, I can't tell you what the number is, but I'm going to guess off the top of my head here, over 200 slides. Going through all of those slides and deciding what to use, which ones to skip through, what to say about the slides is actually a massive prep task.

Richard's guess was almost correct; there were 193 slides provided to coach developers by the FA. In addition, twelve A2 posters with complimentary key messages. I offered to put the posters on the walls. 'N*ot all of them, I don't want to throw too much at them'*, Richard replied.

INSERT IMAGE 2

Figure 2. England DNA Fundamentals.

Good decision by Richard as he chose what information he felt would be best. Similar messages appeared in PowerPoints during workshops two, four, and six, as well as in the learner journal. I was convinced that the learners, who were trickling through the door, coffees in hand, bags around their shoulders, would know the NGBs messages by the end of the course.

The morning progressed swiftly; '*Can we all be saying the same things nationally?'* Richard spoke passionately about the core messages. He sold them to the learners who listened with intent to understand why these messages were important. There were few interruptions.

> *These are good tips, that if you try and bring out in your coaching, will be good for your coaching practice. If you nail 3-4 of them today, great! If by the end of the course if you can do 6-7 of them, then brilliant, and you can build up to the 12 in your own coaching.*

The learners' flicked between glancing at the poster, reading the journal page they were on, and looking at the slide. They heard the governing body's core messages, saw them on slides and posters, and later, on the pitch, experienced them. It's there and there's no way of getting away from it. The frantic note taking, and signposting of information was, on the one hand great, but blimey there was a lot of it. Swiftly moving through the morning workshop at a gallop, Richard was very conscious about stopping conversations to make sure we 'moved on'. '*We'll come back to that*, or, *we're visiting that in workshop X'.* We rarely got back to it though. There's so much to get through. I asked Richard about staying 'on task'. I saw an element of guilt, or frustration at stopping some great conversations.

> Y*ou can just go off on a tangent and I think it would still be valuable for these grassroots coaches, but then you deviate from the plan for the day. A little bit too much conversation and then, all of a sudden, you're chasing time and might not get everything covered. So I just try and stay on target with the content really.*

Bernsteinian interpretation

Like theme one, Richard adopted a strongly framed approach to the selection, sequencing and pacing of content. For example, Richard decided which posters to display and to discard. It could be argued that strongly framed content is useful to provide universal 'key messages' to entry level learners. A strongly framed selection of content may also be appropriate if content needs to be acquired by learners before it can be contextualised (Aldous & Freeman, 2017). Richard's use of strongly framed content is also understandable given Bernstein's (2000) view that framing occurs at the end of a policy creation process influenced by different stakeholders. Related to this, Dempsey et al. (2020) reported that a small group of experienced full time staff at the FA were responsible for developing content they deemed relevant to learners. This structural influence manifested in Richard's practice through key messages on materials such as posters, and PowerPoints, which Richard consistently emphasised. Interestingly, Bernstein (1975) commented that "curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge" (p.85), and thus, in defining the curriculum, this group within the FA, have had a powerful influence on what counts as quality coaching. This defining of *what* counts as valid knowledge was further reinforced through close links between content (theme 2) and the assessment (theme 1). Thus, the insights and expertise of policy makers and course designers, have had a large influence on what knowledge was explored, and concomitantly what knowledge was worthy of certification. In contrast, the specific cohort of learner coaches that worked with Richard had little influence on what knowledge was deemed important on course.

When considering Richard's practice it is also important to recognise that an educator who weakly frames content, could in fact be compromising the learner's certification. This is because the course requires learners to complete strongly framed assessment and demonstrate

understanding of strongly framed content. In these circumstances, coach developers such as Richard and the learners primarily focused on the prescribed content and assessment. Indeed examples of individualised or learner-focused practice that deviated from the prescribed content, were rare. There was little room for the learners themselves, to select, sequence or pace content, beyond the status quo. When learners did begin deeper discussions, Richard's interpretation that prescribed content needed to be covered led to some missed opportunities to centre learning in the interests of the coaches. Cushion et al. (2019) commented that such a process constitutes a vying for power, and that in this case, coach developers may feel they cannot override the assessment and content provided to them. This may mean that the coach developer's role could largely manifest through the technocratic transmission of a predetermined curriculum to achieve strategic aims. Such a limited view of the coach developer role would be remiss because coach developers are well positioned to not only transmit pre-prepared content, but also to critically explore content, to creatively consider how learners could apply knowledge in their own context, and to care for learners. Without time and space to do this, learners may not access knowledge that is relevant to their context. Consideration, therefore, should be given to forms of communication (Priestley et al., 2015) that encourage coach developers, such as Richard, to utilise their autonomy and co-construct the curriculum with learners. To this end, policy makers may wish to consider how coach developers can weakly frame *some* content in order for learners to select, sequence or pace knowledge that is meaningful to them. However, consideration must also be given to the ability and skill levels of coach developers to perform such processes (Cope et al., 2020). Subsequently, NGBs may wish to (re)consider the training requirements for coach developers, as well as the amount of content provided in what are short time-bounded courses (Culver et al., 2019). Research should also investigate if providing more training, time and space for coach developers and learners to collaborate and frame their own learning (i.e.,

select, sequence and pace content) could be beneficial. Potentially and paradoxically, this less prescribed approach to coach education policy including content and assessment (Theme 1), may actually lead to learning that is more relevant.

Theme 3 – Attempts to weakly frame pedagogic practice

I remember the speech Richard gave to the learners on day one of the course:

> *I really don't want you to stress about passing, I'm sure you'll all pass, these courses now are far more about a journey rather than coming on and doing an assessment, which is what it used to be, so it's far more formative now and I will be supporting you on that. I'm on a journey, just like you guys, I don't profess to know everything, you guys have experiences that I don't have, so I have no doubt I will be learning from you! If I can help you enjoy it more, that means you'll make it better for your players. I'm not here to show you how to coach, I'm here to provide some suggestions and give some advice.*

This felt genuine. Richard wanted to help and support the learners. On the subsequent days, Richard used smiles and enthusiasm to greet the learners each morning, before probing them with the opening question. *'Did you try anything in your session?'* An inevitable starter question for anyone looking to be learner-centred. As always, the day moved at a canter, Richard walked round, diving into group discussions set on knowing the players the coaches worked with. In that moment, the room was vibrant, voices echoed, experiences were shared. I observed Richard as he tapped into the coaches' emotion and encouraged them to recognise players as people. Richard discussed children's home lives, how some children have very

difficult lives, how the best part of their week might be that one-hour football session. It struck a chord with most coaches. They were focused, and no one wanted to break that focus. There was a collective empathy for players, the children. It was a powerful moment. But just a moment. There it was again, that perceived lack of agency from Richard. He felt there was no time to further explore how we could help; we needed to get through the rest of the PowerPoint, plan sessions, complete assessments and get on to the pitch to cover some material, didn't we?

After the PowerPoint, it was the learner's turn to deliver a practical session. Richard proclaimed *I have tried to get to know and find out what the group are like and what they need*. Based on this, Richard assigned each learner either an arrival activity (simple) or a game related practice (more complicated). I wondered if the learners could have chosen which one they wanted help with.

INSERT IMAGE 3

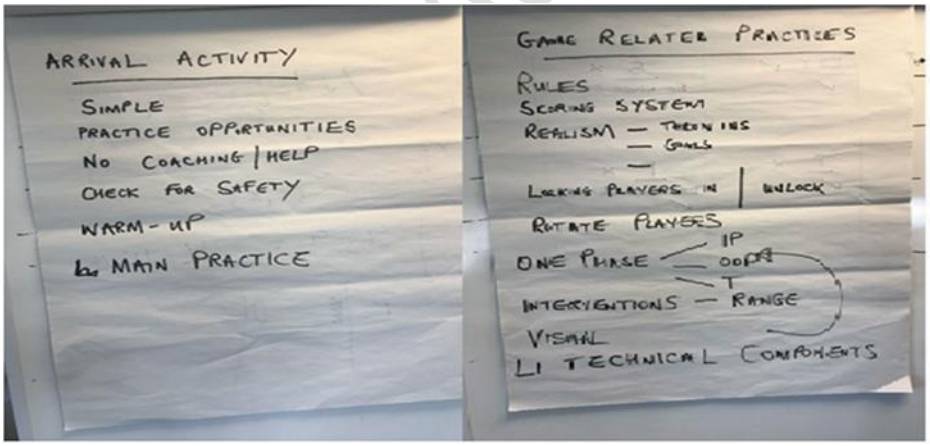

Figure 3. Coach Developer Fipchart Notes.

Richard allowed as much time as he felt he could afford. They had 15 minutes to plan or tweak their sessions. He offered example templates of sessions, ideas to either copy or adapt.

Most learners came prepared, as Richard had sent out their topic in advance. 15 minutes was up, and Richard shoved his boots on. *'Who's got the balls?'* Then, he rhetorically said to me; *'where has the time gone!?'* It's nonstop!

INSERT IMAGE 4

Figure 4. Learner Resource and Learner Work.

During a debrief of a learner's session, Richard asked the learners for their thoughts: *"you could tell that it had been planned"* offered Jeremy. '*Go on, what do you mean?'* Jeremy continued, *"the fact that you'd given it to us a few days before, I don't know about everyone, but it gave me the opportunity to have a look at it. I had to adapt mine because of your rules, the tutor resource thing that you gave us, and the online thing that you sent out. So, I really had to think about it and adapt it."* Other learners joined in, *"from what I saw the other coaches do, I had to really think about it, I had to plan it"*. Richard praised them all. There it was, a high-quality moment where coach developer and learners had benefitted from each other's experiences. And you could feel the uplifting sense of achievement, joy and beaming smiles. Such moments were great, but rare.

Bernsteinian interpretation

Although Richard made authentic strides to create connections between the content and the learners, the interaction between both the macro (theme 1) and meso (theme 2) structures ultimately influenced micro-level pedagogic practice on-course, and meant that Richard maintained much control. Importantly, as Theme 3 demonstrates, throughout the course Richard welcomed coaches, built relationships with them, and asked questions to understand their perspectives. There were also rare examples of Richard adapting the selection, sequencing, or pacing of the course in response to this information (e.g., allocating learners to either an arrival or a game related activity). It would appear to some extent, Richard tried to instil a pedagogy shaped by a learner-centred approach, which may require a weakly framed approach to on-course practice. Similar to Young et al.'s (2020) Bernsteinian analysis of PE, however, Richard experienced a tension between strongly framed content/assessment, and a more weakly framed approach that promotes individualised learning. Related to this, Bernstein (2000) highlighted that educators' framing is often confined within the boundaries of wider discourse. In this case, FA courses have a long history of competency based assessment and influential stakeholders leading coach education (Chapman et al. 2019). Similarly, the level 1 is dominated by predetermined assessment (macro) and a priori content (meso). Richard's attempts to individualise learning were framed within these boundaries. For example, his attempt to allocate different activities to different learners should be appreciated but demonstrates how selection of content remained within the boundaries of that prescribed by stakeholders. Further, he ultimately maintained control of the content, with learners having little control of the selection, sequencing or pacing of activities, discussions, and assessment.

Richard's strong framing is worthy of consideration because Morais (2002) argued successful learning depends on weak framing of pacing to enable educators to 'go off script'

and respond to learner's needs. Similarly, Penney (2013) called for learners to have control of *some* framing features if courses are to support learner development more effectively. For example, perhaps learners could decide what content perhaps they discuss, apply, and critique in two of the seven FA workshops. Doing so may enable learners to access knowledge that they deem relevant, and suitable to their own practical contexts. Further, involving learners in the selection, sequencing and pacing of courses may prompt critical and creative contemplation of curricular. Of course, this does not mean that learners should have control of *all* features. On the contrary, policy makers and developers, as professionals, have expertise. They should lead and strongly frame certain elements of courses. This may be particularly important on a level 1 course with novice coaches. Policy makers also have laudable strategic aims that need to be met such as increasing the quantity and quality of coaches. Nonetheless, perhaps weaker pacing would enable developers like Richard to build on their relationships with learners and further explore prescribed knowledge. Similarly, a weaker selection of content may also enable a balance between the purpose of policymakers and purposes of practitioners.

A concluding scene

Walking back in from the last practical of the course, I caught up with a learner, Steve. He coached an U10's team. He was a big bald bruiser of a man. I would never argue about a throw-in with him. He declared:

> *"I'm 56-years-old and I've been coaching on and off now for nearly 25 years. I've learned so much from this course. I thought I knew about football, but what I've learned, has completely changed how I acted and behaved on Tuesday night. I wasn't*

ranting and raving. I let the kids try and make the decisions and when they did, I just praised them for that, the smile on their faces! I actually went home feeling like a new man and it was just a revelation".

Conclusion

This study examined how formal coach education *policy* was reproduced by coach developers in *practice*. The Bernsteinian concept of framing provided a mechanism to understand the reproduction of policy on the ground, as detailed through creative non-fiction vignettes. What must be remembered is that strong framing (i.e., controlled by the developer) does not mean good, nor weak framing (i.e., controlled by the learner) bad, or vice versa. Instead, it is about *who* controls *what*. With this in mind, we found the FA Level 1 courses in this case study had: 1) a high volume of strongly framed assessment regulated by an external provider; 2) a wide range of strongly framed content provided by the NGB; and 3) coach developers who attempted to weakly frame pedagogic practice. The high volume of assessment and wide range of content, in part, influenced the pacing of the coach developers' practice. However, the strong pacing was also amplified by the coach developers' interpretation of policy and feelings of limited agency in determining how the learning environment could be structured. This meant, that for much of the course, learner coaches had little control over the selection, sequencing, pacing, and evaluation. Such observations, appear incongruent with learner-centred approaches to coach education and may prompt readers to consider and question, would less strongly framed practice mean more meaningful learning? That said, as noted in the concluding scene, strongly framed courses can also benefit learners, and thus a balance is advocated.

As the study concludes, what must be acknowledged, is that different coach developers outside the sample herein, might have interpreted policy differently. Nonetheless, this deconstruction of the FA level 1 course has identified the macro and meso influences on

coach developer practice. Given Richard's efforts to socially construct learning within the boundaries of these influences, it would seem important to acknowledge his endeavour, and not only deconstruct practice but offer ways where reconstruction could occur. To that end, *if* NGBs desire learner-centred provision, then there is a need to consider (a) how adult learners can co-construct curriculum relevant to their needs, and (b) how coach education as an ecological system can enable coach developers to do so. There may be a number of potential ways of achieving this. First, course designers and policy makers should continue to observe and listen to coach developers' interpretation of policy, as we have done here. This would give a clear idea of whether policy has been understood and interpreted in the manner intended. Second, *if* course designers espouse a learner-centred pedagogy, they may want to consider a less voluminous and a narrower range of prescribed assessment and content. A 'selection-box' metaphor, where some space and time are allocated for learners to explore areas of their choosing may be helpful here. Thirdly, Bernstein's concept of framing, which is introduced explicitly to coach education for the first time in this paper, could serve as a useful reflective mechanism for coach developers to use. Framing features including selection, sequencing, pacing, and evaluation could help NGBs shape and guide course design with external bodies such as funding regulatory agencies. Of course, we appreciate that for coach education providers such as the FA, designing and delivering learner-centred coach education is neither easy, nor straightforward. Moreover, using Bernstein's framing concept within this study has identified that constructivist epistemology and learner-centred courses are not immune from the social influences and the power of policy development. Thus, this study also highlights the need to further examine who influences learning, where, when, and how. Such consideration is timely, given the current pandemic and recent dramatic changes in coach education. Here, in the immediate present, coach education, and indeed wider education, is likely to embrace online learning, and may be provided by new organisations.

As demonstrated within this study, the priorities and perspectives of wider macro and meso influencers may shape how education is framed in everyday practice. Post Covid-19, at a time when it may be needed most, it is important to consider who selects, sequences, and paces knowledge, and to what purpose.

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