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-

25   centred', (b) a scaffold between what learners already know and new understandings they

26   seek to know, and (c) uses problem-based and other 'active' methods to enable "mass

27   individualisation of personal development" (FA Education, 2016, p. 6). These changes were

28   part of a response by the FA to criticisms from Sport England and the UK Government, who

29   highlighted the need to increase the quality and quantity of coaches (Dempsey et al., 2020).

30   Critically, Dempsey et al. (2020) analysis of that policy process indicates that multiple

31   stakeholders contributed to the creation of course materials including content and assessment.

32   Further, during the policy process, recontextualisation occurred and policy makers and coach

33   developers interviewed in the study highlighted some elements of confusion. That said,

34   Dempsey et al. (2020) may have highlighted the complex nature of policy creation and

35   recontextualisation, but they did not examine how the policy was operationalised in practice.

36   Therefore, while recent research has shown how coach education policy, informed by social

37   constructivism, is subject to multiple social influences, there is a need to examine how these

38   influences and policies are reproduced by coach developers on courses.

39   The practice of coach developers is an important area of study because according to

40   Stodter and Cushion (2019), coach developer training has traditionally been generic and its

41   effect on coach developers' ability to support coaches is unclear. Rather, prior learning

42   experiences may be a larger influence on how coach developers practice (Cushion et al.,

43   2019). For example, Cushion and colleagues (2019) suggested that coach developers'

44   practices were often ideological and reproduced current practice, as opposed to challenging it.

45   This may include naïve claims to empower learners, but nonetheless impose the language and

46   meanings representative of prevailing cultures. Such naivety stems, not from a Machiavellian

47   intention by developers to ignore policy, but instead from their own experiential journey,

48   where exposure to learner-centred methods may have been misrecognised, misused, or

49   missing entirely.

50   In response to the observations above, this study explores how coach developers in

51   the English FA reproduced 'learner-centred' coach education policy in practice. The English

52   FA Level 1 course, is a pertinent case study because circa 20,000 learners undertake this

53   qualification per annum. Further, the FA has gradually attempted to move from traditional

54   tutor-centred courses towards learner-centred coach education (Chapman et al., 2019). Thus,

55   consideration of the English FA level 1 in Coaching Football course is valuable as a means of

56   understanding how a coach education policy, somewhat informed by social constructivism, is

57   operationalised. The study therefore bridges the gap between understanding *what* policy has

58   been created (in text and through discourse), and *how* it is reproduced in practice. By

59   addressing this gap, the study builds upon recent Bernsteinian influenced conceptions of

60   coach education, as a wide dynamic system (Bush & Williams, 2019; Dempsey et al., 2020).

61   Thus, providing a more complete picture of coach education from policy to practice.

62   Moreover, the significance of the study extends beyond the FA and coaching, by

63   understanding how wider education systems may impact learning.

64

Theoretical Framework: Bernstein's Framing

66   In order to address the aim of exploring education policy in practice, the authors turn to the

67   work of Basil Bernstein. Over a long academic career, Bernstein (1975, 1981, 1990, 2000)

68   has demonstrated that education policy is socially negotiated by different stakeholders.

69   Sadovnik (1991) recognised that Bernstein's early work "stressed the importance of

70   structuralist enquiry" (p. 48). Bernstein's emphasis on structure reflects the influence of

71   Emile Durkheim, on his work (Best, 2007). Specifically, Bernstein (1975) believed that

72   "Durkheim…has shown us that the structure of society…reveals both distribution of power

73   and the principles of social control" (p. 86), and thus structure, power and control are key

74   features of Bernstein's work in education. Since then, Bernstein continually developed

75 concepts and terminology to explain the role of *structure* at the macro level and its impact

76 upon *agency* at the micro level of pedagogic discourse.

77   Importantly, through a sociolinguistic approach, Bernstein (1975) also recognised

78 how individual actors may use their agency to recontextualise knowledge and (re)frame

79 education policy, inherited from powerful structures as part of a knowledge construction

80 process. Here, agency could be seen from an ecological perspective as the resources and

81 contextual factors that promote individual action, such as learner-centred practice, within a

82 given situation (Priestley et al., 2015). Given the nature of previous coach education research

83 (typically authoritarian), coach developers in English football may not have experienced

84 much *agency* as learners (Cushion et al., 2003). That said, while individual actions may be

85 influenced by the prevailing structures of the social world, coach developers, as

86 professionals, do have autonomy to make their own choices and enact learner-centred

87 practice (Hay & Hunter, 2006). Autonomy here is defined as "the quality or state of being

88 self-governing…and the capacity of an agent to determine its own actions through

89 independent choice…" (Ballou, 1998, p.105). Accordingly, although there is a body of

90 evidence that suggests coach developers should use learner-centred methods (Paquette &

91 Trudel, 2018a; Paquette & Trudel, 2018b), there is a need to understand if, and how, coach

92 developers utilise their autonomy to reproduce such policies in practice, and what agency

93 may be required to do so. To that end, the remainder of this section introduces the

94 Bernsteinian concept of framing as a theoretical aid to examine how coach developers in the

95 English FA reproduce policy in practice.

96   To our knowledge, no study has explicitly used the Bernsteinian concept of 'framing'

97 (1975, 1981) to explore how policy is reproduced within formal coach education. This is

98 remiss because framing is concerned with *who* controls *what* at the micro level of pedagogic

99 practice (Bernstein, 2000). Indeed, Bernstein (2000) developed and explained framing as

100   control of the following pedagogic features: (1) Selection – who (coach developers or

101   learners) chooses what is taught; (2) Sequencing – who chooses what is taught first, second,

102   etc.; (3) Pacing – who decides the rate at which something is taught, for example, how long to

103   allow for activities, discussions, debates, and practical demonstrations; (4)

104   Criteria/Evaluation – what is used to determine success. Thus, framing is concerned with

105   'how' curriculum is taught and is a key concept to examine learner-centred courses.

106   For Bernstein (2000), framing can be considered as being either *strong* or *weak*. Such

107   terminology should not be interpreted at the level of positive or negative, or as strong in

108   relation to better, and weak in relation to worse. Rather, strong framing represents educator

109   control over the selection, sequencing, pacing, and evaluation criteria. Through controlling

110   these features, educators can influence how learners develop and demonstrate competency

111   (Aldous & Brown, 2010; Aldous & Freeman, 2017). In contrast, weak framing sees the

112   learner have more apparent control over the features by drawing upon knowledge gained

113   from outside the education institution (Aldous & Freeman, 2017; Bernstein, 2000). Bernstein

114   (2000) identified that each of the control features of framing can be strongly or weakly

115   framed independently of one another. For example, a lesson could be strongly framed in

116   terms of sequencing (i.e., controlled by the coach developer), but have a weak frame when it

117   came to pacing (i.e., determined by the learners). This is important because a mixture of

118   strongly and weakly framed features can lead to a collaborative 'learner-centred' course with

119   insights from policy makers, course designers, coach developers, and crucially the learners

120   themselves.

121   Traditionally, learners on football courses have had limited control over their learning

122   because courses have been strongly framed by policy makers (Chapman et al., 2019). That

123   said, Bernstein (1990) identified that educators do have the autonomy to frame knowledge,

124   within the boundaries of the policy, and thus they can regulate communicative practice

125 between themselves and learners on-course. Therefore, the Bernsteinian lens of framing

126 provides 'a rigorous framework to illuminate the mechanisms of power and control' within a

127 pedagogic space (Badger, 2010, p. 515). For example, coach developers or learners may

128 choose to include information from a particular presentation slide, while excluding another.

129 In essence, framing is a useful analytical tool to examine the interaction of 'learner-centred'

130 macro policy (structure) within the everyday practice of coach developers and learners.

131

Methodology

132

133

Paradigmatic Positioning

135 This research was underpinned by ontological relativism (i.e., reality is multiple) and

136 epistemological constructivism (i.e., knowledge is constructed and therefore subjective)

137 (Lincoln et al., 2018). These positions manifest within this research through the subjective

138 interpretations of the authors, the views of coach developers, and the socially constructed

139 policies of the FA. This is acknowledged, as the case study was conducted *with* the FA, as

140 opposed to simply *on* the FA.

141

Context of the Case

143   Case studies, as used in this research, provide the capacity to develop an in-depth,

144 holistic understanding of a particular issue, event, or person (Hodge & Sharp, 2017). Coach

145 education courses are bounded milestones on a coach's journey and thus, are suitable for

146 situated and temporal case study research.

147   The FA Level 1 in Coaching Football is an entry-level course that is developed by

148 full-time FA staff and is accredited by a regulator in England (The FA, 2019). Part-time

149   coach developers, who are employed and managed by full-time FA staff, deliver most of

150   these courses. Learners on FA Level 1 courses typically coach in the participation domain

151   (Côté et al., 2010), with a focus on providing safe, fun, and engaging opportunities for

152   players.

153

154   *The course (The FA, 2019)*

155   In 2016, the FA relaunched 'The Level 1 in Coaching Football'. The course is made up of

156   seven workshops, and short online modules. These workshops include football-specific

157   technical and tactical information and knowledge from a variety of disciplines such as

158   physiology, sociology, and psychology. Each course lasts three and a half days. On course,

159   coach developers engage learners with PowerPoint presentations, group discussions,

160   individual planning, and evaluation of practical football sessions. Learners are assessed in

161   four core areas: (1) completion of three online modules (introduction to coaching, long term

162   player development, plan-do-review process); (2) attendance at all workshops; (3) completion

163   of 11 workbook tasks in a 'learner journal'; and, (4) delivery of an accumulative 15 minute

164   practical session.

165

166   *Sampling courses*

167   In order to examine the policy in practice, a purposeful and convenient case sampling

168   approach was adopted (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This strategy enabled three courses,

169   informed by the 2016 policy to be observed. Details of the participants (see Table 1.) have

170   been kept vague. Each coach developer is part of a small community of circa 300

171   practitioners and may become identifiable should more information be provided.

172

173 *INSERT TABLE 1.*

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

Course	No. of participants	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.

175

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

8

184   by an awarding body; (3) FA course specific PowerPoint presentations (n = 7); (4) FA posters

185   that represent key messages to be relayed to learners (n = 12); and, (5) a learner journal given

186   to learners on the course. These documents demonstrate how the policy is recontextualised

187   into resources that coach developers and learners use. Documents created by coach

188   developers, such as individualised schemes of work, and worksheets given to the learners

189   were also collected.

190

191   *Semi-structured Interviews*

192   To understand how coach developers' interpret policy in practice, a one-to-one semi-

193   structured interview was carried out with each coach developer on each course (n = 3). A

194   narrative form of interview schedule prompted coach developers to share their stories of

195   current practice. All interviews were audio recorded, took place on the course site (e.g.,

196   clubhouse), and lasted between 28-47 minutes (total minutes: 111 minutes; mean: 36

197   minutes; S.D: 9.60).

198

199   *Sensory Observational Field Notes*

200   To examine policy in practice, the lead author recorded field notes based on 71 hours of

201   observation on the courses. Palmer and Grecic's (2014) framework for field notes was used

202   as a basis for structuring observation. The framework was amended to include a sensual

203   approach to observations as the previous framework did not consider what may be felt by

204   observers and participants including emotions, and nuances that 'make' the event what it is.

205   Indeed, Morris (2017) encourages observers to move beyond the 'hegemony of the eye', and

206   consider what we hear, smell, touch, and feel. Examples of this include: the smell of freshly

207   cut grass, the touch of a football, and the sound of children playing.

208

Photography

210 To understand the context in which policy is reproduced, the first author took photographs of

211 the course environments (n = 28). Photographs detailed the layout of classroom spaces, as

212 well as work produced by coach developers and learners. Images were captured to invoke a

213 'feeling' for the context, and to enable co-researchers and readers to *see* the environment in

214 which policy was reproduced. This was appropriate because visual methods provide an

215 opportunity to illuminate the sensual experiences (Pink, 2013). In order to protect the

216 anonymity of participants, photographs did not include people on the course.

217 In sum, the four methods enabled data to be collected on the policy, the people

218 reproducing the policy, the environment, and the practice itself.

219

Analysis

221 Braun et al.'s (2016) six-stage approach to Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to analyse the

222 data corpus. This process involved abductive TA incorporating inductive observation and

223 deductive reasoning. Within Stage 1. initial inductive analysis occurred through the reading

224 and re-reading of observation notes, interview transcripts, and documentation to generate

225 intuitive codes. During Stage 2. data were inputted into NVivo 11. Codes were assigned to

226 observation notes, interviews, and documentation. Stage 3. continued the inductive analysis

227 through discussions with co-authors. Initial codes were challenged and debated. These initial

228 codes were then clustered together to form provisional themes (e.g., initial theme

229 development focused on learner-centred pedagogy, new content on the courses, and

230 assessment). Stage 4. required the lead author to go back and review the dataset. The

231 Bernsteinian concept of framing was used as a theoretical aid at this point to analyse the

232 clusters of codes. Stage 5. further focused on a theoretical explanation as to 'how' and 'why'

10

233 coach developers carried out their practice. Finally, Stage 6. involved co-authors discussing

234 the generated themes and their rationale (e.g., theme idea: an attempt to socially construct

235 learning). During this stage, photographs were used to inform, and affirm the themes

236 identified.

237

Creative Non-fiction (CNF) Representation

239 A composite CNF approach (Erickson et al., 2016) involving the amalgamation of data from

240 three courses was used to report the findings. CNF involves narratives that are "fictional in

241 form yet factual in content. It is grounded in real events and people's lived experiences that a

242 researcher has observed in some fashion" (Smith et al., 2016, p. 59). Literary techniques such

243 as storytelling, and imagery were used to describe scenes, characters, and plots, while

244 representing the data and themes. Indeed, each theme is represented through a first-person

245 account from a fictitious coach developer (Richard), and also learner coaches whose voices

246 are delineated via *italics*. The CNF provides a level of confidentiality for individual identities

247 (Erickson et al., 2016). The CNF also reflects the relativist ontology and constructivist

248 epistemology of the study by including the voice of the lead author.

249

Rigour and Quality

251 The lead author is a practicing coach developer within the FA. To manage subjectivity, it was

252 decided not to sample courses within the region where they work. A reflective journal that

253 detailed the research processes was also maintained and formed the basis of critical

254 discussions with co-authors. For example, the lead author often discussed the practical

255 elements of course experience. In contrast, co-authors challenged this by focusing discussions

256 on broader conceptual considerations.

257   With regards to the CNF, the findings should not only be a thought provoking read,

258   but provide critical analysis (Denison, 2016). Accordingly, after each theme in the CNF, a

259   Bersteinian interpretation is presented to address the research question. Given the nature of

260   case study research, and the small number of coach developers observed in this study, we do

261   not generalise the interpretations from the sample. Instead, we encourage readers to critically

262   consider the theoretical transferability to their own context (Smith, 2018). When doing so,

263   readers may wish to consider O'Malley et al. (2018) who appreciate how qualitative research

264   in general can be judged (e.g., rigour, transparency, impact), but also provide criteria specific

265   to CNF (evocation, authenticity, coherence).

266

267   **Findings and Discussion**

268   This study aimed to examine how formal coach education *policy* was reproduced by coach

269   developers in *practice*. A CNF narrative of the data analysed is presented in this section, to

270   illustrate the following three themes: Theme 1 – A course guided by a high volume of

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

272   and, Theme 3 – Attempts to weakly frame pedagogic practice. The CNF does not follow a

273   logical order of day one, two, and three. Instead, each theme encapsulates moments that best

274   represent the data.

275

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

277

278   *INSERT IMAGE 1*

279

280

281   *"I may not have been as specific or meticulous as I could have been, so can you turn to page*

282   *24 (task 2) and complete that page"*. I was surprised to hear Richard say such a thing.

283   Typically, Richard was very structured, very organised. He had to be. There was no time to

284   waste. Eleven tasks had to be done. Richard now paced around the room, but not in his usual

285   enthusiastic and animated manner. Instead, the pacing said, 'let's get this done'. He bellowed,

286   '*Those of you who do not coach, please sit with someone who currently has a team'*. There

287   was a shuffle of learners as they searched for someone who had a team. Moving on from task

288   2, Richard briefly described task 3. Later he glided over to me, '*do you know what we have to*

289   *do here?'* I sat and gave my interpretation of what I thought had to be done. Richard

290   sarcastically commented; '*I would love to be in the meeting when someone decided this*

291   *would be a good task three'*. I half agreed. The task is not the most fruitful for learners, but it

292   had to get done. Richard went through stage-by-stage of how he wanted learners to complete

293   task 3. The learners put their heads down. Continued to scribble. They sat, hot and sweaty

294   from the morning spent in a learner-led practical session. The back door of the clubhouse slid

295   open to allow the fresh breeze to fill the room and remove the stench of sweaty feet. The

13

296   atmosphere in the classroom felt different than the pitch. It didn't fill me with the joy and

297   enthusiasm of the outdoor session. Richard swiftly moved to task 4.

298   Richard whizzed through each point on the slide before getting learners to discuss

299   briefly in groups and bullet point their answers. Shuffling on seats, frantic pens on paper, the

300   learners were 'getting it done'. I trotted over to Richard in my socks, minding the bags and

301   the boots flung on the floor. I could feel black pellets from the 3G pitch seeping between my

302   toes. Richard was continuing to pace, to observe, wide eyed at the learners to gauge who'd

303   finished. I asked him what value he felt those three tasks across 20 minutes brought to the

304   course. I wanted his feelings, his emotions.

305

306   *it's an administrative task. I guess it's good for learners to complete because if they*

307   *go back to their journal in six months' time, they may see one or two things. We are*

308   *also told about, if an External Verifier comes in, it will cause some issues.*

309

310   Richard was familiar with verification formalities including quality assurance staff checking

311   the standards of learners' work, his own marking, and the pass rates on the course. Tasks are

312   important, but, wow, there was a lot of them!

313

314   *Bernsteinian interpretation*

315   Richard maintained control over the selection, sequencing, and pacing of all predetermined

316   tasks, which subsequently limited learner input. From a Bernsteinian (2000) perspective,

317   Richard's reproduction of policy could be shaped (intentionally and unintentionally) by other

318   macro and meso level influences during policy creation. For instance, as a coach developer,

319   Richard inherited a high volume of predetermined assessment that is monitored by an

320   external regulator. 11 tasks are mandated to be completed. Thus, Richard could only partially

321 control and influence a process already relayed to him by a wider coach education system

322 (Culver et al., 2019), which reflects Bernstein's recognition of powerful structures. This

323 means that Richard's ability to frame assessment is bounded by decisions made during

324 knowledge production (macro) and recontextualisation (meso) of policy as it is cascaded

325 down to him. This process resulted in all learners completing 11 assessments that the FA and

326 awarding body feel *should* be known in order to 'pass' or 'complete' a regulated

327 qualification. This strongly framed approach to assessment may help achieve the strategic

328 objective of increasing the quantity and quality of coaches but it does not necessarily build

329 upon what individual learners already know, nor support the notion of what *could* be known

330 by these learners. Rather, assessment on the courses were predictable, linear, uniform and

331 plentiful.

332   Marking and verification processes also appeared to influence Richard and he

333 interpreted them as wider ecological factors that encourage strongly framed assessment.

334 Priestly et al. (2015) and Young et al. (2020) have observed similar effects in school-based

335 education, where prescribed assessment can limit educator agency. This stems from a much

336 wider system of education, where performance management techniques such as verification

337 and quantifiable key performance indicators assume great importance as quality control

338 mechanisms for ensuring consistency across learning provisions. Further, quality control

339 processes may help coach education providers address strategic priorities, which in the FA's

340 case, included increasing the quality and quantity of coaches (Dempsey et al., 2020).

341 Nonetheless, it has been noted, that standardised competency-based assessment may

342 constrain learner-centred coach education (Collins et al., 2015). This is because learners may

343 become the subjects *of*, rather than dialogical collaborators *in,* assessment. Here, the

344 predetermined and desired outcomes of institutions may disproportionately constrain the

345 agency of coach developers and learners to co-create knowledge and assessment relevant to a

346 coach's needs (Cope et al., 2020). As Richard's story and other research (Collins et al., 2015)

347 suggests, predetermined assessment may be viewed as performative, and may not impact

348 coaches' long-term behaviours.

349   Within the boundaries of the pre-prepared material, it is important to note that Richard

350 had a degree of autonomy and perhaps learners could have completed tasks a different way

351 (e.g., at home in their own time). Richard, however, felt he could not deviate away from

352 prescribed tasks and that these had to be completed in a specific order. He appeared to lack a

353 suitable degree of agency (an environment that encourages his independent choices) to select,

354 and sequence tasks with learners. Therefore, NGBs may wish to (re)consider how assessment

355 orientated processes can encourage coach developers and learners to exercise their autonomy.

356 To this end, those NGBs who desire individualised, learner-centred courses, may benefit

357 from a less voluminous and more weakly framed evaluative process that assesses learners in

358 relation to their own contexts, interests, and areas for development.

359

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

361 The calm transcended the early morning mist and fog. In the room, the heater was turned on.

362 Richard sat back in his chair. We sat together and sipped tea, surrounded by tables set with

363 flip chart paper folded, pens laid on top, and a PowerPoint presentation at the ready. We

364 discussed the content that filled the course.

365

366   *There's been loads of prep work to do because on level 1's, I can't tell you what the*

367   *number is, but I'm going to guess off the top of my head here, over 200 slides. Going*

368   *through all of those slides and deciding what to use, which ones to skip through, what*

369   *to say about the slides is actually a massive prep task.*

370

371 Richard's guess was almost correct; there were 193 slides provided to coach developers by

372 the FA. In addition, twelve A2 posters with complimentary key messages. I offered to put the

373 posters on the walls. 'N*ot all of them, I don't want to throw too much at them'*, Richard

374 replied.

375

376 *INSERT IMAGE 2*

377

378 **Figure 2.** England DNA Fundamentals.

379 Good decision by Richard as he chose what information he felt would be best. Similar

380 messages appeared in PowerPoints during workshops two, four, and six, as well as in the

381 learner journal. I was convinced that the learners, who were trickling through the door,

382 coffees in hand, bags around their shoulders, would know the NGBs messages by the end of

383 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.*

408

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

433   understanding of strongly framed content. In these circumstances, coach developers such as

434   Richard and the learners primarily focused on the prescribed content and assessment. Indeed

435   examples of individualised or learner-focused practice that deviated from the prescribed

436   content, were rare. There was little room for the learners themselves, to select, sequence or

437   pace content, beyond the status quo. When learners did begin deeper discussions, Richard's

438   interpretation that prescribed content needed to be covered led to some missed opportunities

439   to centre learning in the interests of the coaches. Cushion et al. (2019) commented that such a

440   process constitutes a vying for power, and that in this case, coach developers may feel they

441   cannot override the assessment and content provided to them. This may mean that the coach

442   developer's role could largely manifest through the technocratic transmission of a

443   predetermined curriculum to achieve strategic aims. Such a limited view of the coach

444   developer role would be remiss because coach developers are well positioned to not only

445   transmit pre-prepared content, but also to critically explore content, to creatively consider

446   how learners could apply knowledge in their own context, and to care for learners. Without

447   time and space to do this, learners may not access knowledge that is relevant to their context.

448   Consideration, therefore, should be given to forms of communication (Priestley et al., 2015)

449   that encourage coach developers, such as Richard, to utilise their autonomy and co-construct

450   the curriculum with learners. To this end, policy makers may wish to consider how coach

451   developers can weakly frame *some* content in order for learners to select, sequence or pace

452   knowledge that is meaningful to them. However, consideration must also be given to the

453   ability and skill levels of coach developers to perform such processes (Cope et al., 2020).

454   Subsequently, NGBs may wish to (re)consider the training requirements for coach

455   developers, as well as the amount of content provided in what are short time-bounded courses

456   (Culver et al., 2019). Research should also investigate if providing more training, time and

457   space for coach developers and learners to collaborate and frame their own learning (i.e.,

458   select, sequence and pace content) could be beneficial. Potentially and paradoxically, this less

459   prescribed approach to coach education policy including content and assessment (Theme 1),

460   may actually lead to learning that is more relevant.

461

462   **Theme 3 – Attempts to weakly frame pedagogic practice**

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

464

465   *I really don't want you to stress about passing, I'm sure you'll all pass, these courses*

466   *now are far more about a journey rather than coming on and doing an assessment,*

467   *which is what it used to be, so it's far more formative now and I will be supporting*

468   *you on that. I'm on a journey, just like you guys, I don't profess to know everything,*

469   *you guys have experiences that I don't have, so I have no doubt I will be learning*

470   *from you! If I can help you enjoy it more, that means you'll make it better for your*

471   *players. I'm not here to show you how to coach, I'm here to provide some suggestions*

472   *and give some advice.*

473

474   This felt genuine. Richard wanted to help and support the learners. On the subsequent days,

475   Richard used smiles and enthusiasm to greet the learners each morning, before probing them

476   with the opening question. *'Did you try anything in your session?'* An inevitable starter

477   question for anyone looking to be learner-centred. As always, the day moved at a canter,

478   Richard walked round, diving into group discussions set on knowing the players the coaches

479   worked with. In that moment, the room was vibrant, voices echoed, experiences were shared.

480   I observed Richard as he tapped into the coaches' emotion and encouraged them to recognise

481   players as people. Richard discussed children's home lives, how some children have very

482 difficult lives, how the best part of their week might be that one-hour football session. It

483 struck a chord with most coaches. They were focused, and no one wanted to break that focus.

484 There was a collective empathy for players, the children. It was a powerful moment. But just

485 a moment. There it was again, that perceived lack of agency from Richard. He felt there was

486 no time to further explore how we could help; we needed to get through the rest of the

487 PowerPoint, plan sessions, complete assessments and get on to the pitch to cover some

488 material, didn't we?

489   After the PowerPoint, it was the learner's turn to deliver a practical session. Richard

490 proclaimed *I have tried to get to know and find out what the group are like and what they*

491 *need*. Based on this, Richard assigned each learner either an arrival activity (simple) or a

492 game related practice (more complicated). I wondered if the learners could have chosen

493 which one they wanted help with.

494

495   *INSERT IMAGE 3*
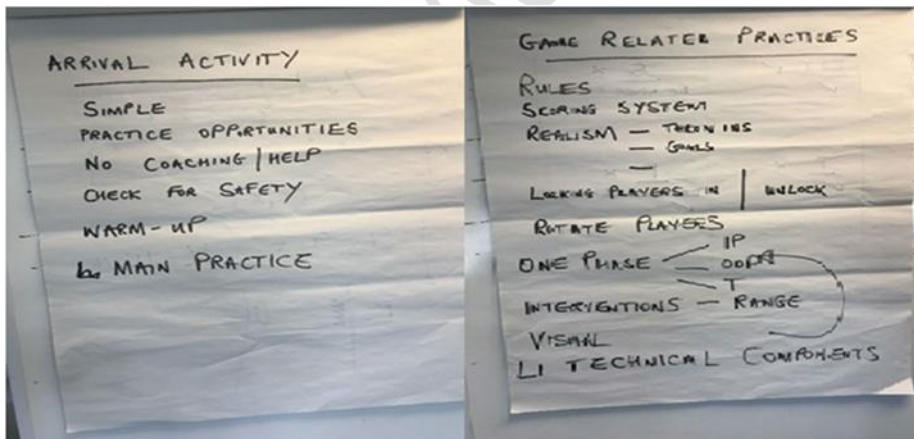
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497

498 **Figure 3.** Coach Developer Fipchart Notes.

499

500 Richard allowed as much time as he felt he could afford. They had 15 minutes to plan or

501 tweak their sessions. He offered example templates of sessions, ideas to either copy or adapt.

502 Most learners came prepared, as Richard had sent out their topic in advance. 15 minutes was

503 up, and Richard shoved his boots on. *'Who's got the balls?'* Then, he rhetorically said to me;

504 *'where has the time gone!?'* It's nonstop!

505

506

507

508 **Figure 4.** Learner Resource and Learner Work.

509 During a debrief of a learner's session, Richard asked the learners for their thoughts: *"you*

510 *could tell that it had been planned"* offered Jeremy. *'Go on, what do you mean?'* Jeremy

511 continued, *"the fact that you'd given it to us a few days before, I don't know about everyone,*

512 *but it gave me the opportunity to have a look at it. I had to adapt mine because of your rules,*

513 *the tutor resource thing that you gave us, and the online thing that you sent out. So, I really*

514 *had to think about it and adapt it."* Other learners joined in, *"from what I saw the other*

515 *coaches do, I had to really think about it, I had to plan it"*. Richard praised them all. There it

516 was, a high-quality moment where coach developer and learners had benefitted from each

517 other's experiences. And you could feel the uplifting sense of achievement, joy and beaming

518 smiles. Such moments were great, but rare.

519

Bernsteinian interpretation

521 Although Richard made authentic strides to create connections between the content and the

522 learners, the interaction between both the macro (theme 1) and meso (theme 2) structures

523 ultimately influenced micro-level pedagogic practice on-course, and meant that Richard

524 maintained much control. Importantly, as Theme 3 demonstrates, throughout the course

525 Richard welcomed coaches, built relationships with them, and asked questions to understand

526 their perspectives. There were also rare examples of Richard adapting the selection,

527 sequencing, or pacing of the course in response to this information (e.g., allocating learners to

528 either an arrival or a game related activity). It would appear to some extent, Richard tried to

529 instil a pedagogy shaped by a learner-centred approach, which may require a weakly framed

530 approach to on-course practice. Similar to Young et al.'s (2020) Bernsteinian analysis of PE,

531 however, Richard experienced a tension between strongly framed content/assessment, and a

532 more weakly framed approach that promotes individualised learning. Related to this,

533 Bernstein (2000) highlighted that educators' framing is often confined within the boundaries

534 of wider discourse. In this case, FA courses have a long history of competency based

535 assessment and influential stakeholders leading coach education (Chapman et al. 2019).

536 Similarly, the level 1 is dominated by predetermined assessment (macro) and a priori content

537 (meso). Richard's attempts to individualise learning were framed within these boundaries.

538 For example, his attempt to allocate different activities to different learners should be

539 appreciated but demonstrates how selection of content remained within the boundaries of that

540 prescribed by stakeholders. Further, he ultimately maintained control of the content, with

541 learners having little control of the selection, sequencing or pacing of activities, discussions,

542 and assessment.

543 Richard's strong framing is worthy of consideration because Morais (2002) argued

544 successful learning depends on weak framing of pacing to enable educators to 'go off script'

545 and respond to learner's needs. Similarly, Penney (2013) called for learners to have control of

546 *some* framing features if courses are to support learner development more effectively. For

547 example, perhaps learners could decide what content perhaps they discuss, apply, and critique

548 in two of the seven FA workshops. Doing so may enable learners to access knowledge that

549 they deem relevant, and suitable to their own practical contexts. Further, involving learners in

550 the selection, sequencing and pacing of courses may prompt critical and creative

551 contemplation of curricular. Of course, this does not mean that learners should have control

552 of *all* features. On the contrary, policy makers and developers, as professionals, have

553 expertise. They should lead and strongly frame certain elements of courses. This may be

554 particularly important on a level 1 course with novice coaches. Policy makers also have

555 laudable strategic aims that need to be met such as increasing the quantity and quality of

556 coaches. Nonetheless, perhaps weaker pacing would enable developers like Richard to build

557 on their relationships with learners and further explore prescribed knowledge. Similarly, a

558 weaker selection of content may also enable a balance between the purpose of policymakers

559 and purposes of practitioners.

560

561 *A concluding scene*
562

563 Walking back in from the last practical of the course, I caught up with a learner, Steve. He

564 coached an U10's team. He was a big bald bruiser of a man. I would never argue about a

565 throw-in with him. He declared:

566

567 *"I'm 56-years-old and I've been coaching on and off now for nearly 25 years. I've*

568 *learned so much from this course. I thought I knew about football, but what I've*

569 *learned, has completely changed how I acted and behaved on Tuesday night. I wasn't*

570   *ranting and raving. I let the kids try and make the decisions and when they did, I just*

571   *praised them for that, the smile on their faces! I actually went home feeling like a new*

572   *man and it was just a revelation".*

573   **Conclusion**

574   This study examined how formal coach education *policy* was reproduced by coach developers

575   in *practice*. The Bernsteinian concept of framing provided a mechanism to understand the

576   reproduction of policy on the ground, as detailed through creative non-fiction vignettes. What

577   must be remembered is that strong framing (i.e., controlled by the developer) does not mean

578   good, nor weak framing (i.e., controlled by the learner) bad, or vice versa. Instead, it is about

579   *who* controls *what*. With this in mind, we found the FA Level 1 courses in this case study

580   had: 1) a high volume of strongly framed assessment regulated by an external provider; 2) a

581   wide range of strongly framed content provided by the NGB; and 3) coach developers who

582   attempted to weakly frame pedagogic practice. The high volume of assessment and wide

583   range of content, in part, influenced the pacing of the coach developers' practice. However,

584   the strong pacing was also amplified by the coach developers' interpretation of policy and

585   feelings of limited agency in determining how the learning environment could be structured.

586   This meant, that for much of the course, learner coaches had little control over the selection,

587   sequencing, pacing, and evaluation. Such observations, appear incongruent with learner-

588   centred approaches to coach education and may prompt readers to consider and question,

589   would less strongly framed practice mean more meaningful learning? That said, as noted in

590   the concluding scene, strongly framed courses can also benefit learners, and thus a balance is

591   advocated.

592   As the study concludes, what must be acknowledged, is that different coach

593   developers outside the sample herein, might have interpreted policy differently. Nonetheless,

594   this deconstruction of the FA level 1 course has identified the macro and meso influences on

595   coach developer practice. Given Richard's efforts to socially construct learning within the

596   boundaries of these influences, it would seem important to acknowledge his endeavour, and

597   not only deconstruct practice but offer ways where reconstruction could occur. To that end, *if*

598   NGBs desire learner-centred provision, then there is a need to consider (a) how adult learners

599   can co-construct curriculum relevant to their needs, and (b) how coach education as an

600   ecological system can enable coach developers to do so. There may be a number of potential

601   ways of achieving this. First, course designers and policy makers should continue to observe

602   and listen to coach developers' interpretation of policy, as we have done here. This would

603   give a clear idea of whether policy has been understood and interpreted in the manner

604   intended. Second, *if* course designers espouse a learner-centred pedagogy, they may want to

605   consider a less voluminous and a narrower range of prescribed assessment and content. A

606   'selection-box' metaphor, where some space and time are allocated for learners to explore

607   areas of their choosing may be helpful here. Thirdly, Bernstein's concept of framing, which is

608   introduced explicitly to coach education for the first time in this paper, could serve as a useful

609   reflective mechanism for coach developers to use. Framing features including selection,

610   sequencing, pacing, and evaluation could help NGBs shape and guide course design with

611   external bodies such as funding regulatory agencies. Of course, we appreciate that for coach

612   education providers such as the FA, designing and delivering learner-centred coach education

613   is neither easy, nor straightforward. Moreover, using Bernstein's framing concept within this

614   study has identified that constructivist epistemology and learner-centred courses are not

615   immune from the social influences and the power of policy development. Thus, this study

616   also highlights the need to further examine who influences learning, where, when, and how.

617   Such consideration is timely, given the current pandemic and recent dramatic changes in

618   coach education. Here, in the immediate present, coach education, and indeed wider

619   education, is likely to embrace online learning, and may be provided by new organisations.

620 As demonstrated within this study, the priorities and perspectives of wider macro and meso

621 influencers may shape how education is framed in everyday practice. Post Covid-19, at a time

622 when it may be needed most, it is important to consider who selects, sequences, and paces

623 knowledge, and to what purpose.

624

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