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**AN EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE OF HEADS OF EDUCATION
AND WELFARE WITHIN THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
PREMIER LEAGUE ACADEMY STRUCTURE: AN ACTION
RESEARCH APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING ROLE
EVOLVEMENT AND PRACTICE.**

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Abstract

The inception of the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) within the Football Association's Premier League Academy structure has increased the emphasis on the educational and welfare provision for elite young footballers. The role encourages clubs to embrace the educational, technical, academic and social needs of the young player. The research aimed to utilise the procedural tenets of action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) to explore, monitor and assist the development of the existing working experiences and practices of the HoEW within their respective football academies. Study 1 utilised a semi-structured interview schedule to capture an understanding of the working practices and experiences of the respective HoEWs, and consequently the young player's educational, welfare and football experience. In order to encourage open dialogue, the interview structure permitted the researcher to adopt a flexible questioning and sequencing approach, where appropriate (Spradley, 1979; Dale, 1996). The structure allowed the participants to describe experiences and clarify meaning. Interviews (n=5; mean duration = 2½ hours) were inductively analysed, encompassing researcher triangulation (n=3) (Patton, 1990), which enabled elements, categories, patterns and relationships between the participants to emerge.

A 'football background' (i.e., playing experience and knowledge of the game) enabled HoEWs to establish initial credibility and acceptance within the football environment. The role of the HoEW is a diverse, dynamic and demanding occupation, where the HoEWs engaged in a number of explicit and assumed roles and responsibilities (i.e., educational guidance and provision, pastoral care, release mechanism, child protection, accommodation and recruitment). Although the HoEWs shared a common educational and welfare remit, it was evident that both local and national discrepancies in provision existed. The extent of the operational and strategic working practices were dependent primarily on the perception and value of the role within each Academy. Each HoEW possessed 'essential' craft knowledge (i.e., an awareness and empathy of football culture and educational experiences) and an undoubted affinity and dedication to the development of young people.

Study 2 extended shared and generic issues evidenced in Study 1 through dialogue and collective understanding and encouraged the HoEWs to engage in some form of change within their working environment. Study 2, Part I encouraged shared reflection and action strategies to move forward utilising elements of Basch's (1987) phenomenological approach to focus groups. The context of the practitioners' responses was captured utilising summary notes and verbatim citations (Lederman, 1990). Further, Study 2, Part II encouraged the HoEWs to identify, engage and reflect on potential *action* within their respective working environment (Tinning, 1992; Greenwood and Levin, 2000). Moreover, formal 'reflection and development' meetings were arranged between each HoEW and the researcher (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). Results were presented as a series of collaborative case studies.

All of the HoEWs recognised the need to engage in subtle, primarily *operational*, mechanisms in order to promote and develop an understanding and acceptance of the role within the football environment. The group also recounted elements of *strategic* frustration. This frustration was dominated by a perceived lack of understanding and appreciation of the role within their respective clubs. The HoEWs articulated the need to continue to engage with the coaches, and the Academy Directors in order to influence change. The HoEWs agreed that the process of change needed to continue,

not only for the sake of a more *global* understanding of player development, but also for the future of the HoEW.

Study 3 further explored the HoEW's (n=2) interactions and working practices within the football Academy. This inquiry utilised the principles of prolonged collaborative ethnography (over a 5-month period) as a *form* of participatory action research. The process was characterised by shared ownership, and underpinned by notions of empowerment, emancipation, and dialectical ideals with a commitment to influence change (Denzin, 2002). Representations of the individual's (and the author's) experiences (Foley, 2002) were presented as two separate narratives (Tedlock, 2000) in order to capture a flavour of the actual experience (Mitchell and Charmaz, 1998). Furthermore, the two HoEWs were encouraged to reflect and comment on the final narrative in order to enable the author (and the practitioner) to engage in further reflexive moments (Davis, 2002).

Both HoEWs were skilled and competent in the delivery of an appropriate and (in most instances) flexible educational programme for each individual boy. In addition, both assumed *strategic* responsibility for the instigation and implementation of the necessary child protection procedures within the Academy. Both HoEWs possessed an undeniable empathy and commitment to ensuring that the best interests of the boys were considered at all times. However, both encountered, endured, and in some instances continue to endure, elements of hostility and ignorance with regard to the nature and perception of the role. More specifically, they exposed (and differentially tackled) some ignorance towards the welfare remit of the role. It appeared that the welfare remit of their role was *dependent* on their own personal skills, past experiences and subsequent *aspirations* (i.e., what they believed the role should entail) *in concert* with the perceptions, constraints (real and perceived) and expectations of their respective Academies. It was apparent that both HoEWs had different *aspirations* and ideals with regard to the wider context of education and welfare.

It appeared that all of the HoEW's working practices (i.e., beyond the co-ordination and delivery of the basic requirements of education and child protection) were guided and or influenced (to some extent) by the skills, past experiences, influences and subsequent aspirations that they brought (or carried) into the role. The notion of an overarching aspiration, or dream, appeared to represent how each individual *wanted to be viewed* within their daily pursuits. Furthermore, it appeared that each HoEW differed (slightly) in the way in which they perceived themselves and their role, and how they perceived colleagues' expectations of them (and their role) within their respective environments. In this sense, the notions of both education and welfare (i.e., divorced of any synthesis with elements of football performance) *still* appear to be viewed as *secondary* components of the young player's development package. The welfare remit could be viewed as the general well-being of the boy with an implicit impact on player performance, or as an explicit and integral component of player performance (i.e., emotional and psychological). Finally, it became clear that in order to establish either of these welfare contexts the role of the HoEW demanded a more influential and strategic position within the Academy structure.

Key Words: education, welfare, elite youth football, action research

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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

In recent years there has been a keen interest in the development of young talent (Franks et al., 1999). Across many sports investing in youth is viewed as a vehicle to ensure the continuous production of elite sports performers. Moreover, bodies such as the British Association for Sport and Exercise Sciences (1992), the British Government (1995) and the UK Sports Council (1995) have identified youth development as an integral element in the future of elite sport.

Both football coaches and club management appreciate that identifying young talented footballers at an early stage and exposing talented players to specialised coaching and training may accelerate (and enhance) the talent development process (Williams et al., 1999). The objective of a football club is success on the playing field (Allcorn, 1997). This is inextricably linked with sound management, effective coaches, appropriate facilities and support mechanisms and, fundamentally, good quality players.

Formal structures have been set up to enhance the development of talent within the football environment. Schemes such as Youth Opportunities (YOP), Youth Training Scheme (YTS or YT) offered young players a platform to develop their football talent in conjunction with the added 'incentive' of engaging in alternative academic and/or vocational pursuits. The establishment of the Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Society (FFE and VTS) by the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) has ensured that educational and/or vocational pursuits are an integral part of youth football development programmes.

Since the emergence of the Football Association's National School in 1984, Football 'Centres of Excellence' have materialized as a mechanism to enhance player production. As these young players cannot be guaranteed a career in football, the additional skills and/or qualifications not only supplement football development but also act as a necessary pre-requisite for life outside football. More recently, formal managerial structures have emerged with the introduction of the Football Academies instigated by the FA Technical Department's Charter for Quality (1997). The effect of such structures on the development of talent invites further exploration.

The complexity of talent identification and development has been well documented (Bloom, 1985; Regnier et al., 1993; Williams et al., 1999). Talent detection involves the prediction that an individual's performance will develop in a particular sport over various periods of time. This process may draw upon psychological, physiological, sociological, behavioural, and performance attributes either alone or in combination. In that sense, talent detection concerns the 'matching' of a variety of individual characteristics, which may be innate or subject to the effect of learning, training and development, to the core tenets of sports performance. Talent selection refers to the identification of an appropriate individual who can best carry out the given sporting activity within a specific context, such as a football tournament. Thus, talent selection may be viewed as 'short term' talent detection (i.e., those that will perform best 2 weeks, 2 months or even 12 months from now) (see Regnier et al., 1993)

In talent identification the aim is to identify participants with the ability to progress to 'elite' status within a given sport. Talent identification is therefore a pre-requisite for the process of talent development. Talent development is associated with the provision of a suitable environment from which potential talent can be realised. In this context, development is a much broader concept and incorporates social, environmental, intellectual, educational, welfare, physiological, physical, psychological factors and motor competence.

Research within the realms of talent identification has tended to be myopic in nature. This is evidenced by the way in which the different disciplines of sports science have been constrained within their own particular boundaries. For example, physical predictors and physiological predictors (Carter, 1982), psychological predictors (Regnier et al., 1993), sociological predictors (Greendorfer et al., 1996). In recent years, researchers have begun to advocate a more holistic (Williams et al., 1999) and humanistic (Richardson, 1998) approach toward talent identification and development. Endeavours to establish clear criteria for the identification and development of talent have generally acknowledged the facets of sociological, educational and welfare as the poor relations within the overall 'talent map'.

Sociological and socio-psychological considerations tend to place an emphasis on the nurturing of talent, environmental factors and the availability of opportunity. For

example, the sociological and socio-psychological perspectives might suggest that the talented young footballer may be subjected to certain pressures and these, particularly during the early years, may be detrimental to development. Consequently, potential talent may not be realised and talented individuals may dropout of their chosen sport. The sociological case would suggest that potential talent could not be nurtured without the appropriate environmental and support mechanisms.

The Football Association has continually advocated the educational development of young footballers, and more explicitly within the aims of the former National School at Lilleshall (Millichip, 1984). October 1997 witnessed the Football Association's (F.A.) proposed regulations, for the football season 1998/1999, more commonly referred to as 'Football Education for Young Players: A Charter for Quality'. The FA's Technical Director Howard Wilkinson stated that the overriding principle of the 'Charter' was to 'attempt' to provide quality experiences for all young players at all levels. The Charter implicitly emphasised the need to adopt a more holistic approach to young player development. The FA Technical Department's Charter (1997) stated that:

"Quite properly the player's' match programme should be developed in the best interests of the players educational, technical, academic and social needs, by the parents in conjunction with the player's school and Football Academy Education and Welfare Officer" (p 1.3).

The Football Academy Education and Welfare Officer (more recently referred to as the Head of Education and Welfare) was identified as a mandatory appointment within the FA Charter's 'Criteria to Operate a Football Academy'. Furthermore, the Charter identified some basic tenets of education and welfare:

"2.4 To recognise and maximise the potential of exceptionally talented players whilst not compromising their overall education and welfare" (p 8).

"4.7.1 Each Academy to ensure that appropriate and adequate educational provision (as determined by the Technical Control Board Academy Sub Committee) is available for each Academy player including primary, secondary, further and higher educational provision. The player's technical and academic potential must be catered for and not compromised (p 4.5).

4.7.2 The Academy Education/Welfare Adviser to ensure adequate liaison is made with all schools and colleges where Academy players are enrolled" (p 4.5).

1.2 The Football Academy - An Evolving Professional Domain

The difficulties in establishing a professional sports/athletic career in tandem with the academic process have been documented (Purdy et al., 1982). The sportsperson/athlete generally under perform academically in comparison to the non-athletic population. The intellectual achievement of talented soccer players has also been described as poor in relation to other societal segments (Bar-Eli, 1993).

The more humanistic and holistic concepts of development however emphasise a more caring and nurturing environment in order to encourage the development of the 'whole' individual. The educational element of the developmental process may not only provide opportunities after football but may also facilitate the production of a more intelligent player. "The production of an intelligent player can provide 'added value' to an increasingly valuable commodity (e.g., an understanding of lifestyle management, self awareness, an ability to respond to complex tactics, media relations)" (Richardson, 1999; p19). However, no real evidence exists as to how this is realised within individual football club settings.

Traditionally football and education have been viewed as separate entities, as time allocated to one area is perceived as diminished time in pursuit of the other (Richardson, 1999). Subsequently, the installation of the Head of Education and Welfare Officer (HoEW), as a full-time 'mandatory' appointment for Academy status, was likely to encounter both advocates and sceptics. In an emergent domain such as the Football Academy, the Head of Education and Welfare, will be subjected to a range of expectations associated with the notions of tradition and culture. Therefore, an assessment of how the HoEWs have begun to construct their working environment could provide useful guidelines for improving and developing the effectiveness of the role, and consequently the young player's educational, welfare and football experience.

1.3 Aims of the Research

The overall aim of the research is to utilise the procedural tenets of action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) to explore, monitor and assist the development of the existing working experiences and practices of the HoEW within their respective football academies. The action research process utilises a spiral of self-reflective cycles. These cycles include notions of *reconnaissance and planning* the change, *implementing and monitoring* the process and consequences of the change, further reflection on these processes and consequences, followed by re-planning, implementing and monitoring, reflecting, and so on... (Elliot, 1991; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). Figure 1.1 offers a representative diagnostic of the action research cycle in relation to the present research.

1.3.1 Reconnaissance and Planning Phase

Study 1 aims to explore the existing working practices of the HoEW. Given that the long-term aim of the research is to stimulate, facilitate and monitor changes in working practice, Study 1 attempts to ascertain an understanding of the practitioners themselves in order to explore the evolvement of their role and the nature of their existing environment. In this sense, Study 1 forms part of an extensive reconnaissance phase that enables a better understanding of the practitioners and their working environment.

Study 2, Part I forms a continuation of the reconnaissance and planning phase of Study 1. In this sense, it attempts to extend the interpretations and dominant themes emerging from study one. Whereas Study 1 concentrates on the individual HoEW and their respective Academy, Study 2, Part I attempts to explore the generic issues influencing their working practices. This study seeks to promote shared dialogue and collective understanding.

1.3.2 Implementation and Monitoring

Study 2, Part II follows on from the extensive reconnaissance work of Study 1, and Study 2, Part I. The aim of Study 2, Part II is to encourage the HoEWs to identify, engage and reflect on potential *action* within their respective working environment. Study 2, Part II aims to encourage each HoEW to plan and engage in an action phase (i.e., process of change). Where each HoEW is encouraged, through interaction with

the researcher, to; monitor the consequences of such a change, reflect on these consequences, re-evaluate and possibly develop the change.

Study 3 further explores the development of two of the HoEWs action phases. More specifically these developments concern the unique context of their personal interactions within their respective working environments (i.e., their football Academy). Ethnographic principles underpinning the ‘observation’ of the HoEW are will be utilised in order to engage in a relatively prolonged interaction with the HoEW. This process should enable the researcher to better understand their beliefs, motivations, and behaviour.

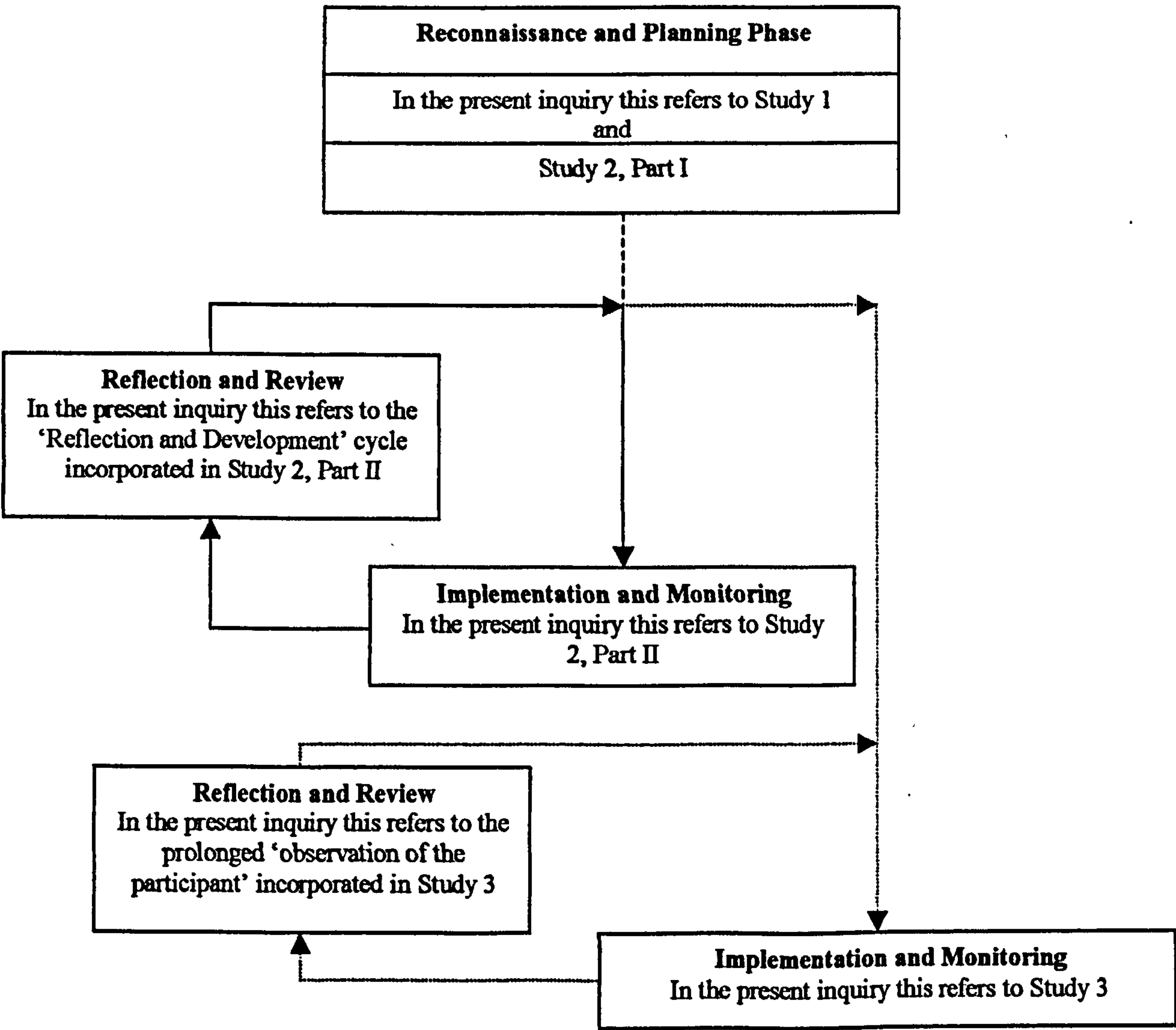


Figure 1.1. The action research cycle in relation to the research process

1.4 Introduction to the Literature Review

Prior to exploring the role of the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW), it is important to try to sketch out the environment and context within which they work. The introduction of the Football Association (FA) Technical Department's 'Charter for Quality' (1997) has increased the emphasis on the young player's development. The central figure within the Charter is the player. The proffered objective is to ensure "...quality experiences for all young players..." (Football Association Technical Department, 1997; p1). Football clubs have expressed a need for increased access to young players to allow them more time to develop. In association with this objective, the underlining principle of the Football Academy structure is to produce players for the first team:

"The purpose of the FA Programme for Excellence is to identify players of outstanding ability and place them in a technical and educational programme designed to produce football excellence in conjunction with personal development."

(FA Technical Department, Programme for Excellence, 1997; p1)

Explicit within this context is the focus of *talent identification*, *talent development*, *education* and *personal development*. The following literature review first concentrates on the core tenets of talent identification and development that underpin the working environment of the Football Academy. Secondly, the text then concentrates more specifically on the role of the HoEW before leading the reader through some of the paradigmatic and location issues faced by the researcher. The context of the research focuses on the existing and evolving working practices of the HoEW within their respective football Academy. In this sense, the literature review finishes by exploring the notion of *evolving working practice* utilising the vehicle of *action research*.

1.5 Talent Identification and Development

Talent identification represents a screening process utilised in order to predict athletic performance. Régnier et al. (1993) described the methodological processes associated with the prediction of athletic performance over time as utilising elements of psychological aptitude, either alone or in combination, with physical, physiological and/or technical abilities as 'sport talent detection'. Régnier and colleagues' synopsis

of talent detection can be viewed alongside the more ‘holistic’ concepts of development that incorporate social (including welfare) and environmental variables (Bloom, 1985). In this sense a more prolonged observation of talented individuals should ultimately alleviate the prognosis and evaluation of talent in terms of their potential to succeed in that particular sport. Commentators have begun to recognise talent identification and development as an ongoing process (Bloom, 1985; Auweele et al., 1993). This view suggests that any systematic search for talent depends on the talented child needing to be exposed to an appropriate environment (e.g., facilities, coaches) and support mechanisms (e.g., social, psychological, welfare). In this regard the ultimate aim is to provide an optimum learning experience that may increase the likelihood of ‘success’ within the child’s particular sporting domain.

1.6 Talent Identification and Development in Football

The football world has traditionally relied upon football specific (or craft) knowledge of experienced coaches and talent scouts to ‘spot’ talented youngsters. The ability to identify talent primarily involves conceptual understanding (i.e., craft knowledge) and an ability to make decisions concerning a player’s potential. Human potential exists in terms of possibility rather than actuality, whereas science dictates that one can only measure, assess or validate what exists in reality (i.e., current performance not football potential). In light of this, talent identification is reliant on the experience of the ‘spotter’ who makes a subjective assessment as to whether or not a young player should be offered a trial and/or signed by the football club. The process is further complicated by the dynamic nature of football performance in addition to the fact that *individuals* are generally identified within the context of *team* performance.

1.7 Talent Identification and Development Process

Talent identification systems have more recently been influenced by the Ajax F.C. acronym model, namely, T.I.P.S. (talent, intelligence, personality, speed). The success of the Ajax model has been envied and thus mirrored by some English FA Premier League clubs with ‘similar’ acronyms such as, T.A.B.S. (talent, attitude, balance and speed) and S.U.P.S. (skill, understanding, personality, speed) emerging as the primary benchmark for talent identification. Considering the complexity of talent

identification and development, it could be argued that the processes behind the identification of talent should match the complexity of the end product. However, it is only recently that the football world has begun to embrace a more holistic and scientific stance to talent identification and development (see Figure 1.2).

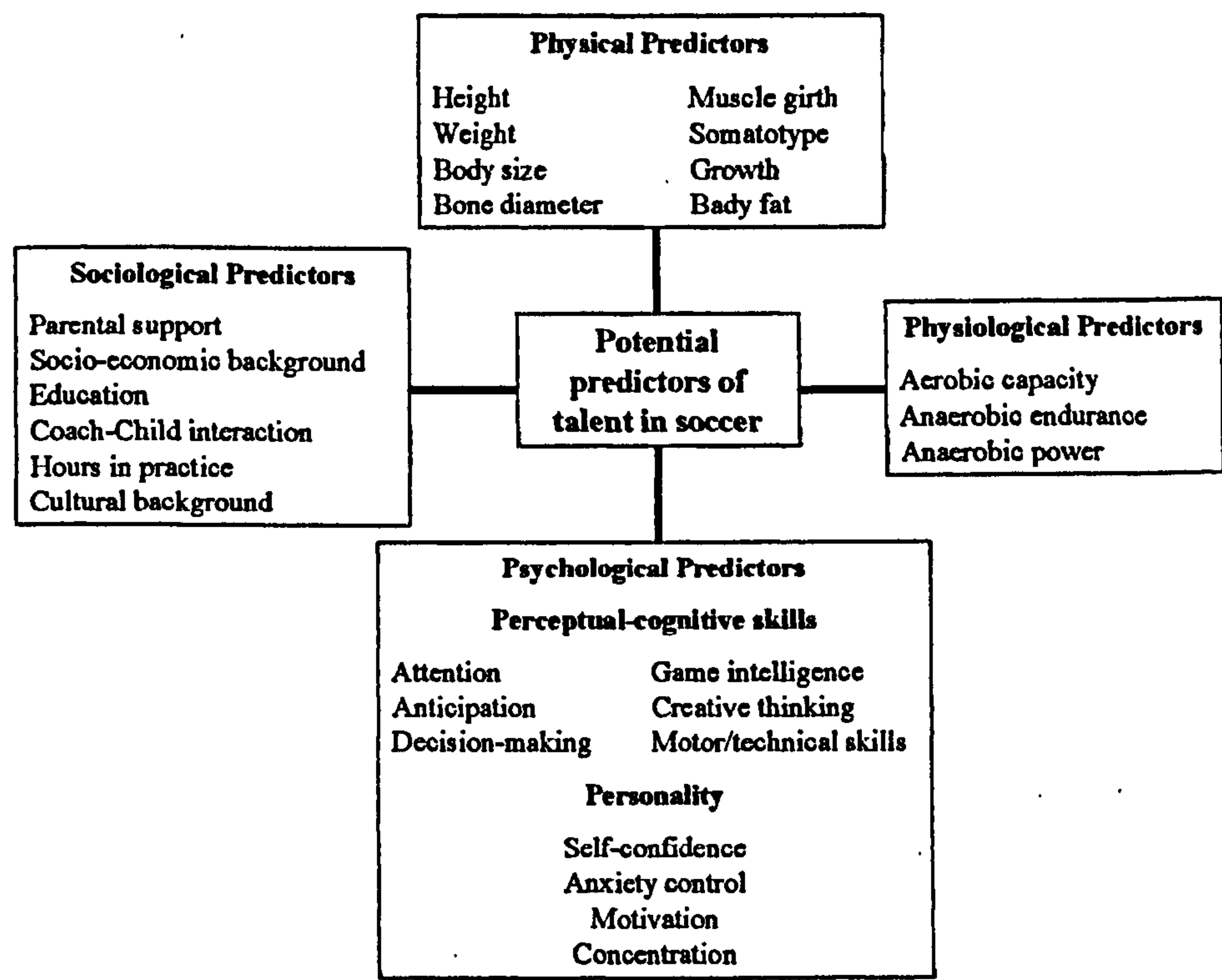


Figure 1.2. Potential predictors of talent in soccer from each sport science discipline (adapted from Williams and Franks, 1998)

Talent development is directly linked to the opportunities afforded to the athlete (e.g., access to top class facilities, a suitable learning environment, quality coaching, welfare and support mechanisms) in an attempt to nurture the athlete and to ensure that potential is realised. In this sense, development is a much more complex process than identification and incorporates social, environmental, intellectual, educational, welfare, physiological, physical, psychological and motor competence.

The talented young footballer may have been ‘identified’ but the procedures and pressures that young talent is exposed and subjected to, particularly during the early years, can be detrimental to achievement. In some cases, it follows that potential talent may not be realised. As a consequence talented individuals may drop out of

their chosen sport. Fundamentally, potential talent may not be realised without the appropriate environmental and support mechanisms.

The present research is located primarily within the framework of player support and talent development. The role of the Head of Education and Welfare may have both a direct (explicit) and indirect (implicit) influence in nurturing the social, educational, welfare and environmental development of identified talented young players within their respective football Academy.

1.8 Multi-disciplinary Approach to Talent Identification and Development

The following section does not profess to be an exhaustive critique of the multi-disciplinary approaches to talent identification and development. More specifically, it is intended to inform the reader of the multitude of influence that may impact the development of talented young footballers.

The increasing influence of sports science within talent identification is evident across a number of sports (see Carter, 1982; Régnier et al., 1993; Greendorfer et al., 1996; Williams and Franks, 1998, Reilly et al., 2000). Traditionally, young athletes have been identified as talented on the basis of current performance and results with a subjective assessment of potential, most identification procedures being heavily reliant on performance as the evidence for giftedness (Rowley 1992). In response to the inadequacies of subjective assessment there have been recent endeavours to produce a more systematic, and more scientific, approach to identifying and developing talent research. The following sections explores some of these more systematic endeavours.

1.8.1 Physical Considerations

Anthropometric attributes such as body composition, mass, bone diameter and limb girth have been espoused as strong determinants of performance (Borms, 1986). Such measures are argued to assist in the prediction of talent, where comparisons may be made between younger and older elite players with regard to physique (Malina et al., 2000) as a pre-determinant of successful performance. The measurement and

physical testing of elite players produce a database of physical characteristics for gauging the physical requirements for football performance (Reilly et al., 2000). Furthermore, Claessens et al. (1991) suggested that the prediction of adult stature is an important part of any talent detection or development process.

Evidence suggests that talent scouts and coaches appear to favour football players born early in the selection year (Richardson and Stratton, 1999) with a greater biological age and/or more advanced morphological age (Malina et al., 2000). This evidence is not isolated to the United Kingdom but is prevalent in several European, Australasian and South American countries (Dudink, 1994; Musch and Hey, 1999). Over-representation of the 'early bird player' is particularly evident in goalkeepers and defenders who tend to be taller and heavier than their counterparts (Brewer et al., 1995; Franks et al., 1999; Richardson and Stratton, 1999).

The current and potential performance of a young player are relevant considerations to predicting future performance, however, the physical characteristics that distinguish between elite and sub-elite players may not be evidenced until late adolescence. This fact clearly inhibits the impact of these matters when identification takes place at a chronologically early stage (see Fisher and Borms, 1990).

Physiological predictors include the measurements of aerobic capacity, anaerobic endurance, anaerobic power and muscle strength. Utilisation of such tests in order to identify talent is thought to be extensive (Jankovic et al., 1997; Janssens et al., 1997; Franks et al., 1999; Reilly et al., 2000).

Jankovic et al. (1997) compared successful (i.e., 1st Division players from Croatia, Germany, Italy and England) and unsuccessful (i.e., regional league players) 15-17 year olds footballers using maximal oxygen uptake (VO_{2max}), grip and trunk strength measures together with absolute and relative heart volumes. Results indicated that the more successful players dominated the tests, recording the higher maximal oxygen uptake (VO_{2max}), anaerobic power values and greater heart volume. The authors concluded that aerobic power could be a useful test in the selection of players aged between 15-17 years, forming a sound argument for the use of physiological measures in predicting talent. However, Franks et al. (1999) analysed similar physiological and

anthropometric measurements in 64 players from the English FA National School (14-16 years of age) and recorded no significant differences between those who were deemed successful (i.e., signed a professional contract on graduation) and unsuccessful (i.e., no professional contract). It would appear that although the physiological measurements may be a useful accessory to the subjective assessments of talent scouts and coaches, they may not be sensitive enough to distinguish between players already selected (i.e., identified as elite) and exposed to systematic training and/or development programmes.

1.8.2 Psychological and Sociological Considerations

Psychological and sociological considerations of development tend to place a greater emphasis on the nurturing of talent, the recognition of environmental factors, and the availability of opportunity than do the more conventional laboratory based scientific disciplines. Psychological characteristics are regularly espoused as the primary distinguishing factor that differentiates between successful and unsuccessful players (Régnier, 1993). Psychological elements exist within a number of multi-dimensional sports talent identification models. However, they have not been accepted as a means of reliable talent identification (Régnier et al., 1993). Researchers have yet to advocate clear and consistent links between a player's 'psychological make-up' (e.g., personality, coping mechanisms) and expert performance (Auweele et al., 2000; Morris, 2000).

The problems associated with matching identification programmes to specific sporting demands are further complicated in team games than individual sports, as there are no clear and consistent objective measures of performance (Reilly et al., 2000). In that sense, psychological researchers have yet to identify a specific personality characteristic and/or profile that can be associated with success in sport (generally) or in football (specifically). Consequently, no solitary inventory exists to aid the talent identification and development process.

Orlick and Partington, (1988) used an athlete interview guide with elite Canadian athletes (n=75) specifically identifying mental skills (i.e., total commitment, quality training; including setting daily goals, engaging in regular competition simulation,

imagery training and quality mental preparation) to be developed and refined for consistent high-level performance at high profile events such as the Olympic games. Their work enhanced knowledge in applied sport psychology and subsequent understanding of top performers and their qualities, and emphasises the value of doing so in developing other athletic domains (e.g., football). Results illustrated that mental skills are a critical part of success in high-level performance sport that need to be refined and developed for those in the pursuit of excellence. Orlick and Partington, (1988) recommended that researchers should explore the mental links to excellence in a variety of disciplines in order to understand the human pursuit of excellence, gain valuable insights into the critical components of excellence in sport, and allow them to develop within a structured psychological development programme. Later work hints towards a more covert development of these skills.

Professional coaches from varying sports suggest it is the superstars who can handle constructive criticism and cope with unfair criticism. If they make a mistake they acknowledge it and do everything they can to ensure that they do not make the same mistake again (Orlick, 2000). Morris (2000) advocated the development of wide ranging psychological skills among young players. Although personality traits are primarily inherited, with heritability estimates between 30-60% (Plomin *et al.*, 1994; Saudino, 1997), it appears that psychological attributes may be developed through specialised training. Motivation, coping mechanisms, concentration, self-confidence and attentional style, have also been identified as potential areas for development through appropriate training (Morris, 1997).

Perceptual-cognitive skills such as anticipation and decision-making provide an alternative approach to talent identification (Helsen and Pauwels, 1993; Williams *et al.*, 1999). Consistent differences have been detected between skilled and less skilled players when tested on their anticipation and decision making skills (Williams and Davids, 1995). Such tests, which typically employ film-based simulations of match situations, have been used successfully with both adult and junior players (Williams, 2000). The superior performance of skilled soccer players during these tests reflects their greater knowledge and experience as a result of specific practice and instruction as opposed to any initial differences in visual skills such as acuity, colour vision or depth perception (Reilly *et al.*, 2003). However, it is not clear what proportion of perceptual

skill is genetically determined compared with that developed through purposeful practice. It may be that talented players are predisposed to acquiring the knowledge structures underlying perceptual and decision-making skill in soccer (Williams, 2000).

Morris (2000) identified two additional cognitive measures for consideration namely, intelligence and creative thinking. At present the concept of intelligence is difficult to define and measure (see Neisser et al., 1996). It appears to incorporate elements such as analytical, creative and practical that may or may not be relevant to soccer. Skilled players have been reported to possess a 'game intelligence' that allows them to analyse major features of their opponent's play (see Singer and Janelle, 1999). It is not clear whether this game intelligence is linked to academic intelligence (Reilly et al., 2003)

The developmental and social consequences of participation in soccer vary from one child to the next. The consequences may be associated with the internal emotions and experiences of children as well as the external societal values and meanings allied with soccer, and the resultant conditions in which participation occurs (Richardson and Reilly, 2001).

An important determinant of success is the socialisation into the particular sport culture (Carlson 1993). McPherson and Brown (1998 cited in Brustad, 1992; p267) stated that socialisation is a "...process whereby individuals learn skills, traits, values, attitudes and knowledge associated with the performance of present or anticipated social roles". The possible implications of which may determine a child's development in his or her particular sport. In essence a child's level of success will be influenced by the ability to adapt and develop socially, and cope psychologically, within the chosen sporting domain.

Brustad (1992) clarified socialisation into three primary components, socialisation *into* sport, socialisation *via* sport and socialisation *out* of sport. Such components take shape across a process from a child's first participation into sport up until the period of discontinuation. Throughout a child's sport life cycle, he or she will experience a host of different relationships and learning environments.

1.8.3 Readiness for Competitive Sport

Many children may participate in competitive sport at an early age. In some cases the children may be as young as 3 - 4 years of age, but on average a child is exposed to competitive sport from the age of 6 - 8 years (Cahill and Pearl, 1993). Readiness to learn within the sport setting occurs following an accumulation of events and/or experiences that enable the learner to acquire additional information, skills or values (Seefeldt, 1995). The concept of readiness suggests that learning (and development) is accelerated and more enjoyable when readiness exists. It may be assumed that as a child meets the age requirement for participation in a given sport that he or she is 'ready' (e.g., under 8 years, under 10 years of age) to participate. Readiness for competitive youth sport requires a match between a child's stage of growth, maturity and development and the level of demand presented by competitive sport (Cahill and Pearl, 1993). The demands of athletic competition are numerous. The potential for stress exists in youth football as players may question whether their own physical and/or skill capability matches the demands made upon them. The fear of failure is a primary concern for young players in addition to the fear of social evaluation (i.e., not meeting the 'expected' performance targets) (Cahill and Pearl, 1993). Although, the process of social comparison is witnessed in early childhood, most children under the age of 12 years, have a minimal concept of the requirements of competitive sport. Several commentators have identified that young children cannot and do not compete because they are incapable of, or uninterested in social comparison (Roberts, 1980; Scanlan, 1988). Nevertheless, these children should not be denied participation. Moreover, the game structures and adult (e.g., parent, coach) expectations of performance should be modified to meet the developmental capabilities of the child.

Implicit within the concept of readiness is the process of self-selection. A child's chosen sport(s) may be influenced by the child's own interest, his or her parents' interests and aspirations, a teacher, a coach, or a combination of all four. Self-selection is a critical factor in a child's sporting development. The child is the one who must practice, be receptive to coaching and, ultimately, compete. The motivation of a child to practice and compete is an essential pre-requisite for successful performance (Richardson and Reilly, 2001). Magill and Anderson (1996) suggested that successful participation in sport is unlikely without motivation. The key to success in sport does not lie in how early a child is exposed to competitive sport, but

that the child concerned is 'optimally' ready to be involved in the sport. This optimisation must also account for the readiness to accept failure within that particular sport (Cahill and Pearl, 1993)

1.8.4 Significant Others

“Children’s sport, education and life experiences are mediated through relationships, especially those relationships which are described as, ‘significant others’”.

(Richardson and Reilly, 2001; p88)

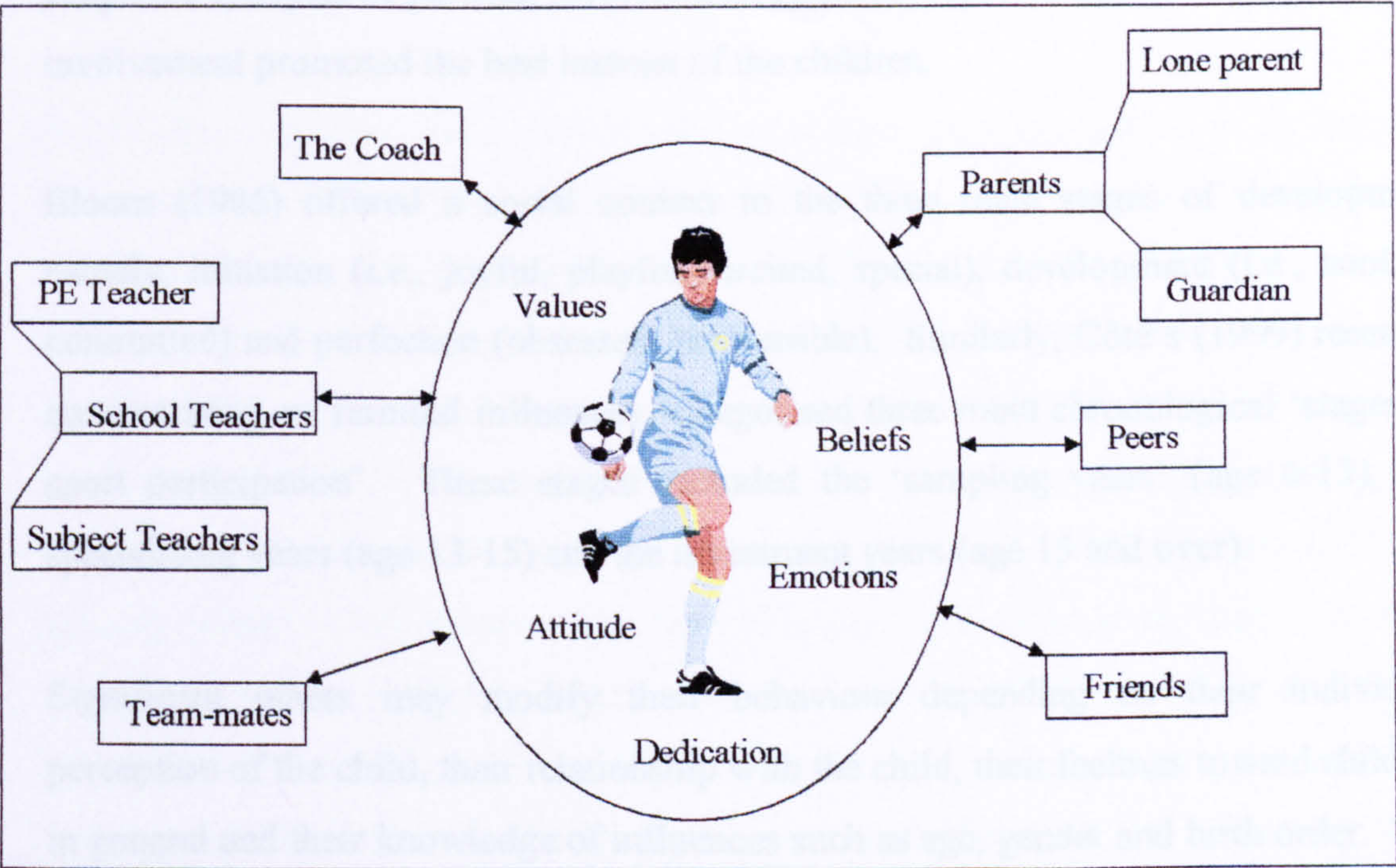


Figure 1.2. Significant others that may influence a young player’s values, beliefs, emotions, attitude and dedication toward sport performance at any given time. (from Richardson, 2000; p28)

Implicit within a child’s sporting, educational and life experiences are the influences of significant others (i.e., key relationships that are peculiar to a child’s individual development). Consequently, these relationships may have an impact and/or influence on a child’s values, beliefs, emotions, attitude and dedication toward sport (i.e., decision-making and thought processes in relation to sport participation, individual goals and performance expectations). These relationships are highlighted in Figure 1.3.

Children have traditionally been seen as empty vessels into which childhood can be socially constructed (i.e., shaped by cultural and structural context of their developing experience) (James and Prout, 1990) and families can pour their social values, customs and cultures (Hill and Tisdall, 1997). As a result children's actions have been depicted as the result of effective or ineffective parenting (Hill and Tisdall, 1997). Numerous studies have explored the influential role of parents and the associated support mechanisms that they provide (Bloom, 1985; Brustad, 1993, Hellstedt, 1988). Hellstedt identified a parental involvement continuum ranging from underinvolved, to moderate, to overinvolved. Although this model offers a fairly simplistic synopsis of parental involvement, Hellstedt reported that moderate levels of involvement promoted the best interest of the children.

Bloom (1985) offered a social context to the three main stages of development namely, initiation (i.e., joyful, playful, excited, special), development (i.e., hooked, committed) and perfection (obsessed, responsible). Similarly, Côté's (1999) research concentrating on familial influences, categorised three main chronological 'stages of sport participation'. These stages included the 'sampling years' (age 6-13), the specialising years (age 13-15) and the investment years (age 15 and over).

Significant others may modify their behaviour depending on their individual perception of the child, their relationship with the child, their feelings toward children in general and their knowledge of influences such as age, gender and birth order. The introduction of the coach exposes the child to a new type of authority. It has been argued that the behaviour of coaches and their involvement with a child are more important in the development of talent than are initial ability levels (Carlson, 1988, 1993). Good coaches know when to push players and when to reduce the intensity of training and their expectations. Moderation of effort and potential 'drop out' may occur if harmony does not exist between coach and player. Some effort should be made to prevent this loss of talent by encouraging the player to return to systematic training. Elite players are more likely to think highly of their coaches from early years of involvement (Carlson, 1993). The relationship is based on shared interests in accomplishing a task (e.g., football performance) rather than on a personal or emotional issue. Talented youngsters may see the coach as 'the gatekeeper' to future

progression, achievement and success within their sport. The potential impact of the coach on the child's socialisation is immense (Richardson, 1999).

A child's social development may be greatly enhanced by the experiences and opportunities afforded by top level sport performance. If the appropriate support mechanisms are not in place (i.e., determined and provided by significant others) then the child's social development may be impeded. Social restrictions and authoritarian structures embedded within a child's talent programme may restrict peer relationships, development opportunities outside of their sport and ultimately affect sport participation and performance.

Knowledge regarding the initial socialisation into sport is required to further the understanding of the importance of the social influences that shape a child's initial attraction to sport and, in particular football. This period of a child's life may be referred to as the *early years* when the child is aged between 0 and 8 (Smith and Smoll, 1996), or early childhood (2 – 6 years) with middle childhood being 6 - 11 years (Berk, 2000). Consequently these periods can determine the participation and future success of the child's sporting career. The process of sport socialisation begins in early infancy. During these early years of life children spend large amounts of time with close family, including time in physical activity (Greendorfer et al., 1996). Influences in this period of socialisation have been strongly related to prevalent attitudes and values within the family or peer group (Brustad 1992; Jambor 1998; Côté, 1999; Babkes and Weiss, 1999). Significant others have been identified as;

“Parents, coaches and peers who all exert strong influences on the child's desire and choice to participate, degree of enjoyment while participating, decision to terminate sport involvement, and on personality and social development which occurs as a result of sport participation.”

(Smith and Smoll, 1996; p88).

Difficulty in quantifying the influence of significant others in the early years of children's lives have been present in the form of methodological problems. An absence of research on younger children has led to fragmented research in the areas regarding children not yet involved in sport and the consequent effects of significant others and the extent to which they influence socialisation processes (Lewko and

Greendorfer, 1988). Reports from adults and children already involved in sport have been the only sources of evidence. In this sense, when researching the influences upon children, it is essential that the children are included in the investigation.

Rotella and Bunker (1987 cited in Kay 2000; p151) stated that children are more likely to participate in sport if their parents have been participants. Moreover, they suggested that the level of performance of the parent (i.e., recreational through to elite) would be strongly associated with the level the child would achieve.

Similarly, Rowley (1992) reported that of the fathers of children involved in football, 70% had played before with 59% of them quoting their involvement as serious. In contrast, Jambor (1998) found that parental sport participation and consequent child participation was indifferent. This latter study reflected the results from two sets of parents one with children involved in youth soccer programmes and one without. However, only thirteen parents had played soccer before which may be attributed to the delayed development of soccer in the United States and as such may be misleading.

Perhaps, more significantly Jambor (1998) suggested that parents were the individuals who were instrumental in determining whether a child participated in sport. Furthermore, they may often be the key socialisers in children's sport participation (Lewko and Greendorfer, 1988). The main individuals responsible for triggering a child's football participation were identified by Rowley (1992). Rowley reported that primarily children identified themselves as the main instigators of participation (46%), identifying an individual sense of motivation and commitment to the sport. Thirty three percent of children identified their father as being the person who introduced them to football, 15% were influenced by their immediate peers (i.e., teacher or coach) but, not surprisingly, only 3% of the children were involved in football due to their mother's influence, and only 3% were influenced by both parents.

When the influence of participation into football as suggested above emanates from the parents and the children themselves, it must be recognised that to some extent the cultural and ideological values, which are innate in the family, are highly responsible for the consequent involvement. Such involvement is initiated after the early years of

participation and moves towards Côté's (1999) *sampling years* where the influence of the family becomes coherent with the influence of further significant others.

The responsibility and impact of these significant others toward the social, academic and sporting development of talented youngsters invite further investigation. A child's social (including welfare) development may be impeded by his or her involvement in high level sport. Social restrictions and authoritarian structures embedded within a child's talent programme may restrict peer relationships, development opportunities outside of their sport and ultimately affect sport participation and performance.

Similarly, children's behaviour patterns, emotions and attributes may be affected by their surrounding environment (e.g., school, home, club), the nature of the environment (e.g., supervised, unsupervised, structured or unstructured) and the culture of the environment (Widdicombe and Woofit, 1995; Hill and Tisdall, 1997). A child's perception of themselves within such environments may affect their decisions, behaviour and ultimately performance. For example high-level performance may occur within the familiar surroundings of a school football team but may diminish in the unfamiliar surroundings of a football club and a perceived 'superior' group of players. The intimidation of the 'new' or unknown must be recognised within performance attributes (Richardson and Reilly, 2001).

1.8.5 Educational Implications

Association football within the UK, traditionally the preserve of the working classes is undergoing change. An increase in the number of players from 'middle-class' backgrounds has social and academic implications. The game is attracting players from different backgrounds, or as Revell (1999) remarked:

"...soccer recruitment has moved out of the backstreets of the industrial north and into the middle-class suburbs...Some insiders talk of the gentrification of the game, with everything from seat prices to recruitment policies aimed at a middle-class market." (p2-3)

Competitive sport and interscholastic/academic achievements are perceived predominantly as separate entities. Time allocated to one area is viewed as diminished time in the pursuit of success within the other (Richardson, 1999). The difficulties in establishing a professional playing career in tandem with academic success have been identified (Houlston, 1982; Purdy et al., 1982; Bar-Eli, 1993). There is no guarantee that a young player will make a successful career out of football.

The mandatory requirement of all football Academies to appoint a Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) is evidence of an attempt to redress this imbalance. The provision of this additional support mechanism may enhance the young player's development experience. These support mechanisms are still evolving but may be perceived to offer a more ethical and humanistic approach, somewhat alien to the traditional ruthless environment of the football world, to youth player development.

1.9 Locating the Research through Paradigms, Moments and Action Research

Having sketched out the all-encompassing complexity of talent development it appears appropriate to locate the nature of the research before engaging in the specific context of the role of the Head of Education and Welfare and the associated sympathies of their role within player development. In this sense, the following section concentrates on the location of the research and the associated research paradigms, moments and notions of action research.

The following section is divided into three parts. First, in order to communicate an understanding of the nature of qualitative inquiry, a journey through what Denzin and Lincoln (1994) described as the 'five moments of qualitative research', with implicit reference to the location of the research paradigm and the associated 'moments' are outlined. Second, there is an attempt to explore the concepts of these paradigms and moments within the contexts of qualitative research in sport and exercise sciences. Finally, the concepts and guises of action research and their inter-relationship with the respective research moments and paradigms are addressed.

It has been argued that qualitative research is gaining credibility within the sport and exercise sciences (Dale, 1996). For this to occur, debates that are presently located in today's post-modern environment have been introduced by means of qualitative research (see Biddle et al., 2001). In general qualitative research is multiparadigmatic in form, and constitutes a multitude of methodological approaches that privilege no single approach. Qualitative research "... has no theory distinctly its own, and multiple theoretical paradigms claim use of qualitative research methods and strategies... is used in many separate disciplines, but it does not belong completely to anyone of them, nor does it have its own distinct set of methods." (Sparkes, 1998; p363). Qualitative research is therefore a multi-dimensional phenomenon that embraces a number of methods.

The purpose of this section is to summarise the characteristics, tensions and contemporary developments within qualitative research. Furthermore, the section aims to identify the 'position' of the author within this landscape.

1.9.1 Paradigms

A research paradigm can be described as a basic belief system or worldview that guides the researcher (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The research paradigm or worldview is inextricably linked to the researcher's ontological (beliefs about the nature of reality), epistemological (the relationship between the knower and the known) and methodological (methods of obtaining knowledge) stance. Ultimately, these beliefs shape the inquirer's view of the world and how he or she behaves within it. "The beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness." (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; p105)

The ontological, epistemological and methodological mechanisms engaged by the researcher are generally grounded in theoretical rhetoric and borne out of pre-conceived notions of inquiry engagement. A historical perspective of research inquiry may shed some light on the constraints, influences, boundaries and potential conflict that may exist within a researcher's inquiry.

1.9.2 The Traditional Period – the first moment

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggested that the first moment began in the early 1900s and stretched through to World War II. In this moment the qualitative researcher adopted a primarily positivist approach to research typified by objective accounts of fieldwork. Denzin and Lincoln (1994; p7) argued that offering "... valid, reliable, and objective interpretations in their writings. The "other" who was studied was alien, foreign, strange." The period itself was seen to be dominated by conventional positivist social science inquiry where "...*internal validity*, the degree to which findings correctly map the phenomenon in question; *external validity*, the degree to which findings can be generalized to other [similar] settings... *reliability*, the extent to which findings can be replicated...and *objectivity*, the extent to which findings are free of bias" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; p100) epitomised the research. During this time authors were thought to assume that "...an apprehendable reality existed driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms... conventionally summarized in the form of time- and context-free generalisations." (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; p109). The typical positivist assumption was that the investigator and the subject of inquiry were

entirely separate entities. During this time the investigator was capable of studying the subject without influencing it or being influenced by it. Threats to the validity of the research existed if this demeanour was not achieved.

The positivist approach was extremely mechanistic more suited to the traditional 'hard' sciences. Consequently, 'qualitative' researchers were not opposed to proposing hypotheses and subjecting environments and subjects to empirical testing procedures.

1.9.3 The Modernist Phase (Post War – Early 1970s) – the second moment

The later stages of the positivist period witnessed a more interpretive approach to qualitative writing. The 'slice-of-life' epistemology advocated by the 'Chicago school' empowered the researcher-as-author to articulate a more detailed narrative of a subject's 'life history'. This approach was still underpinned by the "...mantle of straightforward, sentiment free, social realism..." (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; p7). The modernist phase is saturated in post-positivist ideals of structuralizing and formalizing qualitative methods. This moment witnessed attempts to establish qualitative research as a rigorous form of inquiry in line with its quantitative counterpart. The ontological perspective is driven by elements of critical realism where "reality is assumed to exist but to be only *imperfectly* apprehendable because of basically flawed intellectual mechanisms and the fundamentally intractable nature of phenomena" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; p110).

Although the nature of inquiry shifted more readily to 'natural' settings, situational information and elements of discovery, it was still 'bounded' by elements of objectivity. In that sense, interpretive approaches advocated knowledge as socially constructed, but retained the positivist assumption that aspires to value free description and explanation of phenomena (Bain, 1989). Interpretivists were thought to struggle with the conflict of subjectivity and objectivity, engagement and objectification (Denzin, 1992; Hammersley, 1989). Interpretivism celebrates the permanence and priority of the real world of first-person, the subjective experience, yet, seeks to detach itself from that experience and objectify it. "The paradox of how

to develop an objective interpretive science of subjective human experience thus arises.” (Schwandt, 1994; p119).

Essentially, interpretivism concerns contextualised meaning (Greene, 1994) where the aspiration may be value free but the practice is value laden, “...interpretivist practice intentionally reveals the value dimensions of lived experiences (because there are no facts without values), but the dimensionality revealed is importantly connected to, even constitutive of, the value orientations and stances of the inquirer (because different values can lead to different facts).” (Greene, 1994; p536). The notion of empirically based representations of the subject’s lived experiences and meanings (i.e., value laden) are countered by the inquirer’s desire to demonstrate bias free interpretation. In order to ensure value free (or at least, limited author bias) interpretation, procedures such as triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing and audits emerged to declare evaluator credibility (Denzin and Lincoln, 1995).

Although rigorous research authenticity, and the postulates of credibility surrounding the interpretivist qualitative researcher emerged during this period, the close of the modernist phase witnessed the emergence of ‘grounded theory’ (Glasser and Strauss, 1967) and a plethora of new, more radical and creative research ideas and techniques, (e.g., ethnomethodology, conflict theory, phenomenology and dramaturgical analysis) (Lofland, 1980). This explosion of creativity and new ideas prompted the (alleged) end of the modernist moment.

1.9.4 The Blurred Genres – the third moment (1970’s –1986)

The emergence of new research ideas and techniques now provided the qualitative researcher with a full compliment of paradigms, methods and strategies from which to construct and locate their research. As well as traditional positivist and post-positivist inquiry, theories ranged from interactionism to constructivism and naturalistic inquiry, critical, semiotics, structuralism and feminism (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

It is beyond the scope of this section to encapsulate all of the above, therefore the following text recounts the primary ‘power’ of the post-positivist, constructionist and naturalistic¹ paradigms that dominate this blurred moment.

The concept of ‘blurred genres’ resulted from the ‘blurring’ of boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities. Social sciences were turning to the theories, models and methods of analysis advocated within humanities to support and supplement the research process.

“The essay as an art form was replacing the scientific article. At issue now is the author’s presence in the interpretive text, or how the researcher can speak with authority in an age when there are no longer any firm rules concerning the text, its standards of evaluation, and its subject matter.”

(Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; p9)

At this time the traditional positivist criteria of internal and external validity were replaced with terms such as *trustworthiness* and *authenticity*. The ontological relativism of constructivism (as opposed to ontological realism of the positivist and post-positivist paradigms) deemed realities as “...apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; p110-111). These realities were dependent on the individual persons and/or groups holding the constructions. Constructions are not more or less true in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated (Guba and Lincoln, 1998).

Sparkes (1998) argued that Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) trustworthiness criteria revealed the “...defensive posture among qualitative inquirer’s...and the vestigial influence of the modernist moment.” (p366). In essence the process of trustworthiness focused on the researcher’s ability to carry out the research effectively. As such, Manning (1997) described trustworthiness as “...parallel to the empiricist concepts of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity.” (p 95). In truth, explicitly promoting the ‘rigour’ (and subsequent acceptance) of qualitative inquiry under the guise of a positivist and post-positivist culture.

¹ Guba and Lincoln’s constructivist paradigm is a diverse framework. They originally discussed their approach under the heading of ‘naturalistic inquiry’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). However, recently they have begun using the term constructivism to characterize their methodology (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; p19). They acknowledge that constructivist, interpretive, naturalistic, and hermeneutical are all similar notions (Schwandt, 1994)

Moreover, Clavarino et al. (1995) encouraged the post positivist position of applying 'scientific' criteria to a qualitative research context, postulating that if qualitative research did not engage in such rigour its findings would be taken less seriously,

"Social scientists were now turning to the humanities for models, theories, and methods of analysis (semiotics, hermeuntics)...At the same time, other new approaches were emerging: poststructuralism, neopositivism, neo-Marxism, micro-macro descriptivism, ritual theories of drama and culture, deconstructionism, ethnomethodologyforced to search for new models. The golden age of the social sciences was over, and a new age of blurred, interpretive genres was upon us." (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; p15)

Alternatively, the epistemological approaches of both constructivism and criticalist theories assume that the investigator and the investigated are inextricably linked, relationships develop and findings are created as the researcher and the researched interact (Guba and Lincoln, 1998).[©]Constructions and their associated realities are transient and dynamic in nature. This inextricable link between investigator and the investigated assumes that findings are value based and value mediated. This position challenges the traditional distinction between the ontology and epistemology, where what can be known is inextricably influenced by the interface between the researcher and the researched (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

The primary difference between constructivism and critical theories is the nature of engagement. Constructivism aims to promote understanding and facilitate reconstructions of conceptions that people (including the researcher) initially hold. The process of engagement is one of interaction (hermeneutical and dialectical) between, and among, investigator and participants, where "...change is facilitated as reconstructions are formed and individuals are stimulated to act on them" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Criticalist theory declares its primary intent is to "...empower those being researched, that is, to provide them with the insight necessary to demystify and critique their own circumstances and to choose actions to improve their lives (Lather, 1985 in Bain, 1989; p22). The nature of engagement here promotes dialogic and dialectical, confrontational and even dispute in order to "...transform ignorance and misapprehensions (accepting historically mediated structures as immutable) into more

informed consciousness (seeing how the structures might be changed and comprehending the actions required to effect change)” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; p110). In essence, criticalist theory embraces the notions of empowerment, where participant emancipation is anticipated, and hoped for. Social transformation, aimed particularly toward equity and justice dominate this stance (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). The critical researcher is both instigator and facilitator, assuming that the researcher understands what transformations are required (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

1.9.5 Crisis of Representation – the fourth moment (mid 1980’s – mid 1990’s)

The fourth moment is encapsulated by the tensions in the relationship between the author/researcher and his or her fieldwork. In this sense, the conceptualisation of their experience (i.e., researcher and researched) in the written word is brought to the fore. The crisis of representation was primarily concerned with the researchers’ writing practices (Sparkes, 1995), as research and writing became more reflexive (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Rosaldo (1989; pp 44-45) exclaimed that the “...erosion of classic norms in anthropology (objectivism, complicity with colonialism, social life structured by fixed rituals and customs, ethnographics as monuments to a culture) was complete.” The issues of validity, reliability, and objectivity, which had been settled in earlier phases, were once more problematic (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; p10). Sparkes (2002) suggested that the crisis of representation remains with us today. The assumption that the qualitative researcher can directly capture the *lived* experience is being contested. Richardson (1994) regarded writing as a method of inquiry that moved through successive stages of self- reflection. The immersion of the author in the fieldwork, the encapsulation of this occurrence and subsequent relationship in written form, began to extend the boundaries of qualitative research.

1.9.6 A Triple Crisis – the fifth moment (mid 1990s onwards)

The present qualitative research environment is both defined and shaped by the triple crisis of representation, legitimation and praxis². These three crises are associated with the interpretive, linguistic, and rhetorical turns in social theory. Qualitative researchers must confront the triple crisis of representation, legitimation and praxis

² Praxis has been referred to as moral action. “It was the Greeks who introduced the term ‘praxis’ to denote the idea of critically informed practices.” (Tinning, 1992; p194).

that still exists today; "...the experience is now taken to be *created* in the social text by the researcher, which means that the link between the text and the author has become increasingly problematic." (Sparkes, 2002; p5). This is the crisis of representation. Writing may be considered as "...a *method of inquiry*, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic... Writing is also a way of 'knowing' – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable." (Richardson, 2000; p923). The fieldwork and the writing merge into one another. In essence there is no difference between the writing and the fieldwork. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that this 'blur', implicit within the crisis of representation, moves qualitative research in new and critical directions. Subsequently, the traditional criteria for evaluating and interpreting qualitative research (e.g., triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing) are under scrutiny (McFee, 1992). In this sense, such scrutiny is associated with the legitimization crisis. Sparkes (1998; p363) suggested that legitimization is being, "...problematized and treated with suspicion under the influence of postmodernism and poststructuralism...". "It involves a serious rethinking of such terms as *validity, generalizability, and reliability*... This crisis asks, How are qualitative studies to be evaluated in the contemporary, poststructural moment?" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; p17). These two crises give rise to the third crisis; the crisis of praxis, which asks, "Is it possible to effect change in the world if society is only and always a text?" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; p17)

The evaluation of qualitative studies within the poststructural moment causes concern. Similarly, Lather (1986) argued that validity in critical research required re-conceptualisation. She identified three categories of validity for *value-based, emancipatory research* namely; *construct validity*: a *systemised reflexivity*, which offers some indication of how *a priori* theory has been changed by the logic of the data, is essential in establishing construct validity in ways that will contribute to the growth of illuminating and change-enhancing social theory; *face validity*: which includes member checks that 'revisit' the subject(s) with the tentative results and refine them in the light of the subject's reactions; *catalytic validity*: the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants, similarly described by Friere (1973 cited in Lather, 1986) as 'conscientization,' knowing reality in order to better transform it. The utilisation of 'member checks' was further

contested by Silverman (1993), who questioned the respondent's ability to understand the issues or a report that was more pertinent to a sociological or psychological audience. In addition, the issue of self-image must be considered as, "...overt respondent validation might only be possible when analysis results are compatible with respondents' self images" (Sparkes, 1998; p372). Moreover, critical research is not only dependent on the trustworthiness and credibility of the interpretation, but also on the effectiveness of the process in empowering the participants (Lather, 1986).

The fifth moment also witnessed new epistemologies that may provide the solutions to such problems. "The concept of the aloof researcher has been abandoned. More action-, activist-oriented research is on the horizon, as are more social criticism and social critique" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; p11). Richardson (1994) declared that we are fortunate to be working in a postmodernist climate. Postmodernism questions the privileged "right" of any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, to have universal claim as the authoritative knowledge. "No method has a privileged status. The superiority of "science" over "literature" – or, from another vantage point, "literature" over "science" – is challenged" (p518). The premise of postmodernism is that it allows us to "...know "something" without claiming to know everything. Having a partial, local, historical knowledge is still knowing. In some ways, "knowing" is easier, ...because postmodernism recognizes the situational limitations of the knower" (Richardson, 1994; p518)

Poststructuralism is a particular kind of postmodernist thinking. Poststructuralism links language, subjectivity, social organisation, and power. The centrepiece is language. Language does not "reflect" social reality, but produces meaning, creates social reality" (Richardson, 1994; p518) As with constructivism and critical theories poststructuralism recognises the transient, dynamic and evolving relationship that exists between the researcher and the researched. Language is the vehicle that creates a particular view of reality and of the self. The relationship between the researcher and the researched. It is "...not the result of one's individuality; rather, language constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific." (Richardson, 1994; p518).

The individual is subject to multiple and competing discourses in many realms, hence one's subjectivity is shifting and contradictory, not stable, fixed, rigid (Richardson, 1994; p518). The researcher must know the 'self' as well as know the subject.

"Poststructuralism, then, permits-nay, invites-no, incites us to reflect upon our method and explore new ways of knowing...directs us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times; and...it frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said to everyone,"

(Richardson, 1994; p518)

1.9.7 Crisis? What Crisis?

The brief synopsis of the five moments of qualitative research and the location of the various research paradigms offered in the first part of this chapter highlight the complexity and transience of qualitative inquiry. Qualitative inquiry can be utilised within a broad, interpretive framework, adopting postmodern and critical stances, yet can also be drawn to a narrowly defined positivist, postpositivist, humanistic and naturalistic interpretations of the lived experience (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). However, it is clear that qualitative literature, in whatever guise, is committed to the values of multi-method approaches and the interpretive understanding of the human experience.

The postmodern period, the fifth moment, dominated by ethnographic writing, has struggled to make sense of the crisis. Authors experimented with 'tales from the field' in order to redefine ways of representing the 'other'. These tales were compounded by representational concerns (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Similarly, Atkinson (1990) stated that the text cannot simply describe and inform, it must also persuade. Biddle et al. (2001) reported that it is the *realist* tale that has dominated qualitative research as opposed to the *scientific* tale that continues to dominate positivist, objective science. The scientific tale is simply a case of *presenting* rather than *writing* the findings (Plummer, 2001). "The 'style of no-style' is the style of science..." (Biddle et al., 2001). The realist tale is characterised by the void presented by the absence of the author's voice from most segments of the finished text. Once the research is collected the author vanishes from the text. The text becomes author-evacuated and dominated by scientific protocol (Van Maanen, 1988). The stance is a remnant of the positivist moment in qualitative research. The authors

attempt to distance themselves from the researched utilising alleged *neutral* representations of the external world. This may take the form of a series of closely edited quotations that proffer the authentic and representative views of those being researched, not the author. Van Maanen (1988) refuted this claim, suggesting that such illusions demand a great deal of contextual framing and epistemological stunts.

Many authors have responded to the 'crisis' of representation by immersing themselves explicitly in their texts. "Indeed, oftentimes...the authors themselves are the central characters in the story. In effect, one of the "others" has become the author's narrative self (Tierney, 2002; p389). In effect, the author is placed at the forefront of the text where one may gleam as much about the author's methodological reflexivity, as opposed to the experiences of the researched. The research process engages 'data' collection on the one hand, and self-growth and understanding on the other. These *confessional* tales promote the authors, their concerns and their personal development to the foreground of the text, including, "Stories of infiltration, fables of fieldwork rapport, mini dramas of hardships endured (and overcome), and accounts of what fieldwork did to the fieldworker." (Van Maanen, 1988; p73).

Tierney (2002; p386) attempts to further demystify the crisis by espousing, "The point, of course, is not simply to move from one writing stance to another, as if better writing will reify fieldwork and reinstall claims to authority. The crisis of representation is ineluctably tied to epistemological shifts with regard to a researcher's claims to understanding the Other." Moreover, he asked whether the crisis was merely, "...a tempest in and academic teapot that will eventually subside while representative strategies remain unchanged?" (p386).

The complexity of locating the research is further aggravated by the conflict and tensions that still exist within the qualitative field. Researchers continue to challenge the conflicts and tensions that have existed throughout the five moments, and will no doubt continue to exist, as qualitative research moves forward into a sixth and seventh moments (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Patton (1990) advocated a 'paradigm of choices', one which rejected methodological orthodoxy in favour of methodological appropriateness. The issue for Patton is not

one of aligning yourself with a particular paradigm but more "...whether one has made sensible methods decisions given the purpose of the inquiry, the questions being investigated, and the resources available" (pp38-39). In essence the paradigms, methods or procedures should be recognised in their own right for what they are, and what they can achieve in a specific context or environment.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggested that the sixth (postexperimental) and seventh (the future) moments are upon us. An environment where fictional ethnographies, ethnographic poetry, and multimedia text are taken for granted. "Perhaps what has been learned during the crisis is that the correct representational strategy is one that locates the author's self within the texts as text." (Tierney, 2002; p389). In essence, the writing and representation is a craft. This is not to say that the writing becomes fiction but the writers must come to terms with, or legitimise his or her chosen format and voice. "The use of my voice in a text is always an epistemological concern about studying/ working/collaborating with the Other; to ignore this issue from an end of a narrative continuum or another is to overlook the critical relationship of the researched, the researcher, and the reader." (Tierney, 2002; p391). The reader's subjective interpretation of the written word cannot be taken for granted. A postmodern narrative cannot assume one absolutist interpretation. As Tierney continued, "To claim otherwise is to assume that the author is the textual arbiter of interpretation and definition and to reduce the reader's role to little more than passive observer, a bystander in the author's world." (p392).

1.9.8 Moments in Sport and Exercise Science

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggested that the 'moments' of research philosophy and practice are both historical and somewhat sequential, yet each still operates in the present either as, "... a legacy or as a set of practices that researchers continue to follow or argue against. The multiple or fractured histories of qualitative research now make it possible for any given researcher to attach a project to a canonical text from any of the...historical moments." (p18). An embarrassment of paradigmatic, philosophical and technical choice characterises today's qualitative environment. Moreover, they state that we are in a climate of discovery and rediscovery as new, alternative ways of researching, interpreting and representation are debated. A

moment where qualitative inquiry, "...can no longer be viewed from within a neutral or objective positivist perspective. Class, race, gender, and ethnicity shape the process of inquiry." (p18). However, their depiction of the moments are predominantly dominated by the evolving research practices witnessed in North America. Due to this North American dominance, and the primacy of the sociological and anthropological disciplines, Sparkes (2002) questioned whether the development of these 'moments' can be rigidly applied to other countries and other disciplines:

"The time span of the moments described by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) is difficult to apply to sport and physical activity where qualitative forms of inquiry remain relatively new kids on the block. For example, the third moment of blurred genres between 1970 and 1986, encompasses the period in the 1980's when debates about qualitative research first began to emerge and qualitative articles first began to get published in journals associated with sport and physical activity. Furthermore, since its arrival on the scene, qualitative research within the various subdisciplines of sport and physical activity has developed at different rates."

(Sparkes, 2002; pp6-7)

Sparkes (2002) clarified this position, pointing out that qualitative researchers in sports psychology, during the late 1990s, were operating in a modernist moment, prior to the moment of blurred genres or even the crisis of representation. Alternatively, researchers in sport sociology and education were experiencing the crisis of representation, legitimation and the influence of postmodernism in the early 1990's. Denzin and Lincoln's suggestion that the sixth (postexperimental) and seventh (future) moments are already upon us, (i.e., an environment of fictional ethnographies, ethnographic poetry, and multimedia text) may not be the case in sport and physical activity.

Similarly, Anderson (1999) voiced concerns over the sequential nature of the evolution of moments, where new ethnographic developments or moments should be heralded as increased opportunities for researchers. New opportunities should be seen as welcome additions that supplement existing methods of inquiry rather than signal their demise. This optimistic approach is maintained by Sparkes (2002; p9) who states, "...*something* has happened to qualitative research in recent years that has foregrounded issues of representation and legitimation and loosened the grip of specific styles of writing within the social science community." These new opportunities should not be restricted to a technical level but should be accompanied

by a new dialogue that reflects the epistemology and the legitimacy of the appropriate paradigm (Gilbourne, 1999). Such an approach should be embraced as the research practices of sport, physical activity and social science advance and explore a new semblance of representation and legitimation.

1.9.9 Action Research

Action research is not a new idea and, not surprisingly, many social scientists have studied behaviour in the workplace (Pasmore, 2001). John Dewey, John Collier and Kurt Lewin have been identified as the vanguards of action research. Although Dewey himself did not coin the term 'action research' he is credited with the some of the, "...earliest modern thinking about putting science to use in addressing practical social problems...In his book, *How we Think* (1933), Dewey identified five phases of reflective thinking: suggestion, intellectuallization, hypothesizing, reasoning and testing hypotheses in action." (Pasmore, 2001; p38). Lewin's work on the social problems of prejudice, authoritarianism and dogmatism provided a direct challenge to the traditional perspective of social scientist as "the disinterested 'objective' observer...for Lewin practical and theoretical problems were to be investigated together as if they were one. Action research was to be seen as a group process which always involved a collaboration between researcher and researched." (Tinning, 1992; p190). Collier in his work concerned with changing behaviour in ethnic relations espoused that "...engaging participants in dialogue without research would reveal differences in opinion but provide no means for the resolution of those differences...only a participative approach to research could create the conditions under which authentic improvements in race relations would occur." (Pasmore, 2001; p39).

Carr and Kemmis (1986) described action research as a form of self-reflexive inquiry. In this sense, participants in social situations engage in self-reflection in order to improve and/or rationalise their own practice. In its basic form action research concerns a continuous cyclical process of stages. More specifically, these stages include reconnaissance, planning, observation and reflection (Elliott, 1991). Reason and Bradbury (2001) referred to action research as a participatory and democratic process that concerned the development of practical knowing in the pursuit of

worthwhile human purposes. Furthermore, they suggested that action research is grounded in a *participatory worldview*, which they further promote as a more adequate and creative paradigm. Consistent with the notions of action research espoused by Carr and Kemmis (1986) action research, "...seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities." (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; p1).

As Reason and Bradbury (2001) suggested an emerging participatory worldview, it appears appropriate to note that the underlying principles of action research can be located within the contexts of both constructivism and critical theory. Constructivism postulates that action is intertwined with validity and that inquiry is often incomplete without action (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Lincoln (2001) identified that associations between constructivism and action research included an equitable consideration towards tangible realities and the socially constructed realities of the participant. More specifically, these socially constructed realities incorporated meaning-making, and sense-making cognitive and emotive activities of the associated stakeholders. Furthermore, designing interventions, alterations and redirections to activities determined by the stakeholder, in addition to creating the appropriate conditions for action to occur, are inherent within both research genres (Lincoln, 2001). Critical theory demands a transactional nature of inquiry that "...requires a dialogue between the investigator and the subjects of the inquiry; that dialogue must be dialectical in nature to transform ignorance and misapprehensions (accepting historically mediated structures as immutable) into more informed consciousness (seeing how the structures might be changed and comprehending the actions required to effect change)..." (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; p110). Similarly, constructivism assumes that, "...individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction between and among investigator and respondents." (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; p111). Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated that the critical stance espoused critique and transformation (of social realities) through engagement in confrontation (and even conflict). It appears that constructivism aspires (tacitly) to engage participants in action, which may be dependent on the nature of the enquiry (or the participants), whereas critical theory seeks *explicit* emancipation and empowerment that continues over time.

Action research *demand*s longitudinal engagement wherein the researcher stimulates and facilitates the participant's change strategy. The relationship between the researcher and the researched is consistent with the requirements of both constructivism and critical theory where the researcher and the researched are inextricably linked. The 'change' generally involves a "...cycle of phases or moments which include *planning, acting, monitoring, and reflecting*." (Tinning, 1992; p188). "For action researchers, social inquiry aims to generate knowledge and action in support of liberating social change. The "test" for social research is whether it provides effective support for stakeholders' actions, organizations, and/or communities in their processes of self-determining social change" (Greenwood and Levin, 2000; p94).

Greenwood and Levin (2000; p95) referred to the pragmatist underpinnings of action research where pragmatism seeks to, "...link theory to praxis. The core reflection process is connected to action outcomes that involve manipulating material and social factors in a given context. Experience emerges in a continual interaction between people and their environment and, accordingly, this process constitutes both the subjects and the objects of inquiry. The actions taken are purposeful and aim at creating desired outcomes." Similarly, McFee (1993) stated that action research must incorporate research (i.e., knowledge gathering) *into* action, where action is an identified *outcome* of the process. However, he also stated that action research should not be considered as a specific sort of research, or research as praxis (see Lather, 1986; Greenwood and Levin, 2000), more a process with a specific intention. In this sense, action research should be utilised to influence (or instigate) changes in social and/or working practices.

1.9.9.1 The Guises of Action Research

Action research has evolved under various guises. Researchers have sought to apply and identify different forms of action research characterised by their particular emphasis on knowledge and human interest (Habermas, 1972; Tripp, 1984; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2001).

Kemmis and McTaggart (2001) outlined the evolution of the term '*participatory action research*'. They identified the emergence of 'action research'; its relationship with elements of 'collaborative action research' (i.e., emphasising the interdependence of the activities of academics and educators), through to the convergence of *action research* with *participatory research*. Moreover, they identified seven types of action research; participatory research, critical action research, classroom action research, action learning, action science, soft systems approaches and industrial action research. More specifically, Kemmis (2001; p91-92) distinguished, "...*empirical-analytic* (or positivist), *hermeneutic* (or interpretive) and *critical* approaches in research theory and practice". Each approach has its particular '*raison d'être*' that guides the quest for knowledge. Typically, a technical aspect (i.e., an interest in getting things done) is prominent within the *empirical-analytic* form. "In Habermasian terms the human interests of this form of action research are technical (they focus on prediction and control) and the knowledge form is instrumental (concerned with means-end efficiency)." (Tinning, 1992; p195). Most forms of action relate to increasing or decreasing incidents and/or occurrences in the workplace (e.g., increases in productivity, or decreases in the incidences of inappropriate behaviour). The primacy is within problem solving where a successful engagement of action is achieved if the outcomes match the initial aspirations. However, the action may not necessarily question the aspirations themselves, or even attempt to discover or discuss the social and/or historical construction of the action itself. The process generally takes a narrow and pragmatic view of its function (Kemmis, 2001) consistent with the positivist paradigm.

Although *interpretive* action research has technical aspirations it embraces a more practical emphasis. There is an interest in facilitating 'wise and prudent' practical decision-making by practitioners. Tripp (1984) referred to practical or interpretive action research as self directed by individual or group practitioners. The aim is as much to do with developing new practices as it is with improving existing practice. Practitioners are encouraged not only to improve practice but also to:

"...see how their goals, and the categories in which they evaluate their work, are shaped by their ways of seeing and understanding themselves in context. The process of action research is a process of self-education for the practitioner – though one which may also produce commentaries and reports aimed at helping others see things more clearly...unlike technical action research,

however, practical action researchers aim just as much at understanding and changing themselves as the subjects of a practice (as practitioners) as changing the outcomes of their practice.”

(Kemmis, 2001; p92)

Carr and Kemmis (1986) described the role of the facilitator in such action as, “Socratic”. The practitioners utilise the facilitator as a sounding board for new ideas, to understand the rationale behind their own actions and to engage in the process of self-reflection.

Tripp (1984; p12) described critical or emancipatory action research as the activity of a “...self-leading group, aimed at developing new practices and/or changing constraints with a shared radical consciousness and problematized values.” Moreover, Kemmis (2001) suggested that emancipatory action research not only aims to improve outcomes but also enables practitioners to arrive at a critique of their own working environment. The process intervenes “...in the cultural, social and historical processes of everyday life to reconstruct not only the practitioner but also the practice setting (or, one might say, the work, the worker and the workplace).” (Kemmis; 2001; p92). Emancipatory action research recognises the strive to improve achievements in relation to functional goals but also recognises that these goals as determined, manipulated or defined by the individual or the organisation, may be inappropriate. “It recognizes that we may want to improve our self understandings, but also that our self-understandings may be shaped by collective misunderstandings about the nature and consequences of what we do.” (Kemmis, 2001; p92). With respect to knowledge and human interests Tinning (1992; p195) stated that, “...emancipatory action research is clearly aimed at criticism and liberation (from restrictive thoughts and practices) through a process of critical reflection.

The concern here relates to the precise nature of engagement of action research and the consequent outcomes of the action research process (i.e., the requirement to emancipate the participant through the reconstruction of the workplace). Kemmis (2001; p93) described his (and his colleagues) dilemma,

“...that we should no longer set out to persuade others that they should undertake action research projects as a form of participatory, collaborative critical investigation aimed at critical reconstruction of the work, the worker and workplace. We feared that our advocacy for critical action research had become

a 'solution' looking for 'problems' – that we had an answer to questions that people were not necessarily asking for themselves. Instead we thought we should be working with people already committed to addressing felt dissatisfactions and overcoming injustices in the settings in which they found themselves...we could more readily develop the critical approach in contexts where people were already committed to taking action because they had begun to form a critical view about the nature of the consequences of the practices in which they were engaged.”

The process of action research concerns a particular kind of practice, which incorporates an understanding and recognition of the existence of craft-knowledge (McFee, 1993). Moreover, action research should be an inclusive (i.e., researcher and participants), interactional and evolving process, which identifies practical knowledge, which is subsequently evidenced in and through action (McFee, 1993; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2001; Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

1.10 Education and Welfare – The Development of a Profession

Having previously sketched out the complexities of talent development, followed by an overview of the research paradigms that help to locate the research, it appears appropriate to concentrate on the notions of education and welfare. The following section offers a brief historical synopsis of the role of education and welfare within the public sector and social services. Furthermore, the section aims to explore the notions of education and welfare and the perceived role of the HoEW within the football environment.

The provision of education and welfare services date back to the Education Act 1870 and the establishment of compulsory education for children. The service gained momentum primarily through concerns over the exploitation and neglect of children. The service itself gradually diversified its perspective due to the increase in social problems witnessed in the post war period. The 1944 Education Act has been cited as the framework for the conceptual grounding of social care and education (NASWELB: The National Association of Social Workers in Education, Liverpool Branch, 1989).

The Education and Welfare Officer (EWO) has often been referred to as the ‘Cinderella’ role of the education system and has been traditionally undervalued and neglected by senior decision-makers in education” (MacMillan, 1977; p14). MacMillan ascribed this neglect to the, ‘...phantom’ nature of the role, as it is “...very difficult to distinguish its outline, structure or purpose.” (MacMillan. 1977; p14). Moreover, an extremely diverse set of descriptions have been used to describe the ‘original’ role of the education welfare officer, “...ranging from the more official ‘truancy officer’ or ‘attendance officer’ to the less official ‘school-boardman’, ‘kid-catcher’ or ‘whipper-in’.” (MacMillan, 1977; p15).

1.10.1 Historical Influences

The more formal role of the EWO has been guided primarily by three government reports, the Plowden Report (1967), The Seebohm Report (1968), and the Ralphs Report (1973). The Plowden Report (1967) made explicit reference to the role of education welfare officer:

“...[a] readily available social worker whom schools know and trust, and who can act quickly.”

(cited in NASWELB, 1989; p1).

“...the liaison officer between home, school and local authority and agencies for the welfare of children.”

(MacMillan, 1977; p15).

The diversity of responsibility highlighted above continued with an associated accountability for advising the parents of delinquent children, the referral of children to appropriate child guidance clinics, exchange of information and co-operation with other social workers, supervision of families where child neglect had been identified and arranging the provision of school meals and clothing to appropriate cases (MacMillan, 1977). In the Plowden report (1, 81) it was concluded that:

“The greater part of their [EWO’s] time is spent on school attendance work and routine inquiries... The rest of their work with primary school children is mainly concerned with free meals and clothing. Keeping track of changes in the child population of their areas and following up children with verminous conditions.”

(MacMillan, 1977; p15-16)

The Plowden report also emphasised that the EWOs were not trained for social work. It was argued that, as the EWO was usually ‘first on the scene’, he (or she) were insufficiently trained to deal with the diversity of complex issues relating to school absenteeism (e.g., school phobia, maladjustment or protracted social problems). “The role was seen to be much more extensive and complex than the popular misconception of the school board man who knocks on the door, fills in forms and prosecutes recalcitrant truants.” (MacMillan, 1977; p124). The Plowden report also noted substantial differences in the nature and application of the role across the country (i.e., the areas studied).

The Seebohm Report (1968) took these proposals forward and proposed the establishment of a social services department within every local authority. This department would incorporate the children’s department, welfare, health, housing and education.

Whilst acknowledging the endeavours of the EWO and the important links between social services, health services and the schools, the Seebohm Report identified similar disparity in the nature of the role, levels of provision and standards of training and pay across the country. In this sense, the report highlighted that, "...neither the title nor the duties of the education welfare officers had been specified in any enactment." MacMillan (1977) also noted that most education authorities used the EWO to help carry out some or all of certain statutory or discretionary duties, such as the enforcement of school attendance, the granting of free school meals, the administration of clothing or maintenance grants, and the arrangement of school transport (MacMillan, 1977). Other duties identified in the Seebohm Report included the making of censuses of pre-school populations, escort duties for children or parents on journeys to special schools, and work in connection with juvenile employment.

Despite the limitations of the Seebohm Report (i.e., based primarily on 8 county councils, 15 county boroughs, 5 London boroughs, 6 other local authorities, plus limited follow-up visits and interviews) the transfer of EWOs to the proposed social services was recommended primarily on the basis that it is essential to consider and, if necessary, deal with a child in his/her total environment (i.e., family, neighbourhood, and the school). Social workers within the social services department closely allied to pupils and schools, will more readily achieve this objective and deal with the whole range of family problems, including families where there are children *under* as well as *over* school age. Alternatively, Plowden suggested that these positions, "...might be filled by EWOs after a two-year training period, similar to that required for the Certificate of Social Work and working within something akin to the Seebohm Report's unified social work service." (Department of the Education Welfare Service, HMI, 1984; p1).

Although there was an increased awareness of the social factors impacting educational performance, and a renewed impetus on the role of the EWO as the primary liaison between the school and home, it appeared that they were not appropriately qualified for the task. MacMillan (1977) referred to the EWOs as products of the education system that existed before the Second World War. Furthermore, he suggested that the EWOs were individuals who had stumbled into the

role following, at best elementary, education and limited alternative employment opportunities during a time of economic depression. However, such backgrounds were not thought to have a derisory influence on the role as it was recognised that the EWOs possessed communication and organisation skills that demonstrated adaptability within the social environment (MacMillan, 1977). Moreover, it was their failure to gain statutory recognition and training within the social services environment that limited their 'voice' within organisational and procedural workings.

The undervalue of the EWO is epitomised in the response from the Secretary of the Education Welfare Officers National Association (EWONA) (Coombes, 1964 in MacMillan, 1977; p36):

“...few of the local authorities actually knew the range of duties that the officer is called upon to carry out and the many referrals he makes with no demands made upon the central administration. Too often teachers are unaware of the value of the officer and his proper role.”

The failure of the 1970s Social Services Act (despite recommendations by the Seebohm Report) to include education and welfare services within the newly formed social services, ensured that the role of the EWO was in danger of further fragmentation and uncertainty. Though many local governments accepted the social work role and function of the EWO identified in both the Seebohm and the Ralphs Report (1973), the great majority retained the Education and Welfare Service within education. The Ralphs Report (1973) further acknowledged the value of the role, “...in supporting the main educational function by means of social work functions performed within the educational system” (in NASWELB, 1989; p1). The failure of central government to recognise the role prompted the EWONA, jointly with the National Association of Chief Education Welfare Officers (NACEWO) to circulate a memorandum which outlined the most comprehensive perspectives of the role of the EWO to teachers, social workers, local and central government agencies and professional associations (MacMillan, 1977). A summary of the main points is offered below:

- EWOs are concerned that every child receives full-time education suitable to his (or her) age, ability and aptitude.

- Adequate welfare facilities are available to enable the child to take full advantage of the educational provision (e.g., clothing, school meals, transport, maintenance allowances).
- The EWO seeks a 'general liaison' role and does not claim to be a specialist or remedial social work agency.
- The EWO provides the vital link, interpreting to the home the policy, problems and the concern of the school for a particular child. In addition, the EWO provides the school staff with information surround the child's circumstance and background.
- The linking of home and school may begin prior to the child reaching compulsory school age, continue through school and in some cases develop into linking home and employment.
- In cases of special educational treatment it is the responsibility of the education welfare services to make provision for the examination of the child, ascertain special needs requirements and allocate an appropriate school or arrange home tuition.
- The EWO should follow up poor attendance and suspected truancy and act as authorised prosecution officer for the local education authority – preparation of court briefs, social reports etc.
- The EWO should co-operate with careers officers and youth services in relation to juvenile employment and child performance.
- The EWO should consult with other departments; attend case conferences, school functions, parent/teacher association meetings; appropriate clerical and administrative duties, reports, statistics etc.

(Adapted from MacMillan, 1977; pp37-40)

Unfortunately, unlike most other professional education and social services, there appears to have been limited central government recognition or encouragement for the education welfare services, despite their traditional location and longevity within this environment.

1.10.2 The Education Welfare Service Today

The above section has sketched out some of the historical developments and government influences surrounding the development of the EWO. The EWO has evolved from its earlier guise of an 'enforcement officer', primarily concerned with school attendance and employment, to a more generic role of liaison officer between the child, the home, the school and the local education authority. "Throughout this period and the development of this role, the motivating force appears to have been the initiative of individual officers in their respective local authorities supported by the collective ethos of the professional associations." (MacMillan, 1977; p40). The

primary concern of these individuals is that every child has an opportunity, by right, to engage fully with the educational system.

The focus of the education and welfare service today still lies predominantly within the educational remit. The emphasis is dominated by the enforcement of school attendance and exclusion policy. This is highlighted by the three local government Education Welfare missions offered below:

“To encourage and enforce school attendance, and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.”

(Sandwell, Education and Lifelong Learning, 2003; p1)

“The Education Welfare Service has 4 main areas of responsibility – Attendance, exclusion, child protection and youth justice...To achieve this aim the Education Welfare Service can:- provide support to all school aged children...to enable them to achieve their full potential through their education; develop links between home and school; ensure appropriate access to the resources of the Education Department and other agencies; provide advice on benefits available to school aged children from families on low incomes.”

(Buckinghamshire County Council, Education Welfare Service, 2002; p2)

“The EWS is a support service for pupils, parents and schools working in the areas of: school attendance; exclusions from school; child employment. Each school has a named Education Welfare Officer who can be contacted through the school or at the local Area Education Office.

(Cumbria County Council: Education Welfare Service, 2003; p1)

The modern service is now far removed from the early beginnings and is a professional body with a diverse range of skills. Although the techniques have changed the basic ideals are illustrated in the service motto “...for every child a chance.” (NASWELB, 1989; p2).

The role of the EWO within the social services and the educational system is driven by a clear underpinning remit to monitor and promote attendance in schools and to work closely with these schools and families to resolve attendance issues. As identified in the slightly different missions of the three local governments mentioned above, there is still a need for a clear role for the EWS, and mechanisms for regular review monitoring and evaluation of the service (Atkinson et al., 2002). Similarly, the Audit Commission (1999) reported inconsistencies across LEAs in their

mechanisms to resolve truancy. The Commission recommended local authorities to adopt a more strategic approach to resolving issues rather than concentrating on individual case studies.

1.10.3 Education and Welfare in Football

Traditionally football and education have been predominantly perceived as separate entities. Time allocated to one is invariably viewed as diminished time in pursuit of success within the other (Richardson, 1999). The difficulties in establishing a professional sports or athletic career in tandem with academic success has been documented (Purdy et al., 1982). Athletes generally score lower academically than their counterparts in the non-athletic population. The intellectual achievement of talented soccer players has also been described as poor in relation to other societal segments (Bar-Eli, 1993).

The Football Association advocated the educational development of young footballers within the aims of its former National School at Lilleshall (Millichip, 1984). However, the educational emphasis of a young footballer's development on signing a one or two-year professional contract at the age of 16 was limited. Bourke (2002) suggested that the presumption that young footballers disliked school (or education) was unsubstantiated. More recently, the FA has sought to redress this imbalance by promoting an increased emphasis on the educational development of young players. More specifically, the FA introduced the concept of Football Academies governed by Football Academy Criteria, where;

“A fundamental aspect is the match programme, to be provided by the Football Academies. It is therefore, proposed that the key individuals in the make-up of the players' match programme should be the parents. Quite properly the players' match programme should be developed in the best interests of the players' educational, technical, academic and social needs, by the parents in conjunction with the player's school and Football Academy Education and Welfare Officer.”

(The Football Association Technical Department, 1997; p3)

The introduction of the Football Academy Education and Welfare Officer (now referred to as the Head of Education and Welfare) was identified as a pre-requisite

hin the Charter's 'Criteria to operate a Football Academy'. The education and welfare remit as identified in the Charter states:

2.4 To recognise and maximise the potential of exceptionally talented players whilst not compromising their overall education and welfare."

(FA Technical Department, 1997; p8)

4.7.1 Each Academy to ensure that appropriate and adequate educational provision (as determined by the Technical Control Board Academy Sub Committee) is available for each Academy player including primary, secondary, further and higher educational provision. The player's technical and academic potential must be catered for and not compromised.

4.7.2 The Academy Education/Welfare Adviser to ensure adequate liaison is made with all schools and colleges where Academy players are enrolled."

4.7.3 Commitment to screening, profiling, monitoring and recording key aspects of the players' physiological growth and development, as determined by the FA Technical Control Board,

4.7.4 The interchange of research data and information between The Football Association and Academies and between Academies. This process will not compromise the individual rights to confidentiality.

4.7.5 Adequate player insurance."

(FA Technical Department, 1997; section 4.5)

though the introduction of the EWO was identified as a mandatory pre-requisite for academy status, it appears that the FA fell short of identifying clear guidance for the person specification and/or explicit action of the role. Figure 1.4 offers a basic structural composition of a 'typical' Academy and the perceived location of the associated personnel.

Professional football cannot guarantee young players a successful professional playing career. Given this lack of certainty it is now accepted that failure must not hinder a young player's social and/or educational development. Football is moving to an era in which parents and young players are beginning to demand an educational 'exit route' (Richardson and Reilly, 2001). The seductive nature of the football environment may dilute the desire for educational development, particularly where the individual sees their career being shaped by football and not by academia. The pursuit of sporting excellence, and its perceived rewards has created an educational dilemma concerning the context of the academic versus sporting success. The Head of Education and Welfare has been introduced to provide support for young players

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graph TD
    AD[Academy Director] --- RA[Recruitment]
    AD --- EA[Education providers]
    AD --- AS[Assistant Academy Director Under 19s]
    AD --- AU[Assistant Academy Director Under 17s]
    AD --- OS[Operations: Finance, Catering, Admin, Kit person, Ground staff]
    
    AS --- HEW[Head of Education & Welfare]
    AS --- SSC[Sports Science Support]
    
    HEW --- EP[Education providers]
    
    AU --- C[Coaches: Under 19s - Under 9s, G/K coaches, Skills coach]
    AU --- MT[Medical Team: Doctor, Physio(s)]
  
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Academy Director

Assistant Academy Director Under 19s

Assistant Academy Director Under 17s

Head of Education & Welfare

Recruitment

Education providers

Sports Science Support

Coaches:
Under 19s - Under 9s
G/K coaches
Skills coach
(full-time/ part-time)

Medical Team:
Doctor
Physio(s)
(full-time/ part-time)

Operations:
Finance
Catering
Admin.
Kit person
Ground staff

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1.11 Mapping the Research Journey

Having sketched out elements of the notions of talent development, the associated sympathies of the HoEW and the paradigmatic landscape it is important to outline the methodological appropriateness and relevant paradigmatic location of the present research. In this sense, the following section offers a brief overview of the paradigmatic nature of each study. Furthermore, the section identifies the appropriate research methodologies and identifies the associated time line of the research.

The qualitative interview has been a traditional mainstay for data collection throughout the moments. The centralisation of the qualitative interview within qualitative research has ensured its prominence as ‘method’ itself, yet the technique has a ‘wide-range’. It can take the form of an open-ended, free flowing narrative that claims to offer ‘voice’ to its participants or alternatively, it can be a standardised, structured interview text that may yield standardised, or even tabulated results (Silverman, 2000).

The qualitative interview process when depicted as a conversation between equals, “...is made available to anyone wanting to engage in a conversation...qualitative research seems to involve nothing more than good intentions (that is, to give voice to the voiceless) and the ability to listen and then transform into a reduced verbal text what one has heard” (Sandelowski, 2002; p105). Sandelowski continued to reflect that this is an extremely naive view of the qualitative interview process. These good intentions falling short of legitimising the research process, hence, the reason why too many qualitative studies have not advanced knowledge in their fields.

On reflection the methodologies employed need to be legitimised in their own right depending on the nature and circumstance within which they are employed. The appropriateness of the ‘task in hand’ is never more relevant to the methodological stance, procedures utilised, the nature of the environment and the availability of appropriate resource. Garratt and Hodkinson (1999; p527) claimed that, “...the selection of appropriate preordained sets of different paradigmatic rules, then, is not a solution. A more constructive way forward begins with the acknowledgement that the selection of criteria should be related to the nature of the particular piece of research that is being evaluated.” The early stages of the research were driven primarily by

technical and logistical demands. The primary concern was to secure the approval and commitment of the North West Heads of Education and Welfare within the research. The paradigmatic issues surrounding the nature of engagement within the research will be touched upon in the following section.

1.11.1 Understanding the Role of the Head of Education and Welfare

The HoEW, under the original guise of an Education and Welfare Officer, was introduced to the football environment, and more specifically to football Academies, following the implementation of the FA's Charter for Quality (1997). The role of the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) was identified as a pre-requisite for Football Academy status. The introduction of a more formal role for the HoEW was a 'new' concept within the football environment.

My first introduction to the HoEWs was in the summer of 1999, when my Director of Studies, Dr David Gilbourne, and I were approached to do a presentation to the North West Heads of Education and Welfare on 'Youth Player Support Mechanisms'. The presentation incorporated both psychological and sociological perspectives of youth player support. It was this initial meeting that inspired the overall remit of the research.

The introduction of the Head of Education and Welfare into an environment that had traditionally been resistant to the notions of education and welfare (i.e., English Professional football) (see Parker, 1998) was a unique opportunity for research. Initially, the remit of the research concerned the exploration of the evolving role of the HoEW. This unique opportunity was further enhanced by the deliberate intentions of the FA Premier League Chief Education Advisor to allow the remit/domain of the HoEW to evolve within its own environment (i.e., football club setting). Each setting is potentially subjected to elements of tradition and culture. These traditions and cultures may be generic within the football environment but also peculiar to each individual club environment (e.g., preconceptions of education and welfare, available time and financial resources).

1.11.2 Study 1: Interviews, April/May 2000

Early informal consultations and conversations revealed many uncertainties existed within the role of the HoEW. It was therefore considered relevant to spend a considerable amount of time forming a picture of the environment, individual constraints and operations utilised (i.e., an extensive reconnaissance phase). An assessment of the knowledge base utilised by the HoEWs to construct their working environment was deemed essential in order to guide the process of developing effectiveness within their working environment, and consequently the young player's educational, welfare and football experience.

The traditional mainstay of qualitative research (i.e., a qualitative interview) was employed primarily within an interpretivist paradigm. The social reality of the HoEWs was captured and constructed revealing the value dimensions of their lived experiences (see Greene, 1994).

The primary aim of the interviews was to understand the HoEWs lived experience through their own "...interpretations and sense making" (Greene, 1994; p536). Interviews were constructed recognising the need to provide the HoEWs with a 'voice' to express their thoughts and reflections, yet establishing elements of consistency and trustworthiness within the research process. The parallel perspectives of trustworthiness and authenticity denote their philosophical relationship with the positivist and postpositivist elements of internal and external validity respectively.

The research process utilised the procedural works of Scanlan et al. (1989), seen by many as an excellent model for qualitative research methodologies (Gould, 1990) and Dale's (1996) phenomenological approach (i.e., open-dialogue between two people that encourages the self and the other to describe experiences, clarify meaning, and perhaps realise it for the first time). The primary goal was to understand meaning, not through method or control, but through openness and dialogue, consistent with the interpretivist paradigm. Elements of Gould et al.'s (1996) trustworthiness criteria (e.g., prolonged engagement, triangulation) were also incorporated. Triangulation occurred throughout the research process, including methodological triangulation (i.e.,

construction of the interview schedule) and investigator triangulation (analysis of transcribed interview material) (see Janesick, 1994).

The uniqueness of the HoEW circumstances, the limited literature surrounding the role of education and welfare officers, and the subsequent lack of research in to the role of the HoEW ensured that the research can lay claim to predominantly inductive analysis (see Scanlan et al., 1989b). This claim is based on a consideration of Krane et al. (1997; p216) who suggested that, "...it is unrealistic to expect any researcher to begin a study without the requisite knowledge to understand the phenomena under consideration." Whilst prior knowledge of the football environment is conceded (i.e., cultural idiosyncracies), the experiences of the HoEWs were of a naturalistic origin (Meyer and Wenger, 1998). In this sense, Study 1 forms the basis of the reconnaissance phase of the action research process.

1.11.3 Study 2: Action Phase, December 2000 through April 2002

The openness and dialogue continued as the research moved towards a sharing of the pertinent issues arising from the interview transcripts. The sharing included a focus group (see Basch, 1987; Bloor et al., 2000) with all participants. It is here that the research initially touches on the constructivist paradigm as potential problems and problem resolutions are discussed. The relativist ontological approach enabled realities to be formed based on the retrospective, intangible mental, socially and experientially based, local and specific constructions of each HoEW. The individual constructions are shared and refined through interaction with the researcher and between the HoEWs (see Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The evolution of the role is paramount within the focus groups and the 'seeds' of change were stimulated.

Following the focus group, another gathering of the researchers and the HoEW was initiated. The primary aim was to understand and reconstruct the constructions that the HoEWs (the researched) and myself and colleagues (the researchers) held, with a view to engaging in change. Change was facilitated as the reconstructions were formed and the HoEWs stimulated to act upon them (see Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

The process of engagement reflects the nature of the associated paradigm. The aim of this phase is to empower the HoEWs and provide them with opportunities to engage in reflection, demystify and critique their own circumstances. The process of empowerment moves the research process from the constructivist paradigm to the critical paradigm. The dialogue becomes dialectical in nature in order to facilitate the transformation of initial constructions into a more informed consciousness (i.e., participants choose and engage in actions of change to improve their working environment) (see Lather, 1985). The researcher (myself) and the participants (HoEWs) become inextricably and interactively linked. Although the research may not seek to achieve all of the associated notions of the critical paradigm, for example, "...engagement in confrontation, even conflict should occur" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; p113), it still promotes engagement over time and change, even emancipation from existing working practices that are consistent with the critical paradigm.

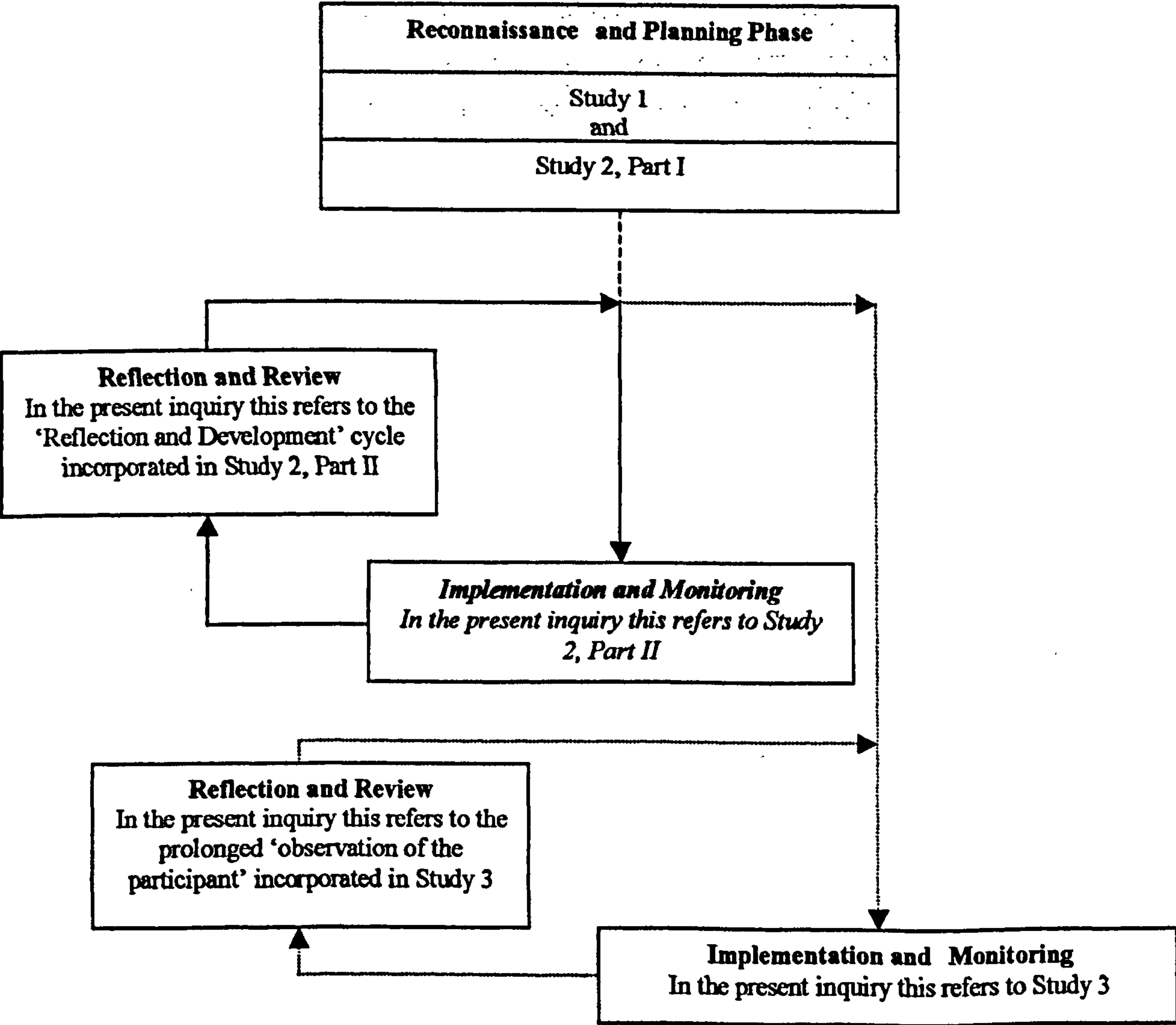
1.11.4 Study 3: Participant Observation, September 2002 through January 2003

The journey through the research paradigms continues into the postmodern, poststructuralist paradigms as the author engages in participant observation. Moreover, the action research established through the extensive reconnaissance and planning phase (i.e., Study 1, Study 2, Part I) and identified in Study 2, Part II is extended utilising two of the practitioners. More specifically, Study 3 embraces the principles of prolonged collaborative observation of the practitioner to further facilitate the notions of action research (Denzin, 2002). Study 3 allows the lived experiences of both the author and the HoEWs to be articulated. The author's voice is nurtured and synthesised within the written word (i.e., lived experiences of myself and the HoEW within their particular football club). The writing becomes legitimised as a method of knowing (Richardson, 1994). Study 3 utilises the narrative as the most appropriate form of representation which, in this instance, best establishes, creates and represents the meaning of the practitioners existence (Tedlock, 2000).

Chapter Two

Study 1:

An Exploration of the Existing Working Practices of the Heads of Education and Welfare



Author's note: The area highlighted in the above model reflects the location of the material presented in Chapter 2, Study 1 (i.e., the initial part of the reconnaissance and planning phase) within the action research cycle.

2.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this phase of the project was to explore the existing working practices of the football academies' Heads of Education and Welfare (HoEW). The longer term aims of the research were to stimulate, facilitate and monitor change within the work place (i.e., the football club). In order to explore the involvement of the role it seemed necessary to gain an understanding of the practitioners themselves and their existing working practice.

When the present inquiry began, the role of the Education and Welfare Officer (EWO), within the Local Education Authorities (LEA) social services system, had long been undervalued, and a victim of its own diversity (MacMillan, 1977; Atkinson et al., 2002). Many EWOs and LEAs still struggle to identify the purpose and location of the role (i.e., social services or education). Many regional inconsistencies existed with regard to service provision. However, the primary role of the EWO within the social services and/or the educational system has been guided by a clear remit to monitor and promote attendance in schools, and work closely with these schools and families to resolve attendance issues (Atkinson et al., 2002). Due to the traditional nature of the football environment and its perceived ambivalence to education (e.g., see Parker, 1998), it seemed important to establish whether the Football Academy HoEWs were faced with similar value perceptions and diversification with regard to the notions of education and welfare.

2.2 Exploratory Work and the Role of the Football Association

Informal communication and conversations took place between the researcher and two of the potential participants within the research (27th August and 7th September 1999 respectively). The purpose of this preliminary exploration was to establish the feasibility of the research project, to gain an understanding of the HoEW's remit and to establish each practitioner's location within their own working environment. These early discussions were utilised to drive the research proposal and the initial interview schedule (see Appendix A).

Following these early discussions the research proposal was formulated (see Appendix A). At this stage the author's concerns revolved around gaining access. Traditionally, the football environment has been sceptical of 'outsiders' amongst their

midst (Parker, 1998). Issues of sensitivity and confidentiality abound. Gaining access to one club can prove extremely difficult. Working with 'other' clubs simultaneously can often be viewed unfavourably, due to the risk of *sharing* practice or professional secrets. In order to gain official access to a number of clubs, it was necessary to gain the support of the Football Association (FA). In this instance a meeting with the FA Premier League's Chief Education Advisor was convened (November, 1999). During this consultation it was evident that, although skeleton guidelines were offered as to the nature and function of the HoEW, there was a deliberate attempt to allow the role of the HoEW to evolve naturally within their respective environments (i.e., football club Academy). The Chief Education Advisor agreed to seek further authorisation for the present research from the FA Executive.

Following approval from the FA executive a presentation was made to the North West Heads of Education and Welfare (n=5), the Premier League's Chief Education Advisor and the Education Advisor to the Football League, 11th January 2000. At this meeting the research proposal was agreed in principle with five HoEWs agreeing to participate in the programme.

2.3 Rationale, Design and Construction of the Qualitative Interview Methods

In accordance with the views of the FA Premier League's Chief Education Advisor, the Education and Welfare domain was perceived as an 'evolving profession'. In-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews were employed in order to gain a clearer understanding of the HoEW's working environment. Whenever a domain is rationalised (structured), it enables a clearer perspective of promising talent to be realised (Rathune and Whalen, 1993). The objective was to identify the practitioners' perceptions of the content, structures and processes that influenced their existing working practice.

In, what appeared to be, an ill-defined domain, such as education and welfare, many uncertainties may exist concerning the operations undertaken and the individual constraints that might be present. Consequently, a great deal of time was required to form an overall picture of the situation. Therefore, an assessment of the knowledge that the HoEWs use to construct their working environment would enable the author to develop a grasp of the effectiveness of the role, and consequently the young

player's educational, welfare and football experience. This necessitated a need to understand previous, current and environmental experiences in order to enhance existing practice. From a conceptual perspective it has been suggested that a better understanding of expert and exceptional performance required the accounts to specify the different environmental factors that could selectively promote, and facilitate the achievement of such performance (Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Römer, 1993).

With this in mind, the utilisation of an inductive qualitative approach was expected to provide depth and understanding within an emerging work context. It was also felt that this approach would best capture and construct the participants' value dimensions of their lived experiences (see Greene, 1994) and clarify their opinions with respect to their individual work setting. The interview was designed, therefore, to enable the HoEWs to express their thoughts, concerns and reflect on their respective roles. The primary aim of the interview was to capture an understanding of the HoEWs' experiences and working practice within their own environment (see Buchanan et al., 1983; Côté, et al., 1993). Consistent with Dale's (1996) phenomenological approach, an open dialogue was encouraged to enable the participants to describe experiences, clarify meaning and, perhaps even realise it for the first time. The purpose was to understand meaning through openness and dialogue, consistent with the interpretivist paradigm.

The initial formulation of the interview schedule was guided by the early consultations with two the potential participants (i.e., whilst establishing the feasibility of the research), and the Premier League's Chief Education Advisor. Alternative references were also utilised, such as research literature concerning the general perception and role of Education and Welfare (i.e., within the social services) and elements of youth and talent development.

The initial interview schedule was developed through peer triangulation (Janesick, 1994) and then utilised in an external pilot interview with an FA Premier League Football Academy Director (31st March, 2000). The experiences and comments from the pilot interview resulted in minor changes to the interview schedule, but generally confirmed the content and nature of delivery of the interview itself. (The full development of the interview schedule can be seen in Appendix Ai). At this point it

appears appropriate to note that throughout the development of the interview schedule, and throughout the entire research process, the researcher was invited to, and attended, the quarterly North West Head of Education and Welfare group meetings.

A semi-structured interview schedule was constructed, utilising guidelines set out by Gould (1990), and the procedural works of Scanlan et al. (1989a), in order to promote a clear sequence of questions. However, in order to encourage dialogue, the structure also permitted the researcher to adopt a flexible questioning and sequencing approach, where appropriate (Dale, 1996). Such incidents occur when participants refer to, and answer, 'other' elements of the research outlined within the schedule, prior to that information or experience being requested. Similarly, the participant may cover an array of issues within an open and diverse response, which may not require further elaboration or clarification with further questioning. This flexible approach ensured that each participant felt comfortable with the interview dialogue and promoted openness and flow within the interview (see Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Spradley, 1979). Consequently, the participants were granted greater influence on the tone and direction of the interview (Dale, 1996). The consistent depth to the questioning, and the complexity of the responses were established by a priori probing rules (Patton, 1980). Table 2.1 outlines the phases of the interview schedule.

Phase 1, 'Introduction and Familiarisation', of the interview schedule is consistent with standard procedures to establish comfort and rapport with the participant. Although each participant was previously made aware of the background of the research, and his location within it, during the presentation of the initial proposal (11th January, 2000) this information was reiterated by way of an introduction. This phase then enabled participants to articulate their background (i.e., personal, academic and sporting), experiences and qualifications that were pertinent to the role. Phase 1 enabled the participants to outline their rationale for undertaking the position of Head of Education and Welfare, and clarify the qualities that they deemed relevant to the role. Logistical elements of their interview process, date of appointment and job descriptions were also addressed in this phase.

Phase 2 concentrated on the specific working practices of the role. Participants were asked to provide retrospective accounts of their initial feelings and experiences within the role and, to elaborate on elements of responsibility and empowerment (see MacMillan, 1977). In addition, the participants were requested to 'sketch' an organisational chart of the club structure, and identify the 'strength' and 'frequency' of their relationship with each individual. The chart was then used as a visual aid whilst the participants described their working relationship with associated personnel.

Phase 3 was designed to facilitate descriptive retrospections and/or prospective procedures that they had, or would engage in when faced with specific youth player dilemmas. The emphasis of this phase was on socio-psychological, educational, development and welfare issues (see MacMillan, 1977; Bloom, 1985; Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Richardson and Reilly, 2001; Appendix Ai). Phase 4 extended the context of phase 3 by exploring the participants' feelings when dealing with particular issues described in phase 3. The primary goal was to explore the nature of their relationship with the boys and their ability to cope with certain situations. This phase was driven primarily by the responses in phase 3 where the participants may have alluded to their specific limitations and/or competencies. The phase continued in order to establish any particular skills and/or training that they believe appropriate to the development of the role.

The role of the EWO, situated within the social services and/or educational system, has been fragmented, with numerous inconsistencies in the nature and standard of provision (MacMillan, 1977). Phase 5 explored the participants' perceptions of the location, and practices of HoEWs within Academies across the country. Phase 6 encouraged the participants to reflect and describe their own personal and professional development since the inception of their role. Each individual was then asked to identify his most pleasurable 'positive' experience, and the worst 'negative' experience within the role. Phase 7 addressed the participants' internal (i.e., the club) and external (i.e., The FA) concerns about the development of the role. Phase 8 provided an opportunity for further elaboration and/or clarification of issues referred to during the interview.

Table 2.1. Summation of the interview schedule

<p>Phase 1 <u>Introduction and familiarisation</u> Background (i.e., personal, academic and sporting), experiences and qualifications. Retrospective rationale for undertaking the role. Qualities relevant to the role. Interview process, date of appointment, job description.</p>
<p>Phase 2 <u>Working practice</u> Retrospective accounts of feelings and experiences, responsibility and empowerment (see MacMillan, 1977; Wilding, 1982; Atkinson, 2002). Organisational chart - 'strength' and 'frequency' of relationships.</p>
<p>Phase 3 <u>Socio-psychological, educational, development and welfare</u> Descriptive retrospections and/or prospective procedures utilised to deal with specific youth player dilemmas (see Appendix Ai; Bloom, 1985; Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Richardson and Reilly, 2001;).</p>
<p>Phase 4 <u>Limitations and/or competencies</u> Extension of phase 3. Nature of their relationship with the Academy players, ability to cope with certain situations. Establish appropriate skills and/or training.</p>
<p>Phase 5 <u>Working practices</u> Location and working practices of HoEWs within Academics (MacMillan, 1977; Atkinson, 2002)</p>
<p>Phase 6 <u>Personal and professional development</u> Positive and negative experiences.</p>
<p>Phase 7 <u>Future of the role</u> Internal (i.e., club) and external (i.e., FA)</p>
<p>Phase 8 <u>End of interview</u> Clarification, elaboration and response</p>

2.4 Analysis

The researcher inductively analysed (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Scanlan, 1989b) the content of the interview transcripts (n=5), typed verbatim from the micro audio-tapes used to record the interviews. The uniqueness of the HoEW circumstances, the limited literature surrounding the role of education and welfare officers per se, and the subsequent lack of research concerning the role of the HoEW ensured that the interviews were, predominantly, inductively analysed (Scanlan et al., 1989b). The analysis was *predominantly* inductive in consideration of Krane et al. (1997; p216) who suggested that, "...it is unrealistic to expect any researcher to begin a study without the requisite knowledge to understand the phenomena under consideration." Although the author has prior knowledge and experience of the football environment (i.e., cultural idiosyncracies), the experiences of the HoEWs in situ, were of a naturalistic origin (Meyer and Wenger, 1998). This analysis was then independently scrutinised by two experienced qualitative researchers. Researcher triangulation (n=3) (Patton, 1990) enabled elements, categories, patterns and relationships between the participants to emerge from the interview transcripts (Scanlan, 1989b). This

technique engages the similar contextual principles of grounded theory where emerging themes are exposed to a constant comparison, involving an inductive process of reasoning (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Scanlan et al. (1989b; p68) succinctly described how the process of content analysis unfolds:

“The process begins with clustering the quotes around underlying uniformities (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The underlying uniformities (i.e., common threads) are the emergent themes. Clustering involves comparing and contrasting each quote with all the other quotes and emergent themes to unite quotes with similar meanings and to separate quotes with different meanings.”

In essence, the initial formations enabled a building process to take place, where higher-order and overarching themes, or general dimensions were identified. In order to alleviate any bias during the analysis the co-researchers were unaware of the identification of each participant.

2.5 Results

The interviews (n=5; mean duration = 2½ hours) were inductively analysed (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Scanlan, 1989b), encompassing researcher triangulation (n=3) (Patton, 1990). The elements, categories and general dimensions that emerged were exposed to constant comparison and critique in order to establish and confirm appropriate and coherent meaning. The following results phase is divided into two sections. Section A offers the perceived location of each HoEW within their own Academy (i.e., an organisational chart), and the main roles and responsibilities undertaken. More explicit information concerning the general background and experience of the HoEWs is detailed in Appendix B. Section B provides further insight into how the HoEWs’ experiences, skills and influences impact their working practice. Both section A and section B offer content analysis and specific ‘pen profiles’ peculiar to each HoEW.

2.5.1 Section A – Part I - Organisational Positioning

During the interview each HoEW was asked to sketch an organisational representation of their club and Academy structure. The chart aimed to ascertain the perceived location of the HoEW within the Academy and within the football club. Each participant was also asked ascribe a mark out of 10 for the frequency (i.e., 1 = infrequent; 10 = frequent) and strength (i.e., 1 = weak; 10 = strong) of how they perceived their relationship with each individual and/or department identified in their chart (see Figures 2.1 – 2.5).

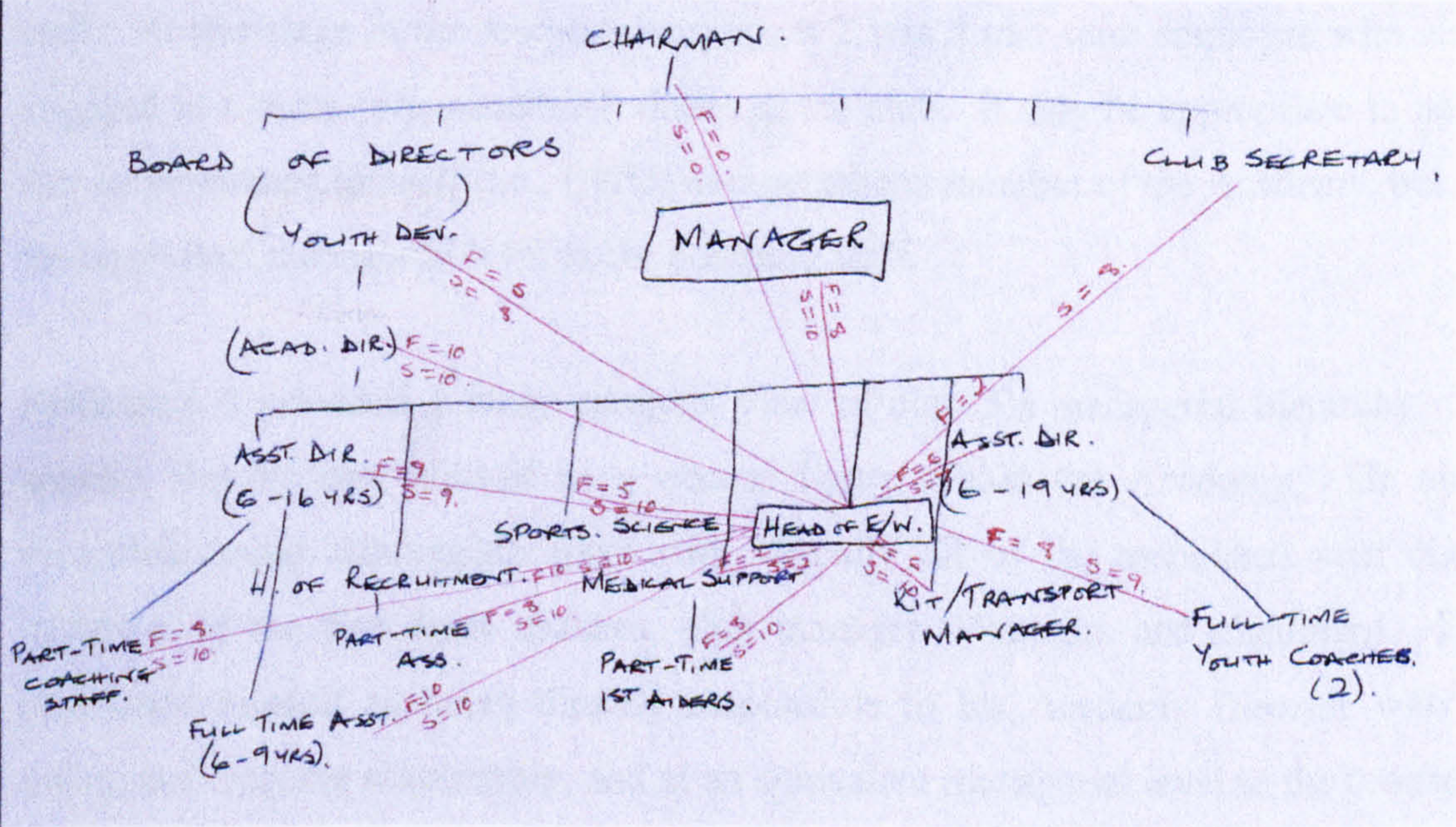


Figure 2.1. Participant 1’s organisational chart.

Figure 2.1 suggests that Participant 1 viewed his role as being central to the Academy. He identified relationship links with all members of the club except for the club chairman. Within the managerial hierarchy, he positioned himself just below the two assistant Academy Directors, and slightly above the full-time youth coaching staff.

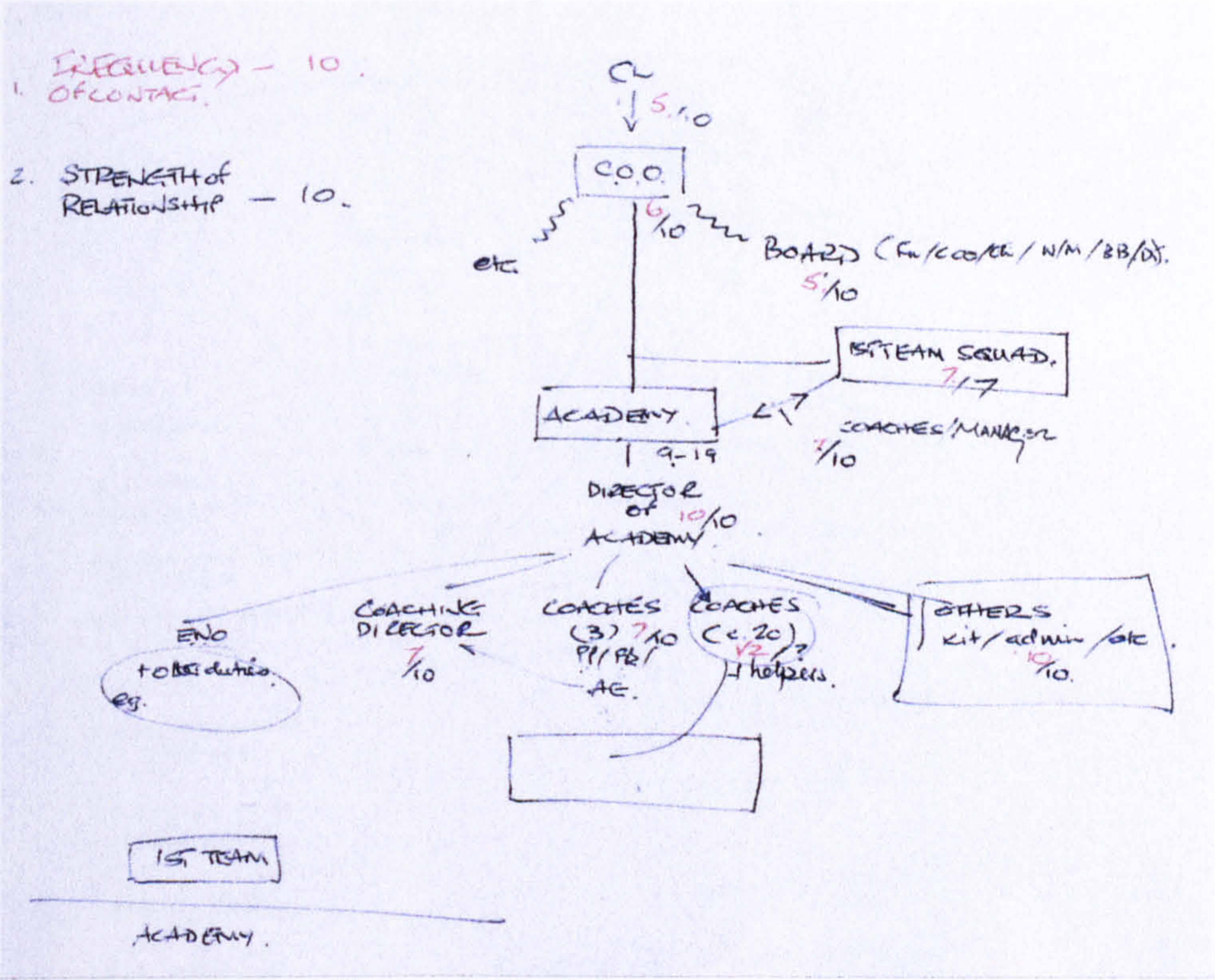


Figure 2.2. Participant 2’s organisational chart.

Figure 2.2 offers a very succinct description of club 2’s managerial hierarchy. Participant 2 identified sound relationship links with both the Academy and first team staff. At this stage in the research Participant 2 was a part-time employee who also engaged in a more ‘organisational’ duties at the club. It may be appropriate to note that he positioned himself (i.e., EWO) as a peripheral member of the Academy, but at the equivalent managerial level as the coaching staff.

Participant 3 provided a fairly complex view of club 3’s managerial hierarchy. It appears that he saw himself as a central figure within the Academy. He also identified sound relationship links with virtually all of the associated staff (i.e., inclusive of the first team coaches, club manager, Directors and chairman). He positioned himself as being directly responsible to his Academy Director with a strong and frequent relationship, and at an equivalent managerial level to the coaches.

Note, however, that he identified himself as the ‘Youth Development Officer’, only referring to ‘Head of Education and Welfare’ in parentheses.

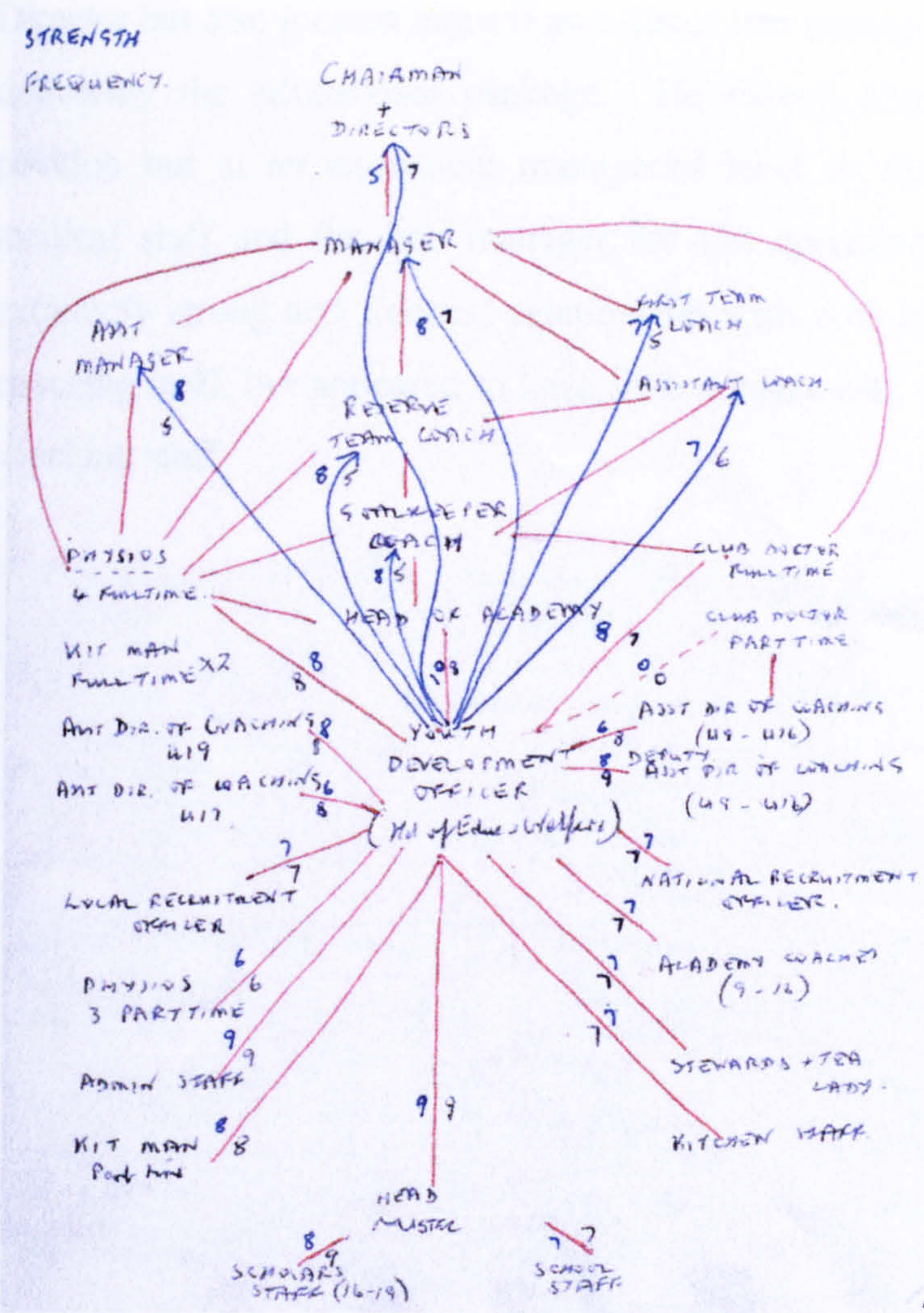


Figure 2.3. Participant 3’s organisational chart.

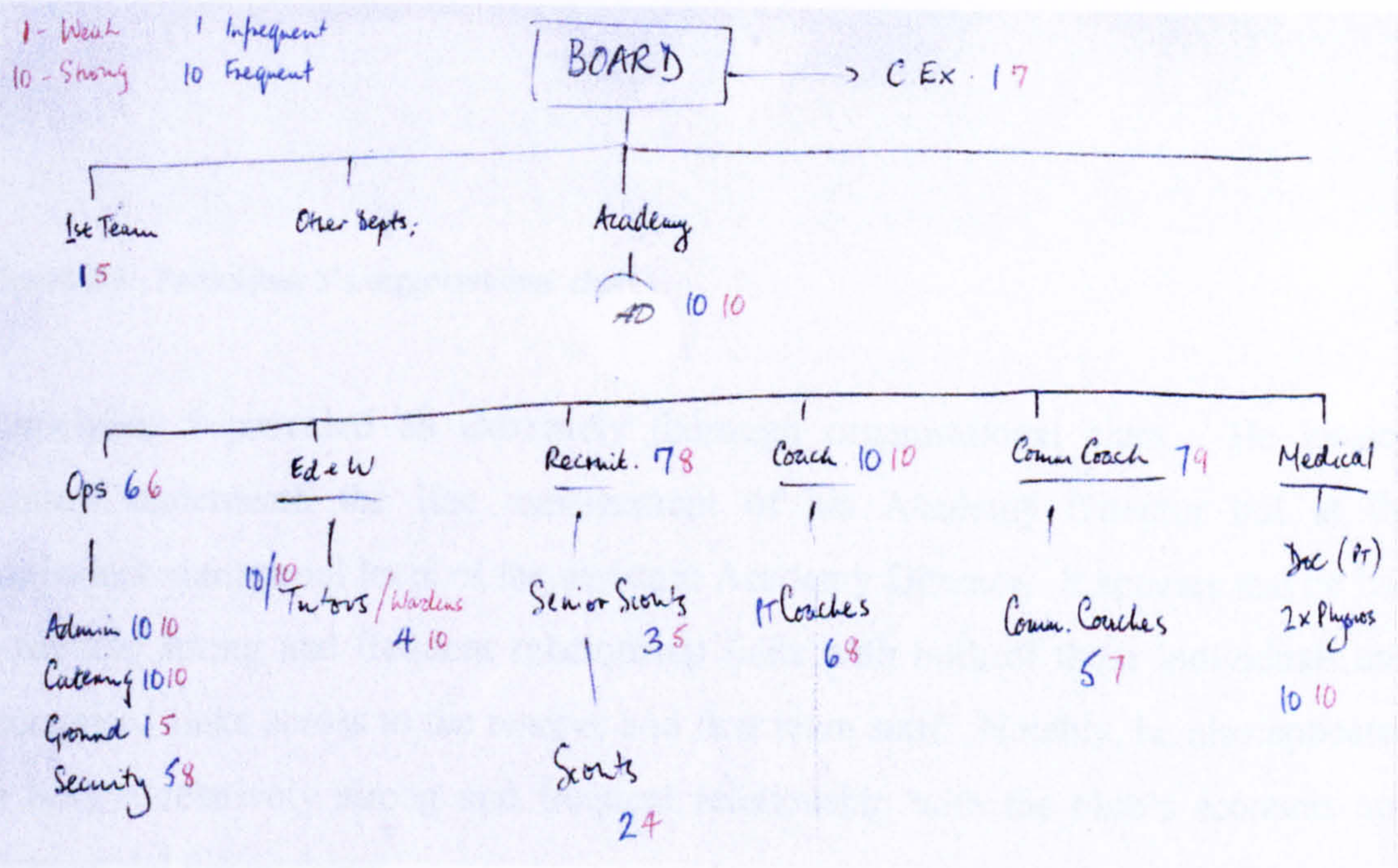


Figure 2.4. Participant 4’s organisational chart.

Participant 4 provided a succinct organisational representation of his club and Academy structure. Again he situated himself under the auspices of his Academy Director but also located himself as a direct line manager to the tutors responsible for delivering the educational package. He placed himself in a slightly peripheral position but at an equivalent managerial level to the coaches, recruitment team, medical staff and the line manager for the operational teams. He identified an extremely strong and frequent relationship with both his Academy Director and the coaching staff, but appeared to have little contact with the first team management or coaching staff.

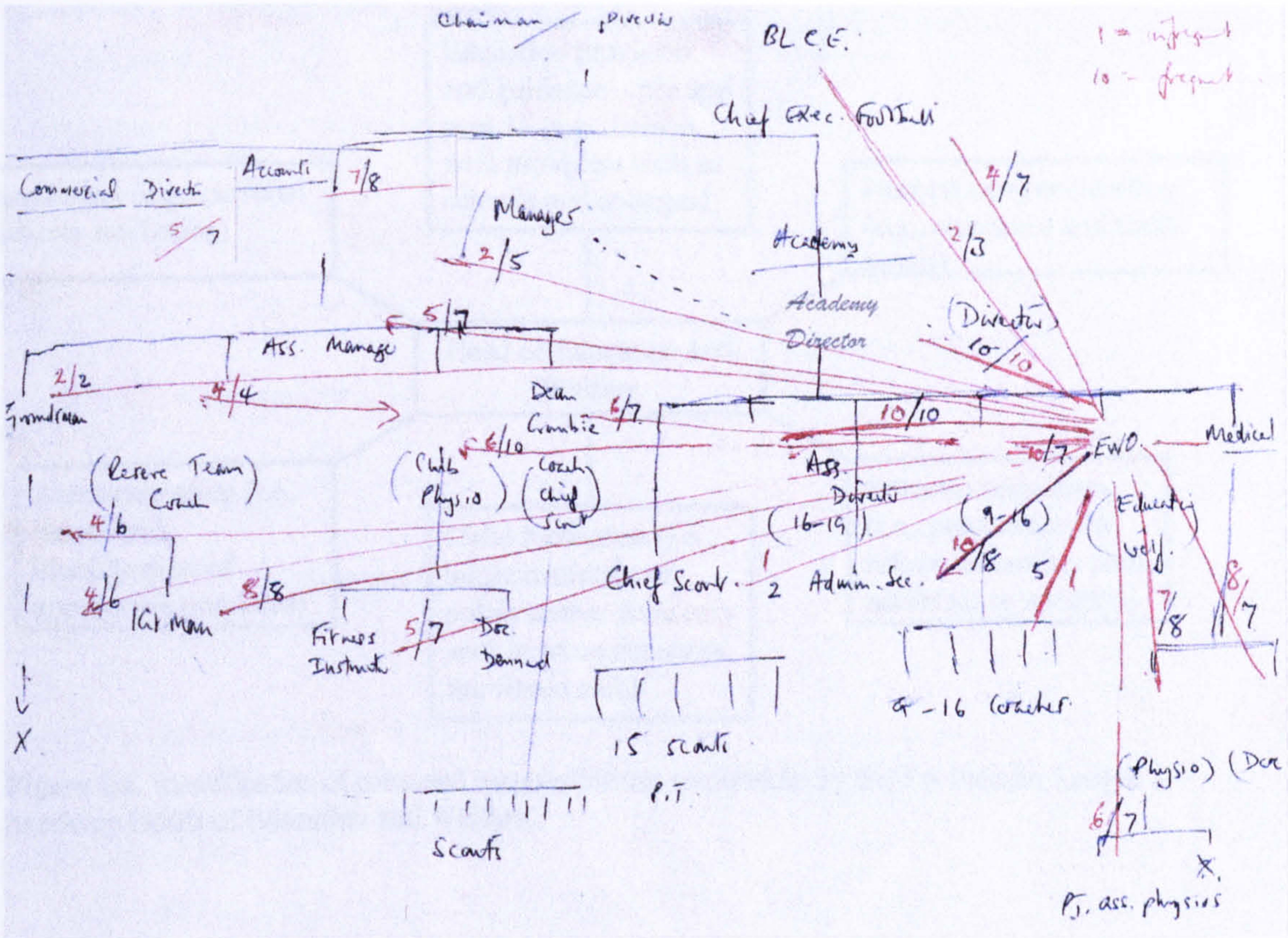


Figure 2.5. Participant 5's organisational chart.

Participant 5 provided an extremely thorough organisational chart. He located himself underneath the line management of his Academy Director but at the equivalent managerial level of the assistant Academy Director. It appears that he had extremely strong and frequent relationship links with both of these individuals and recognised links across to the reserve and first team staff. Notably, he also appeared to have a relatively strong and frequent relationship with the club's accounts and commercial departments.

2.5.2 Section A - Part II – Roles and Responsibility

This phase of the results section provides details of the primary roles and responsibilities of the Heads of Education and Welfare (see Figure 2.6). A more specific breakdown of the structure, process and rationale for these generic themes, through the process of content analysis, is detailed in Figures 2.7 through 2.12. Furthermore, the nature and/or level of engagement of each participant within each of these themes is captured by appropriate quotes from each of the HoEW’s interview. These quotes provide a pen-profile peculiar to each HoEW (see Figures 2.13 – 2.17). A further synopsis of these themes is provided at the end of this phase.

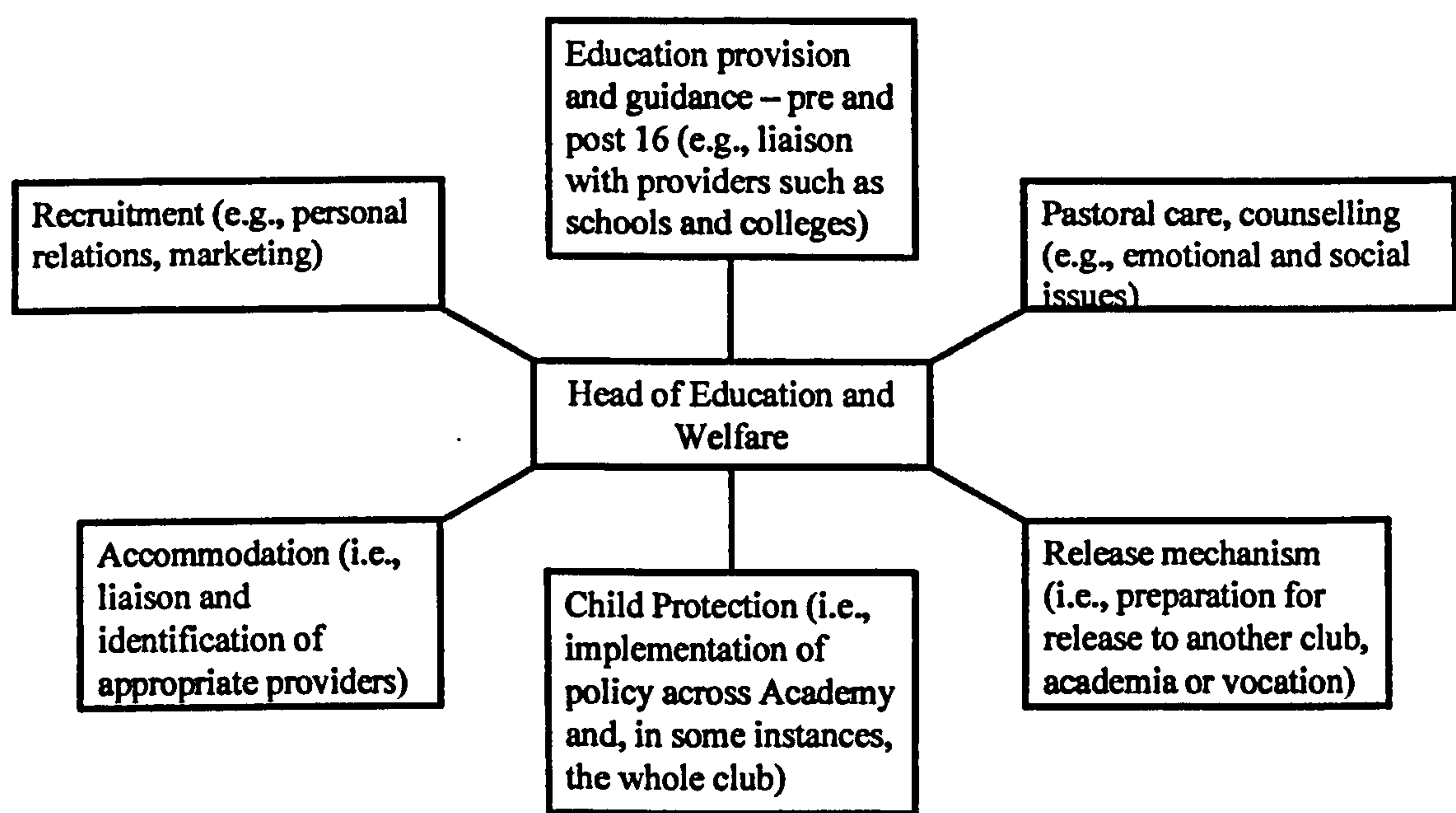


Figure 2.6. Identification of roles and responsibilities undertaken by the FA Premier League’s Academy Heads of Education and Welfare.

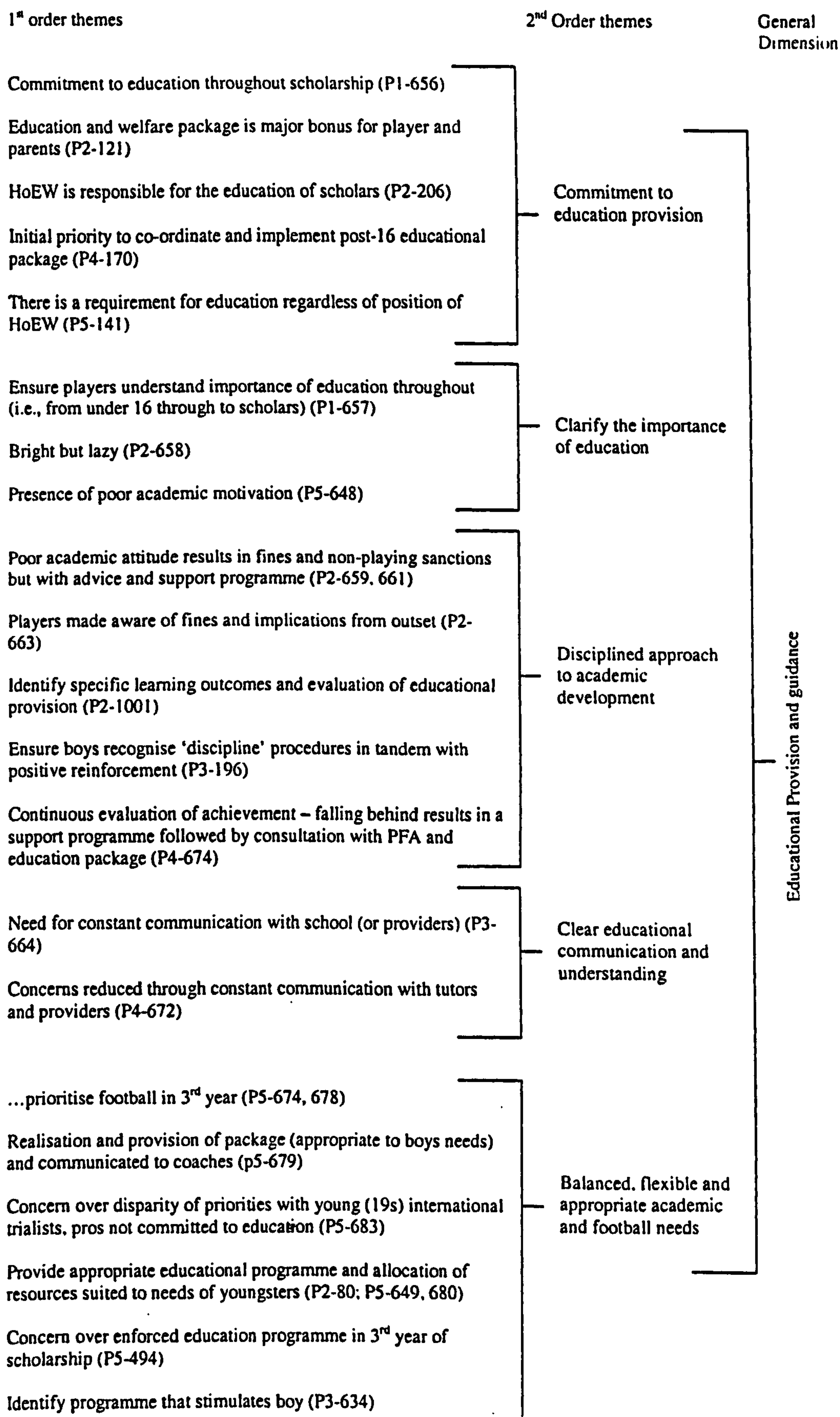


Figure 2.7. Elements of educational provision and guidance resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

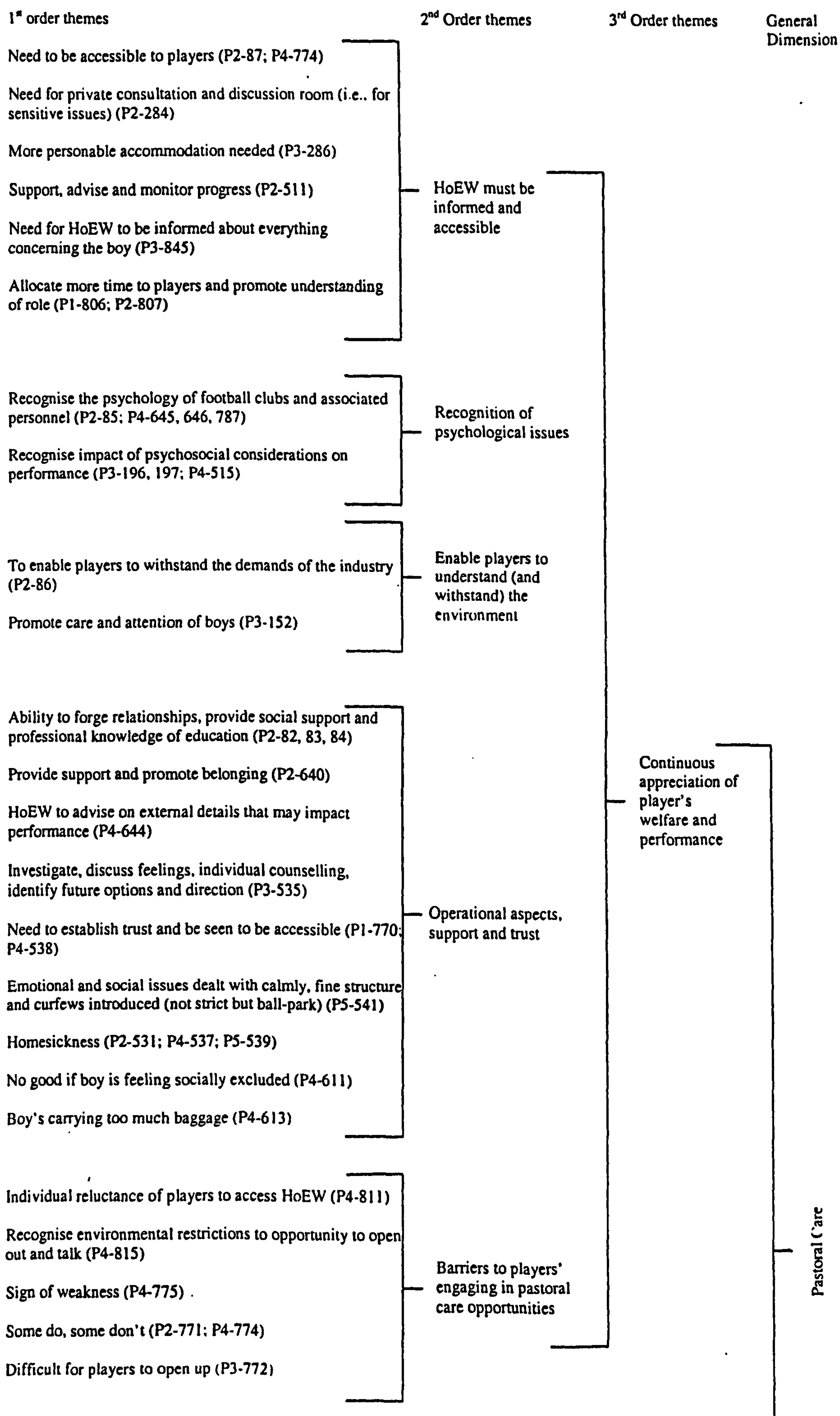


Figure 2.8. Elements of pastoral care resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

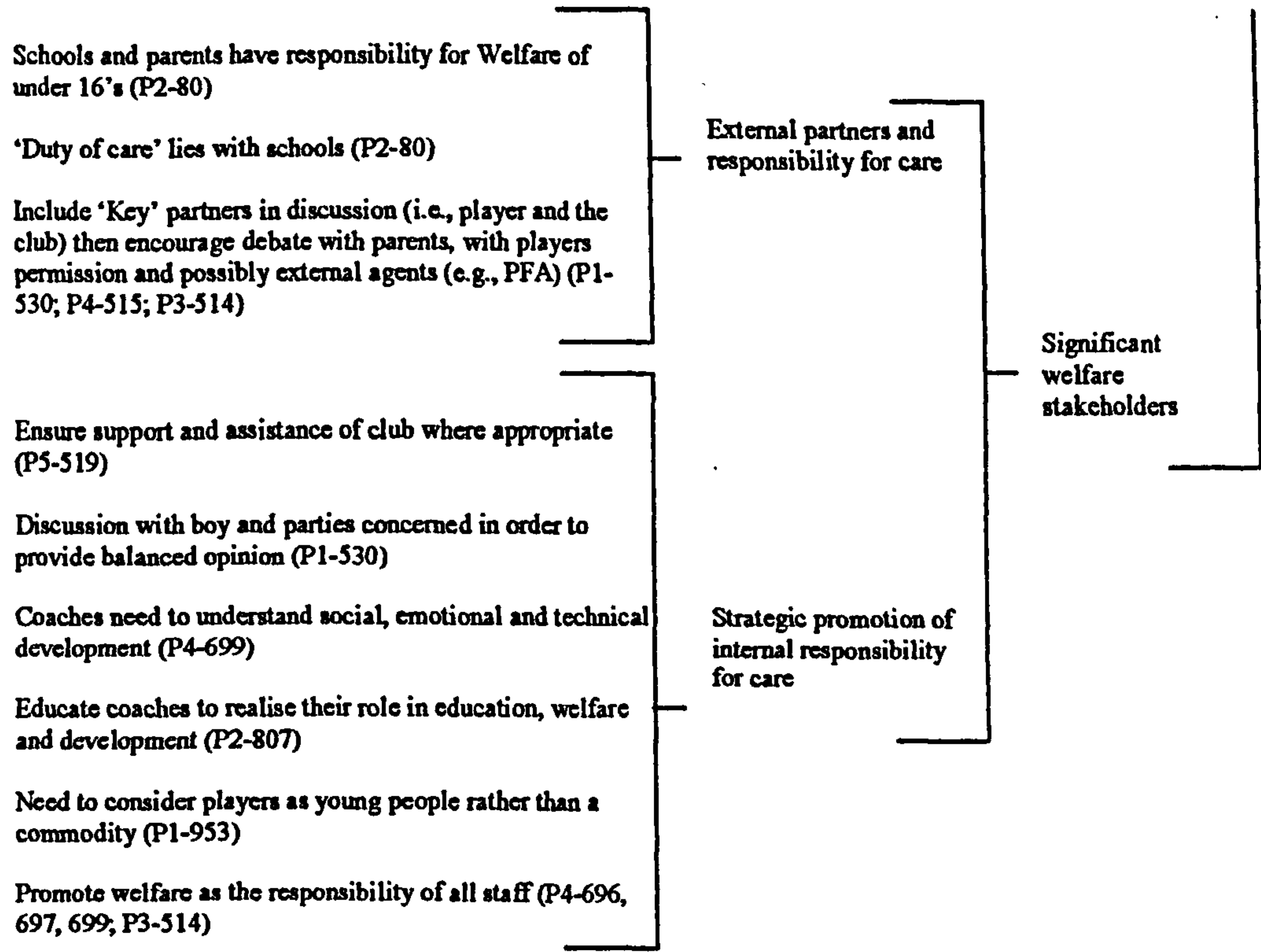


Figure 2.8 (cont'd). Elements of pastoral care resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

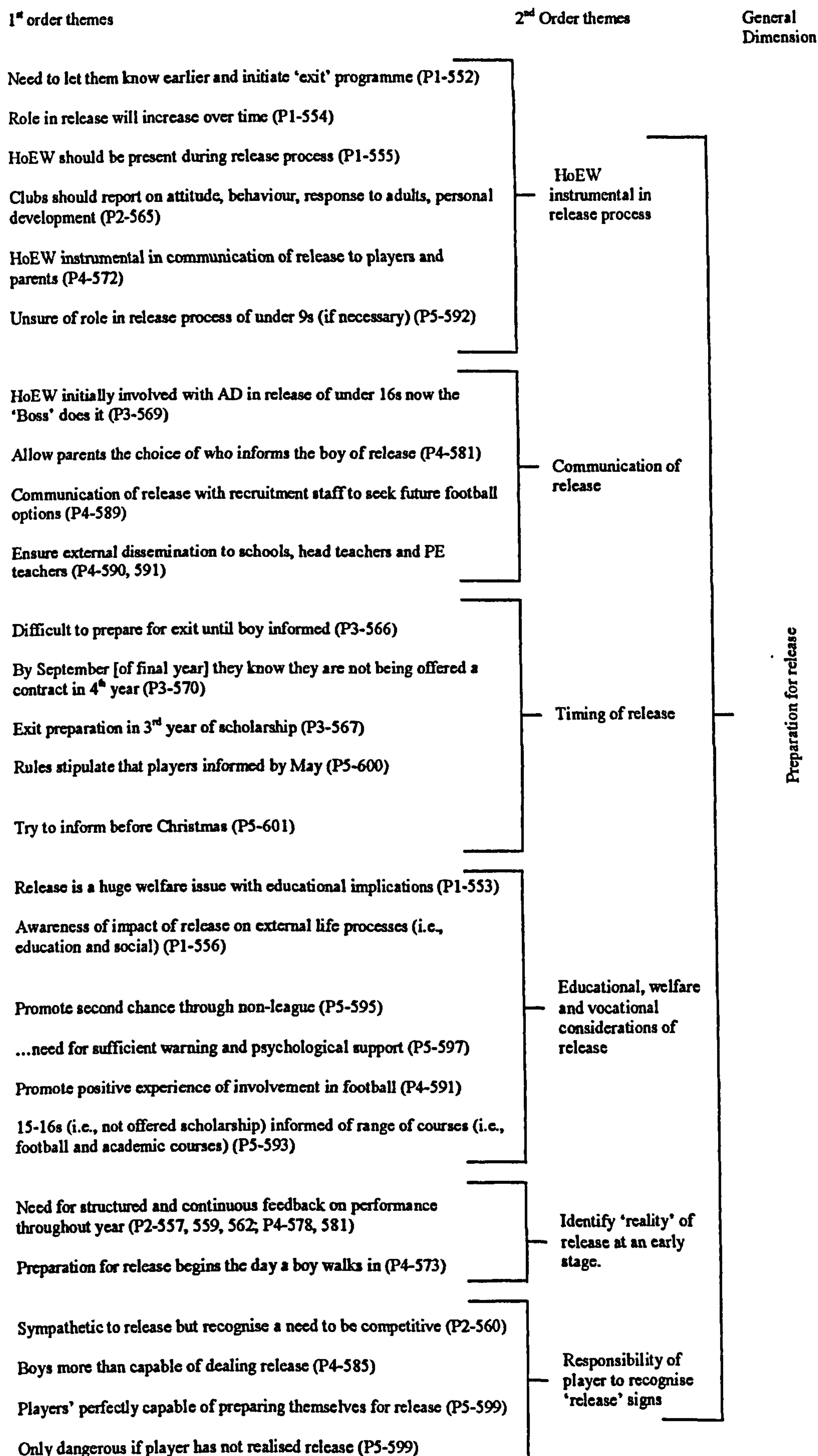


Figure 2.9. Elements of preparation for release resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

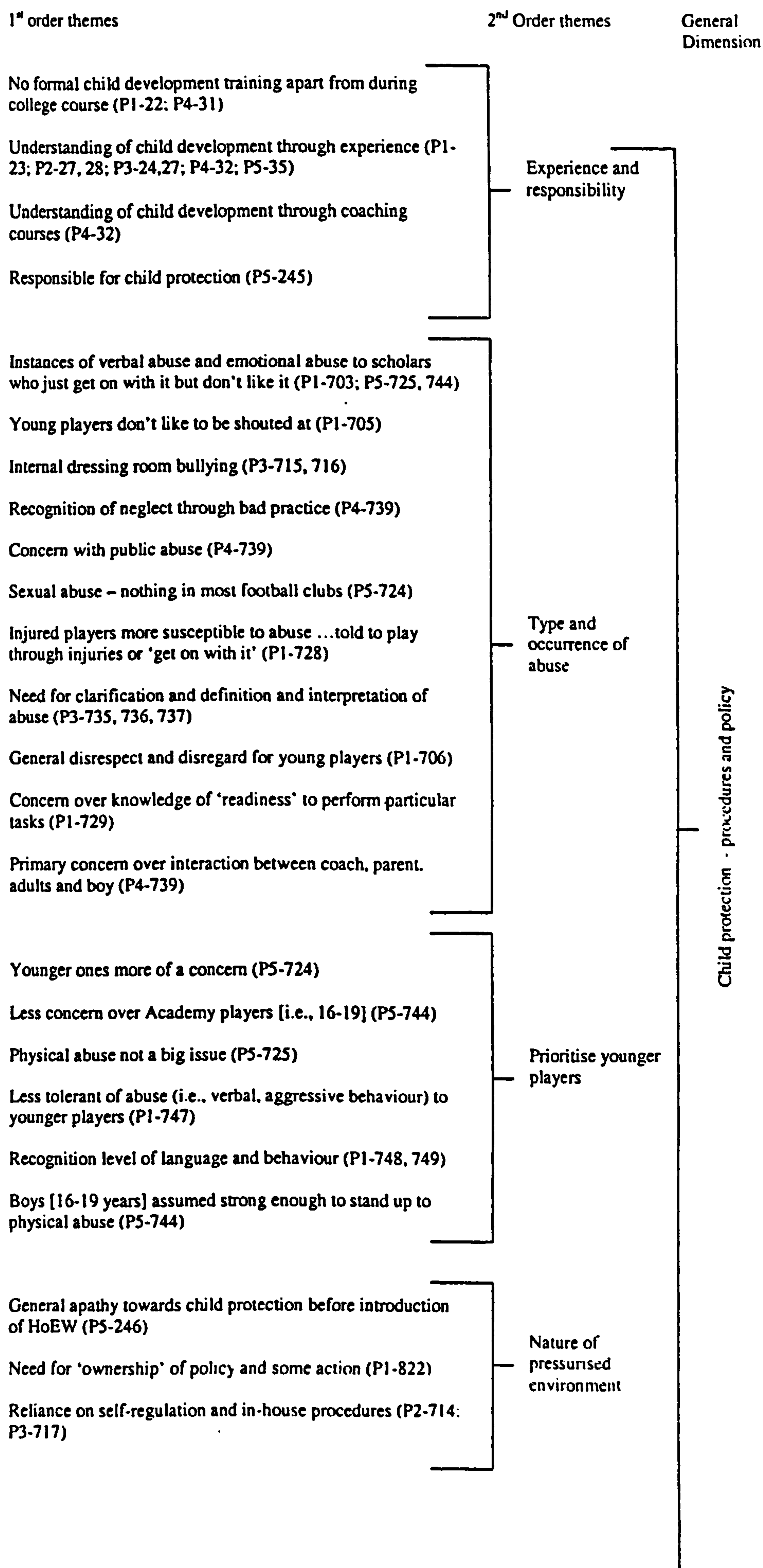


Figure 2.10. Elements of child protection resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

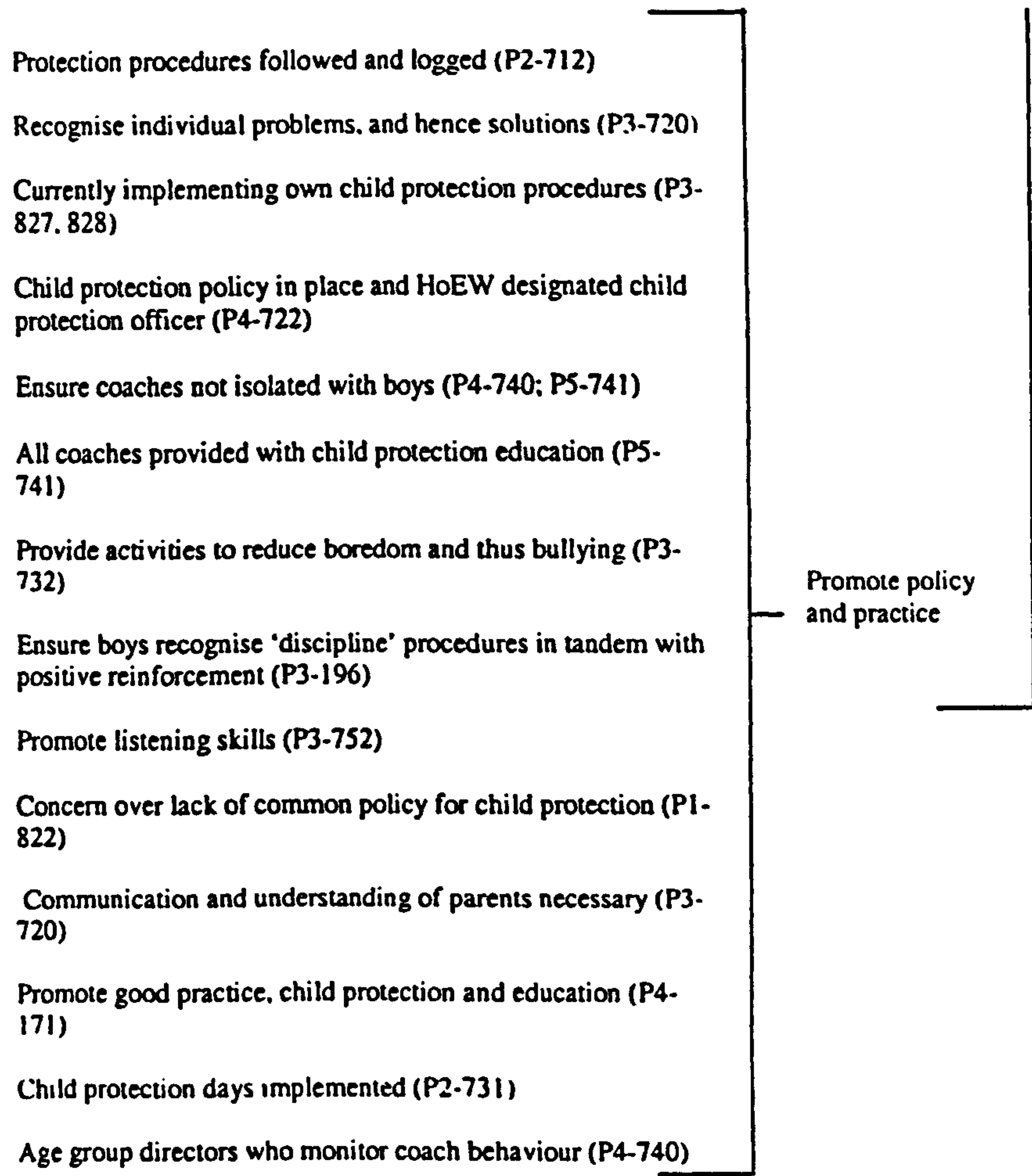


Figure 2.10 (cont'd). Elements of child protection resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

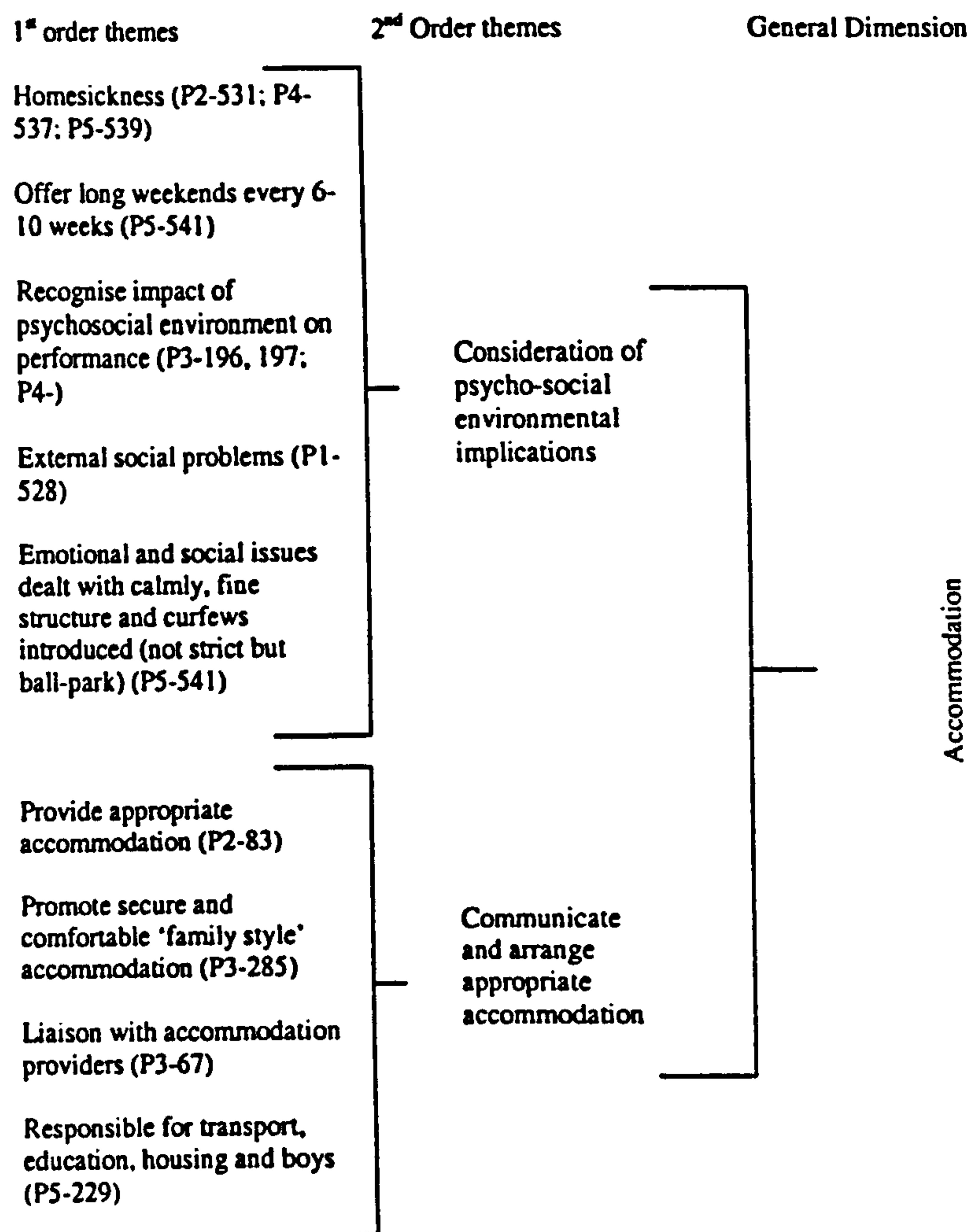


Figure 2.11. Elements of accommodation resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

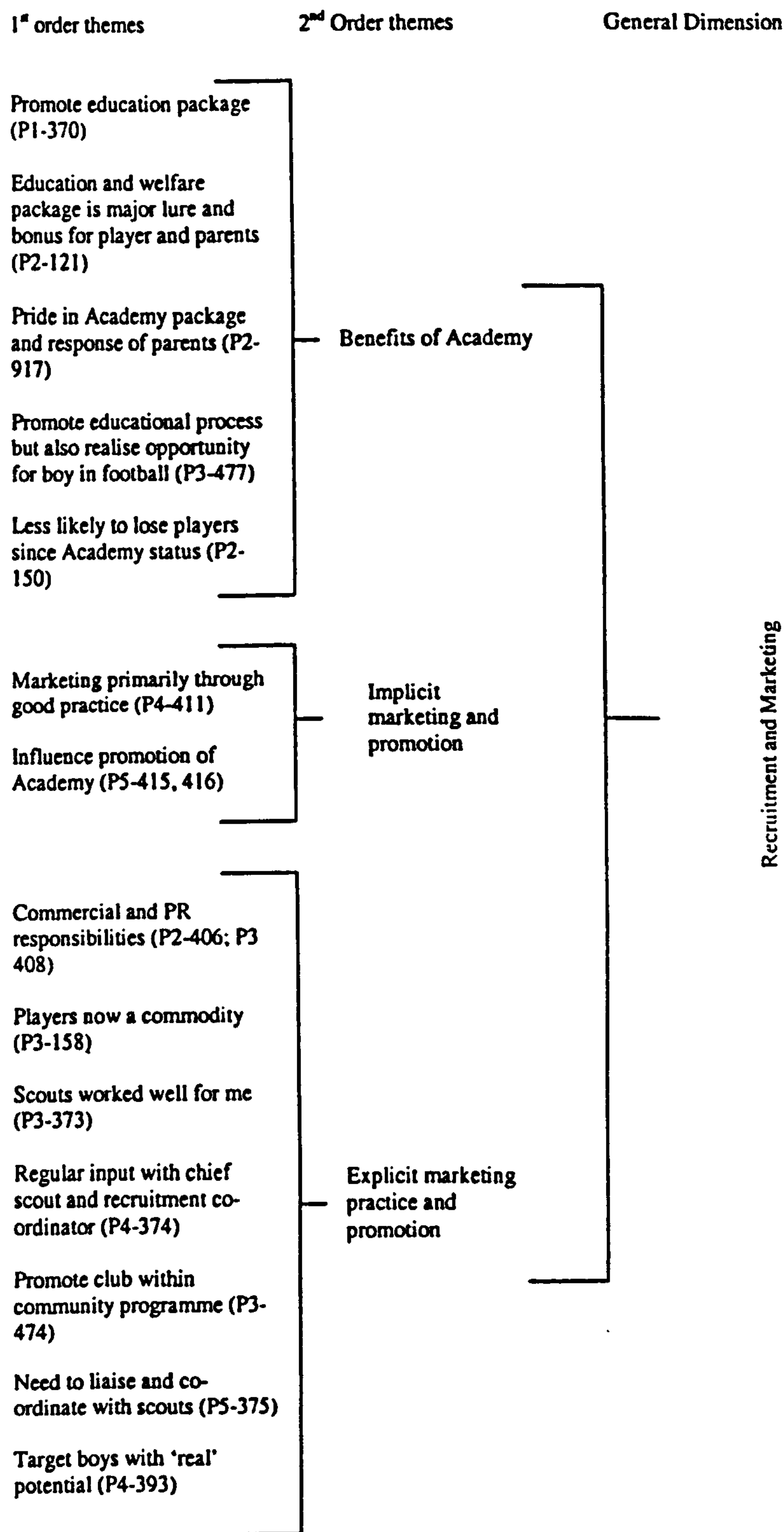


Figure 2.12. Elements of recruitment and marketing resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

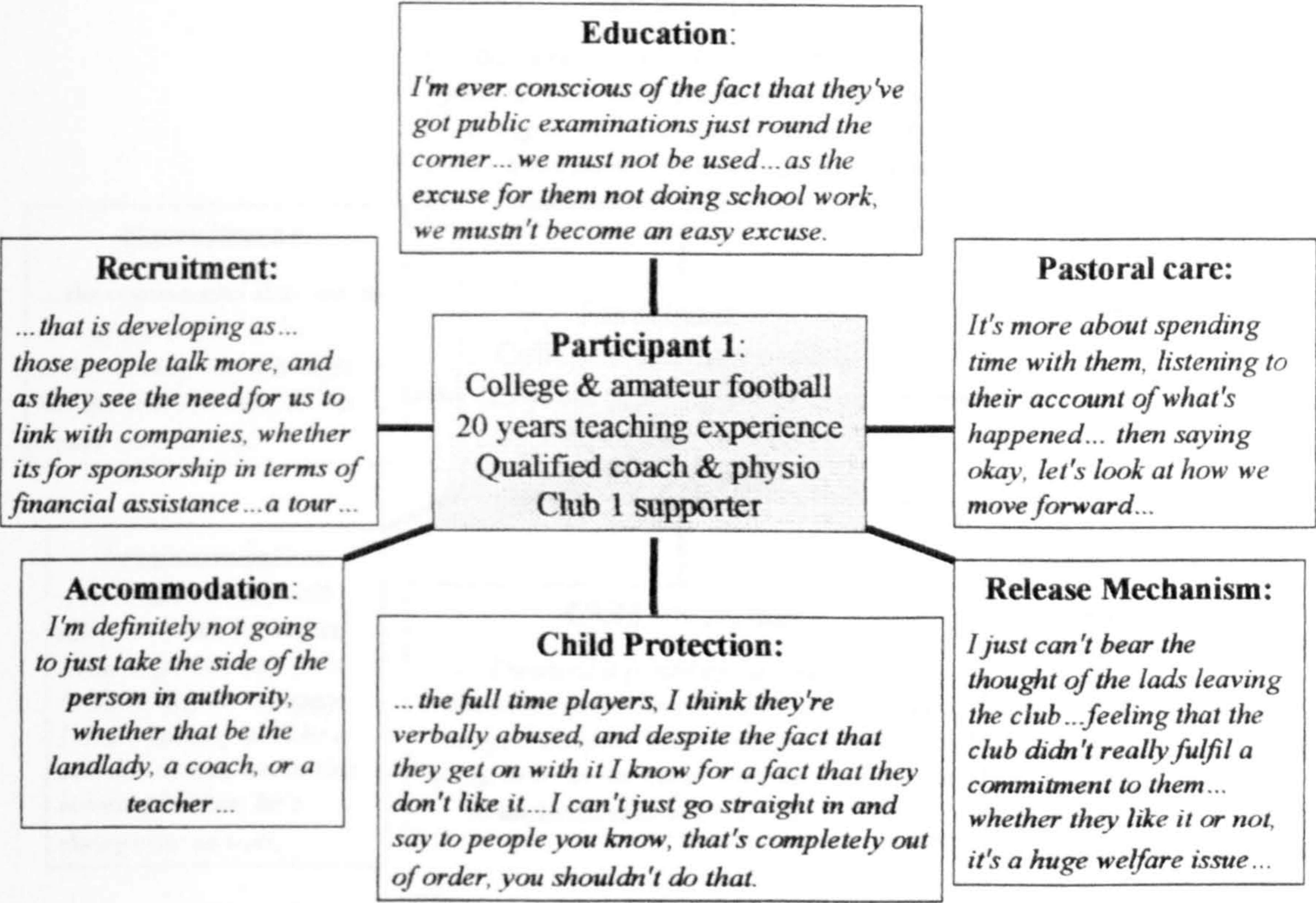


Figure 2.13. Synopsis of Participant 1's engagement within the 6 common HoEW tasks.

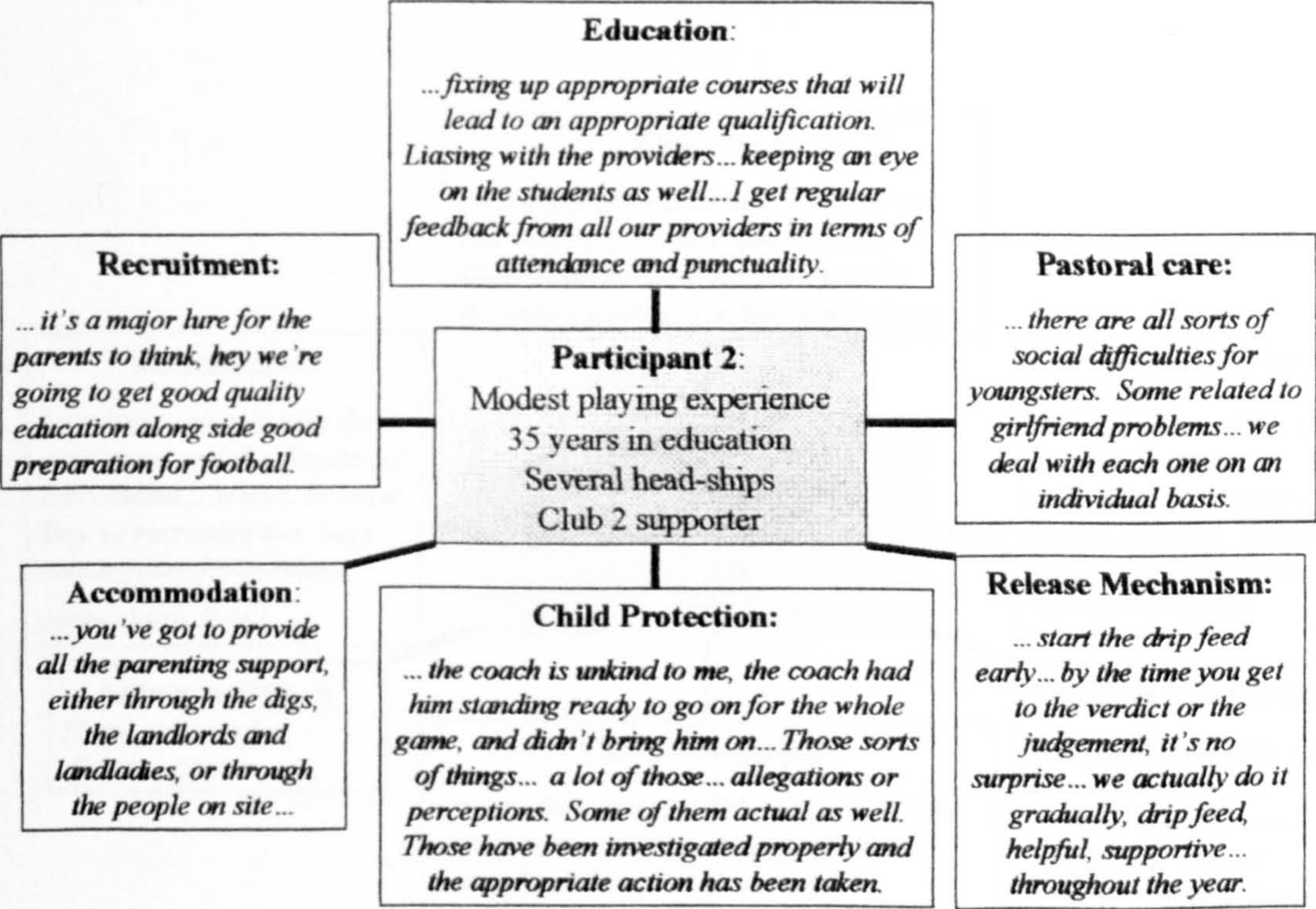


Figure 2.14. Synopsis of Participant 2's engagement within the 6 common HoEW tasks.

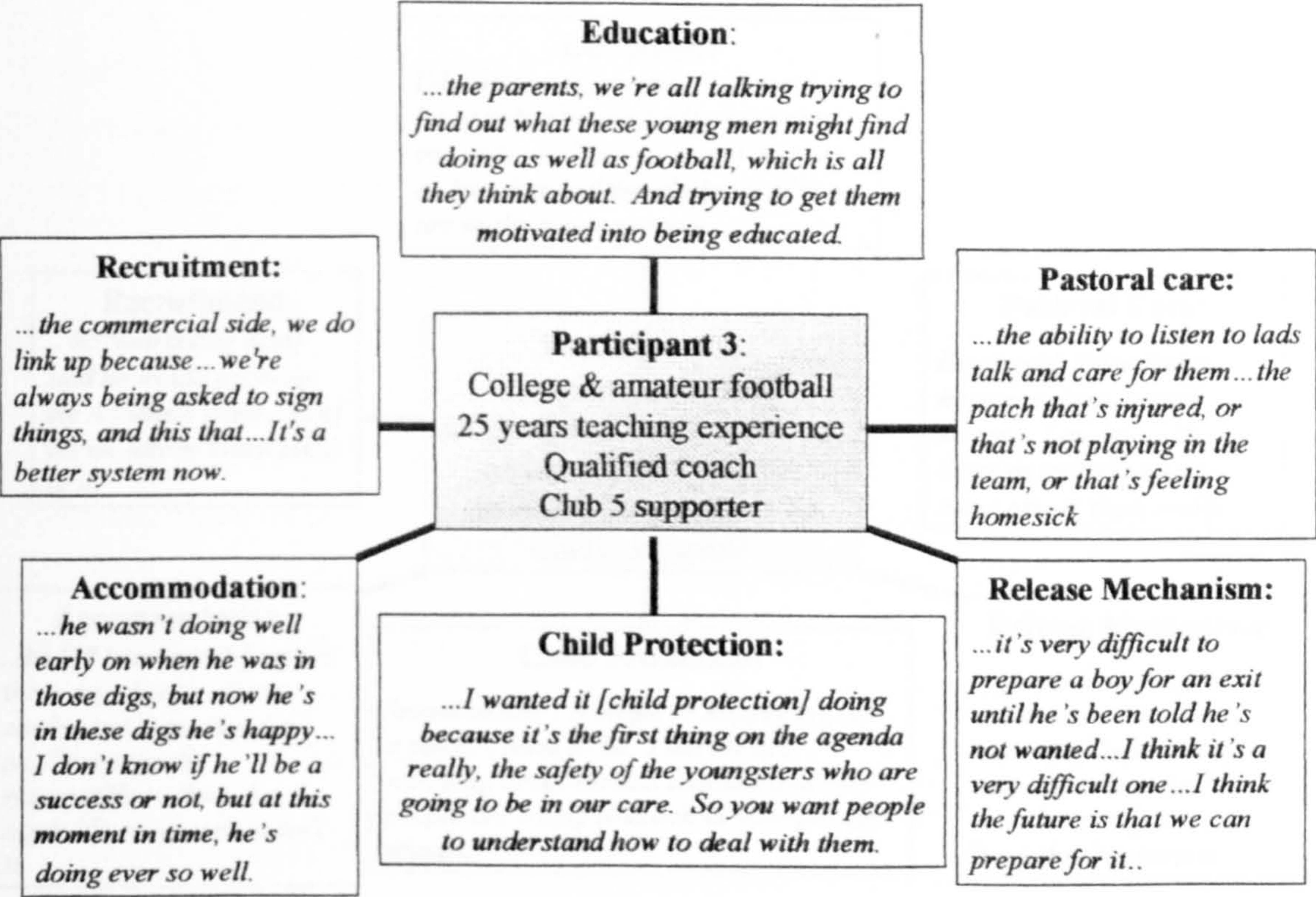


Figure 2.15. Synopsis of Participant 3's engagement within the 6 common HoEW tasks.

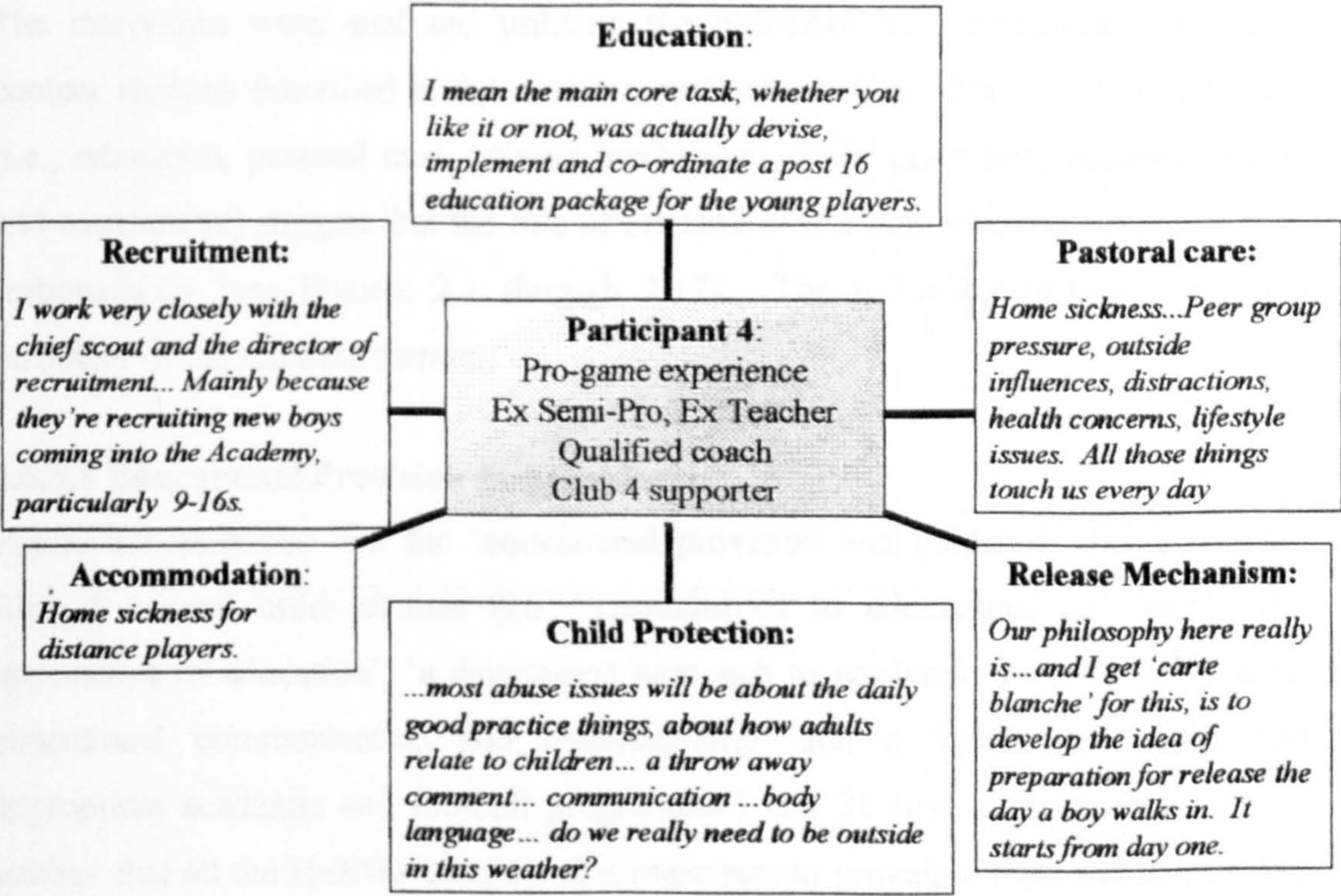


Figure 2.16. Synopsis of Participant 3's engagement within the 6 common HoEW tasks.

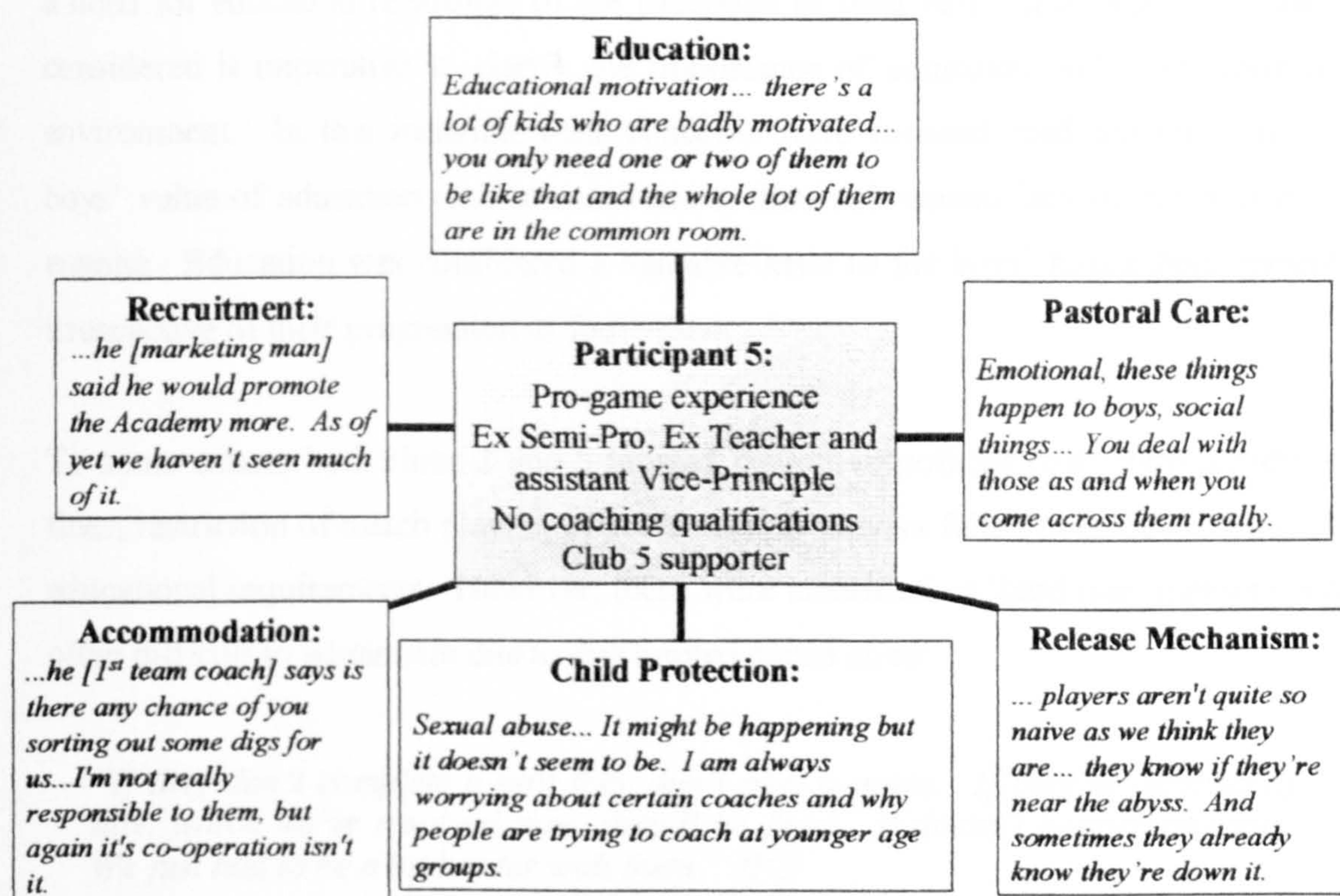


Figure 2.17. Synopsis of Participant 5's engagement within the six common HoEW tasks.

2.5.3 Section A – Synopsis

The interviews were analysed utilising the inductive and hierarchical process of content analysis described in the previous methods section. The six distinct themes (i.e., education, pastoral care, release mechanism, child protection, accommodation and recruitment) suggest that the role of the HoEW is a multi-faceted composition of responsibility (see Figures 2.1 through 2.17). The following section presents a summary of the separate themes.

2.5.3.1 Educational Provision and Guidance

Figure 2.7 identifies that the 'educational provision and guidance' theme resulted from 5 second order themes (i.e., 'commitment to educational provision', 'the importance of education', 'a disciplined approach to academic development', 'clear educational communication and understanding' and a 'balanced, flexible and appropriate academic and football programme') and 21 first order themes. It was evident that all the HoEWs considered it important to provide a clear and appropriate educational package for the boys. Not surprisingly, the educational responsibility was identified as one of their main responsibilities. The HoEWs identified that there was

a need for education regardless of the inception of their role. It appeared that they considered it imperative to clarify the importance of education within the football environment. In this instance, their concerns were focused predominantly on the boys' value of education and, in some cases, their subsequent lack of motivation to engage. Education was considered a valuable asset to the boys' future development irrespective of their progression as footballers.

To some extent, both clubs 2 and 5 utilised restrictive policies (e.g., introduction of fines, restriction of match playing opportunities) if players failed to achieve identified educational requirements. However, these were identified as 'hard line' measure and often difficult to administer due to due limited squad sizes:

"If they don't complete a unit they don't play a game. If they're persistently late, which we've resolved now, they'll be fined. It doesn't happen anymore. We just had to be a bit harder with them." (P2)

Others expressed that although they sometimes had educational concerns it was a general myth that the boys did not care or bother about education:

"...there's still a myth that, if he's going to be a footballer he's going to be a scallywag and he doesn't concentrate on school. Most kids are highly motivated at school, high expectations from the parents, good backgrounds. (P4)

All HoEWs expressed a desire to provide an appropriate and stimulating educational package that met the needs and requirements of each individual boy. It was also evident that there was a need to adopt a flexible approach, where appropriate, to the educational provision. More specifically, there appeared to be a general recognition that the third year of a scholarship should be, predominantly, allocated to their football programme. This was perceived as a crucial phase in a player's football development, and it was imperative to allow a player an opportunity to realise his football potential:

"...he's worked his socks off for two years, contrary to all beliefs, got himself married, which I spoke to him before he did that... And then somebody from the FFE and VTS said to me well why don't you put him in here on a course? Why? Because that third year to them is so important. If they don't get a contract at the end of that then they're out of football. (P5)

2.5.3.2 Pastoral Care

The concept of ‘pastoral care’ (see Figure 2.8) derived from 2 third order themes (i.e., an ‘appreciation of a player’s welfare on performance’ and the recognition of ‘significant stakeholders’), 7 second order themes, and 33 first order themes. The HoEWs identified that there was a need to provide clear support structures within the Academy, and an implicit requirement for them to be accessible to the boys. There was a clear recognition of the social and psychological pressures of the football environment. The HoEW needed to ensure an appropriate, supportive structure to enable the boys to understand and, ultimately, cope with this environment:

“By and large some of them are not emotionally aware, emotionally competent almost. It’s a self-awareness thing, I think they need more emotional competency, more emotional resilience sometimes to bounce back. But yeah I think they are pretty good, and I have feel comfortable with that.” (P4)

All HoEWs identified the need to utilise operational mechanisms to establish a trusting and supportive relationship with the boys. Again, they identified the need for them to be accessible, but also recognised some perceived barriers (e.g., perceived sign of weakness, environmental barriers and general reluctance) preventing the players’ engaging in pastoral care opportunities.

It appeared that there was a general requirement to promote the role of key external partners (e.g., schools and parents) in the general well-being of the boys. In addition the HoEWs thought it appropriate to promote (and coerce) a more inclusive responsibility for the welfare of the boys by the internal stakeholders (e.g., coaches and auxiliary staff):

“I think that as long as the coaches realise that part of their responsibility is to the players and their parents we’re covered in that.” (P2)

2.5.3.3 Preparation for Release

‘Preparation for release’ (see Figure 2.9) derived from 6 second order themes (i.e., ‘HoEW is instrumental in release’, ‘communication of release’, ‘timing of release’, ‘educational, welfare and vocational considerations of release’, ‘identify reality of

release at an early stage’ and ‘responsibility of player to recognise release signs’), which resulted from 26 first order themes. All HoEWs stressed that they *should* play an integral role in the release of boys from the club. However, they identified that the process of release may take different forms. For example at club 3, the manager was involved in informing the players, whereas club 4 allowed the parents an opportunity to break this news where appropriate.

Although the FA regulations stipulate that the boys should be informed of their release by the month of May, the HoEWs stressed that, where appropriate, they tried to inform boys earlier. In some cases boys were informed before the Christmas break. All the HoEWs were sympathetic to the potential educational, welfare and vocational implications of the release process. They recognised that an early decision allowed the boy time to come to terms with release. It also enabled the boy to consider, prepare, and actively pursue alternative exit routes (e.g., educational destinations, potential loan spells).

The HoEWs also recognised the need for players to understand the harsh realities of the football environment at an early stage (i.e., competitive). The HoEWs recognised the need for continuous feedback throughout the year. They also suggested that the players must take some responsibility to recognise and prepare themselves for release. However, they expressed concern if players did not realise they were being prepared for release despite the feedback:

“I don’t think that the players are quite so naive as we think they are. Because I think that they know if they’re near the abyss. And sometimes they already know they’re down it. So it doesn’t come as a complete shock, I think they probably have prepared for it. So most would be like that. But it’s the ones who think I’m all right for next year, and suddenly bang! They’re the ones I need to carefully manage and help.” (P5)

2.5.3.4 Child Protection – Procedures and Policy

The ‘child protection – procedures and policy’ theme (see Figure 2.10) resulted from 5 second order themes (i.e., ‘experience and responsibility’, type and occurrence of abuse’, ‘prioritise younger players’, nature of pressurised environment’ and ‘promote policy and practice’) which were derived from 38 first order themes. None of the

HoEWs had undertaken any formal child protection training but each had assumed responsibility as an integral part of their remit. However, each participant referred to an implicit, craft understanding and awareness through his previous existence within the teaching and/or coaching profession. Concerns of abuse included verbal, emotional, bullying, neglect and a general disregard for the players:

"The young players don't like to be shouted at. And they shouldn't be shouted at as often as they are, I mean there's no harm in, there's no problem with raising your voice and changing the levels and the tone and all that. And even very occasionally the odd expletive... But unfortunately it's the disregard for them as people, and it's disrespect, it's just not good enough in my opinion."
(P1)

It was evident that the HoEWs appeared less concerned with such incidents within the scholarship cohort (i.e., 16-19 years). It was, more or less, assumed that they were capable of looking after themselves. Their primary concern surrounded the younger age groups (i.e., 8-15 years). The HoEWs stressed a general apathy towards child protection within football, prior to their appointment. As they had assumed the mantle of 'designated child protection officer', all participants had begun to raise the awareness of such issues within their respective clubs. Each HoEW expressed some success in instigating elements of good practice, procedures and policy within their Academy but stressed that this was an ongoing process. Nevertheless, concerns were expressed over the lack of common policy, disparate level of engagement across all Academies, and the need for external expertise and/or future assistance:

"... there's got to be common policy, there has to be codes of practice, etc. etc. But I don't think we should as individual clubs draw them up. I think we should work towards something that maybe we contribute to the production of and therefore greater ownership of. But it should be in place as soon as possible, and we should start the training of the multitude of part-time and assistant staff that help out at individual clubs." (P1)

2.5.3.5 Accommodation

The engagement of the HoEWs in the provision of 'accommodation' (see Figure 2.11) was derived from 2 second order themes (i.e., 'consideration of psycho-social environmental implications' and 'communicate and arrange appropriate accommodation') which in turn, resulted from 9 first order themes. It was evident

that all of the HoEWs recognised the importance of providing secure, and settled accommodation for their players. All HoEWs recognised that it may be difficult for some boys to cope with the upheaval from their existing, and familiar home environment. Issues such as homesickness and some behavioural problems were highlighted. As with child protection, the HoEWs had assumed responsibility for this area of work. However, their level of engagement and/or responsibility differed depending on their club's circumstances. For example, the range of accommodation depended on how many boys were on scholarships and how many of these were from outside of the local area. Pressures were also brought to bear through the potential 'overuse' of regular accommodation providers (i.e., landladies, landlords) and seasonal variations (e.g., more accommodation was required during periods where the club engaged in short-term 'trialist' weeks during different times of the year). Participants 2, 3 and 5 stressed that the provision of accommodation and constant liaison with the accommodation providers was an integral part of their role. These perceptions are consistent with Bourke's (2002) assertion that young Irish players often experienced personal difficulties whilst settling in to a new club, culture and environment in England. More specifically, the young players may experience a longing for a more familiar (homely) culture, suffer rejection, and a decreased self – esteem. It would appear that the HoEWs are responsible for ensuring appropriate (homely) accommodation for the young players (i.e., Irish, English and other foreign nationals) in order to facilitate their transition.

2.5.3.6 Recruitment and Marketing

The 'recruitment and marketing' theme (see Figure 2.12) was derived from 3 second order themes (i.e., 'benefits of the Academy', 'implicit marketing and promotion' and 'explicit marketing and promotion') and 14 first order themes. All the HoEWs recognised the inception of the Academy as a vehicle to encourage boys to sign for their club. Participant 2 stressed that the Academy was useful not only for recruitment, but also for the retention of the boys:

... it [the Academy] bears no resemblance, to what it was before. We are unlikely to lose the players as we have done in the past, they're well catalogued... The whole system means that we can keep tabs on the youngsters

much more adequately than we could do in the past, where we've lost youngsters to other local teams because there was no process or structure. (P2)

They also identified that the Academy package (i.e., inclusive of education) was a real bonus for both players and parents. The Academy package promoted the educational aspirations of players (and parents) but also provided an opportunity for the boy to realise the football potential. Participant three suggested that the young players were now more of a commodity. The Academy package could be viewed as a mechanism to ensure that the boy signed for their particular club. In this sense all HoEWs identified a need to promote their Academy either through implicit mechanisms of good practice, or more explicit commercial and personal relations opportunities.

2.5.4 Section B – Experience, Skills and Influences

Further content analysis identified the particular ‘experiences, skills and influences’ (see Figure 2.18) of the HoEW’s that impacted on their working practice. This general dimension was derived from eight third order themes including; ‘craft knowledge/awareness’, ‘barriers to implementing change/working practice’, ‘differentiated recognition of working practices’, professional knowledge/experience and training’, ‘key relationships in procedural and strategic elements of the role’, ‘local and national disparities in status’, ‘operational matters and working practice’, ‘operational tendencies’ and ‘strategic tendencies’. These third order themes resulted from 16 second order themes and 110 first order themes. The following section presents a breakdown of the ‘experience, skills and influences’ theme and provides further detail on the nature and/or level of engagement of each participant is provided by appropriate quotes from each of the HoEW’s interview. These quotes provide an ‘experience, skills and influences’ pen-profile peculiar to each HoEW (see Figures 2.19 – 2.23). A further synopsis of this theme is provided at the end of this section.

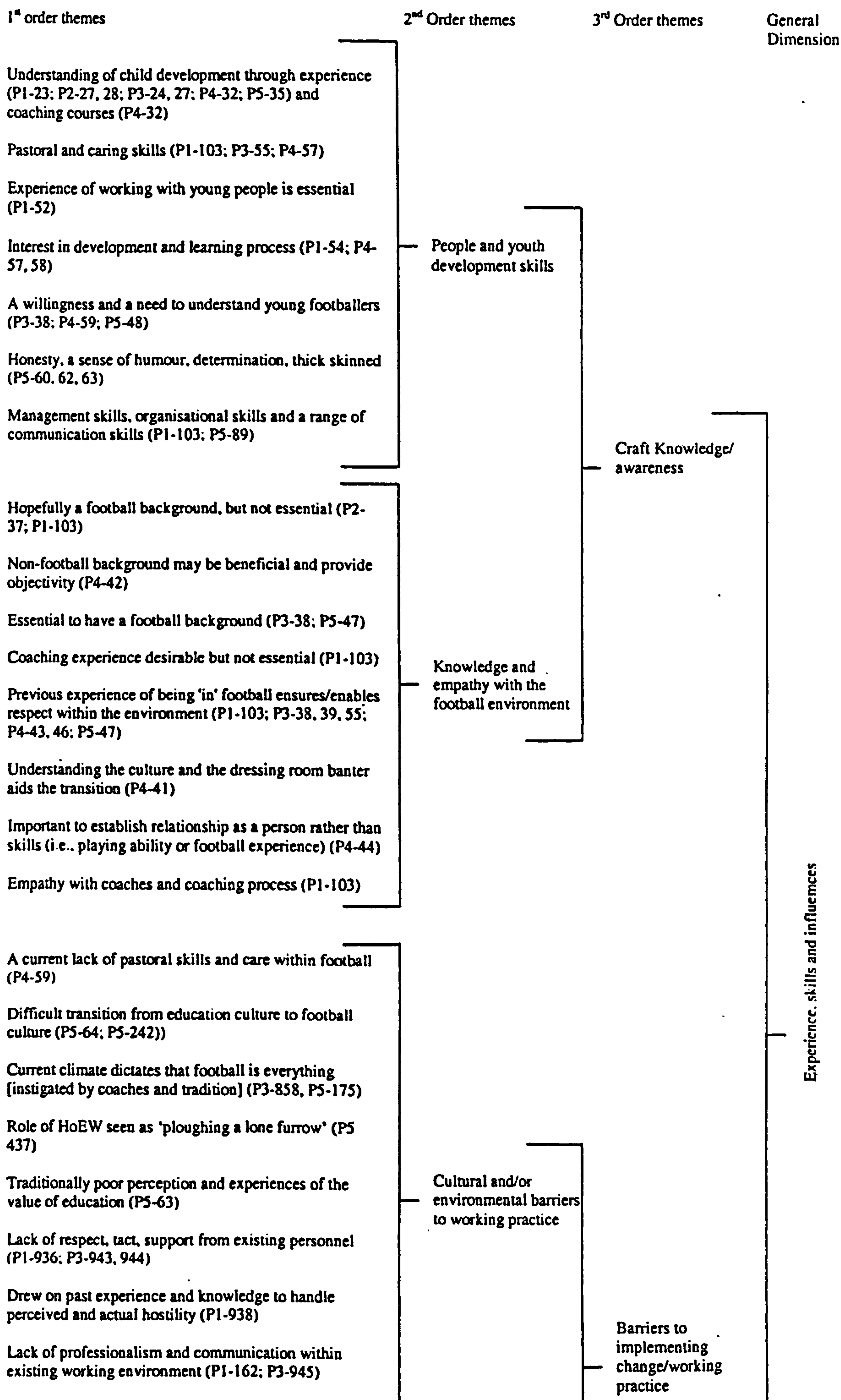


Figure 2.18. Elements of the HoEWs' experiences, skills and influences resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

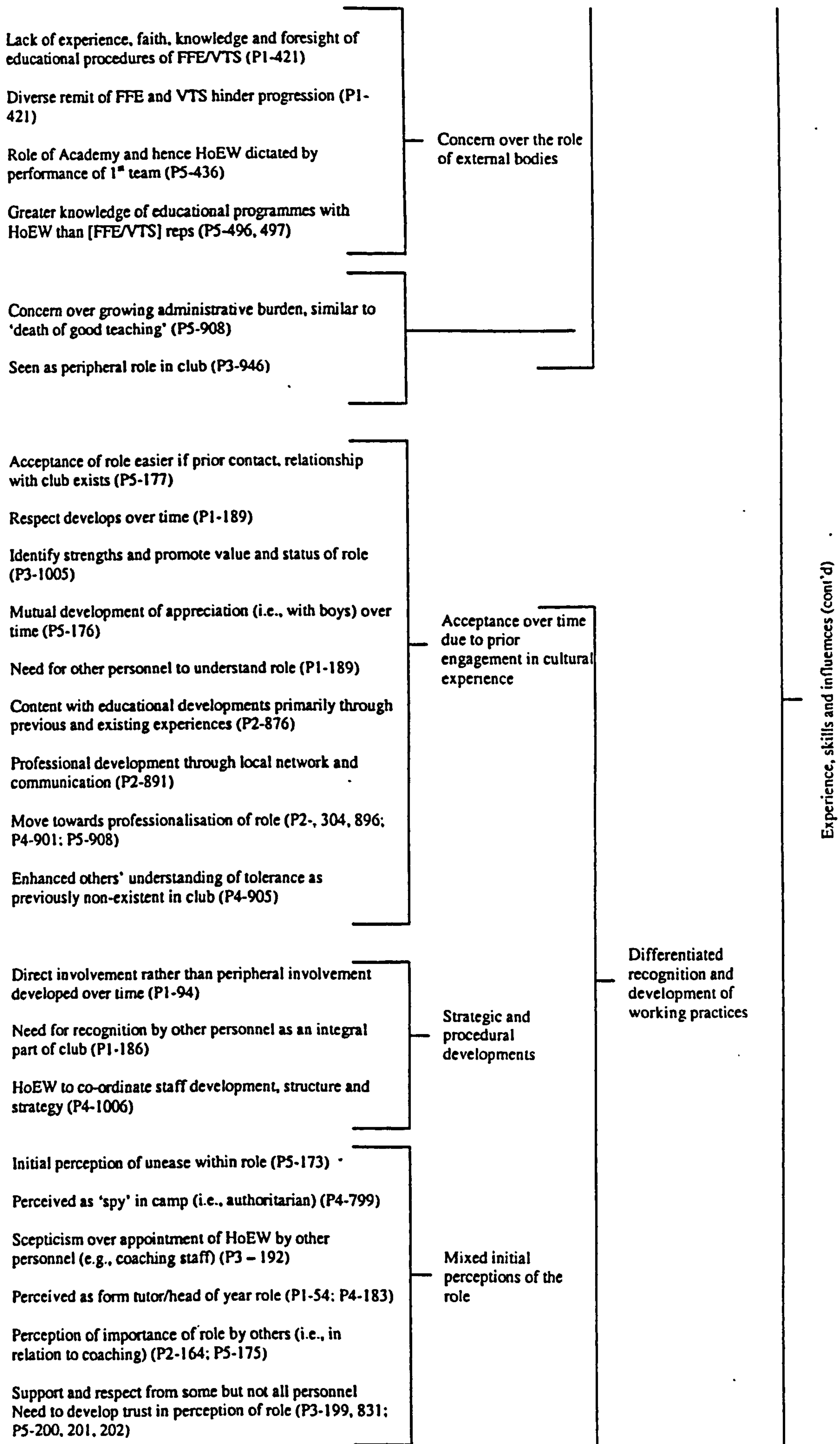


Figure 2.18 (cont'd). Elements of the HoEWs' experiences, skills and influences resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

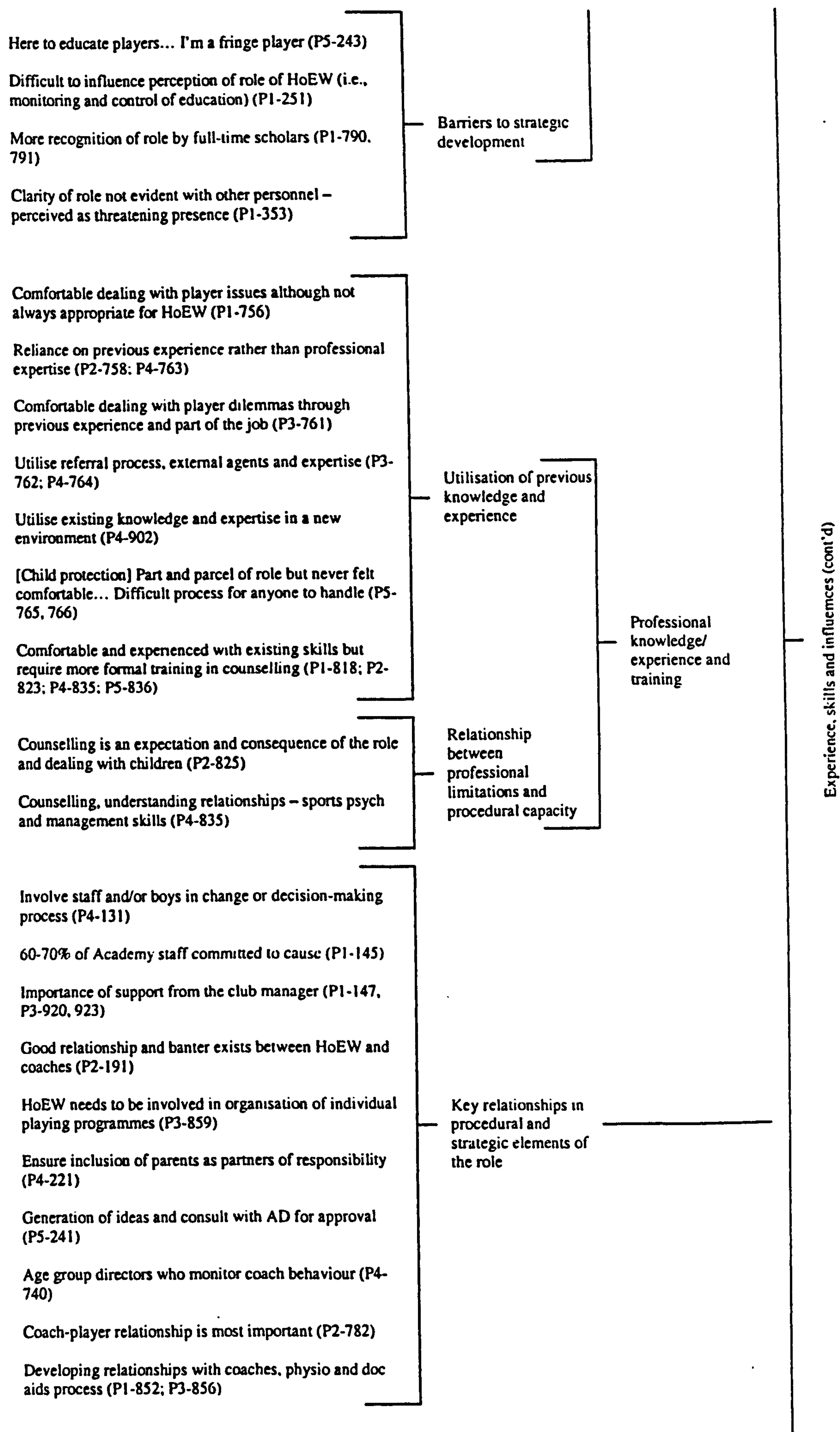


Figure 2.18 (cont'd). Elements of the HoEWs' experiences, skills and influences resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

Lack of common and good practice exploited by clubs, parents and agents (P3-155)

Concern over disparity of Football League clubs and Premier League clubs (P5-435)

Other clubs a little 'care free' (P1-605)

Minor differences in procedures (e.g., travel, college, accommodation) (P2-839)

Differences exist because of circumstance, environment, practice & relationships (P3-844)

Minor differences in procedures (e.g., travel, college, accommodation) (P2-839)

Problems with facilities and accessibility due to restrictions and nature of environment (P5-851)

Cheating clubs – doubling the role of HoEW with a coach (P2-958)

Differences in every single club (e.g., education package and child protection) (P4-847)

Budget discrepancies (P5-849)

Operational disparity and difficulties

Local and National discrepancies in status, operational matters and working practice

Experience, skills and influences (cont'd)

Responsible for all young boys (i.e., 9-19/20 years) where as 20-21s tend to go their own way (P3-210)

Responsibility to ensure boys are happy with both club and school environment (P3-217)

Assumed responsibility of staff over dealing with and communicating with boys (P4-394)

Advise and empower players to discuss situations with relevant staff (P1-543)

Need to be informed (P1-756)

Likes to coach recognise need to isolate roles of coach and HoEW (P3-808, 810)

Implementation of procedures has compromised involvement (i.e., training and playing) with boys (P4-833)

Enormity and diversity of role hinders coaching contact and managerial opportunities (P3-67)

Differences in application of role (e.g., coaching, playing involvement with boys)

Responsibility, nature, perception and application of role

Be available to support and influence the existing mechanisms of the club (P1-93, 249, 616; P2-209; P3-152; P4-740, 822; P5-243)

Avoid confrontation by 'planting seeds' (P3-237)

Aware not to come across arrogantly. Discuss issues and find solutions (P4-131)

Operational tendencies

Figure 2.18 (cont'd). Elements of the HoEWs' experiences, skills and influences resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

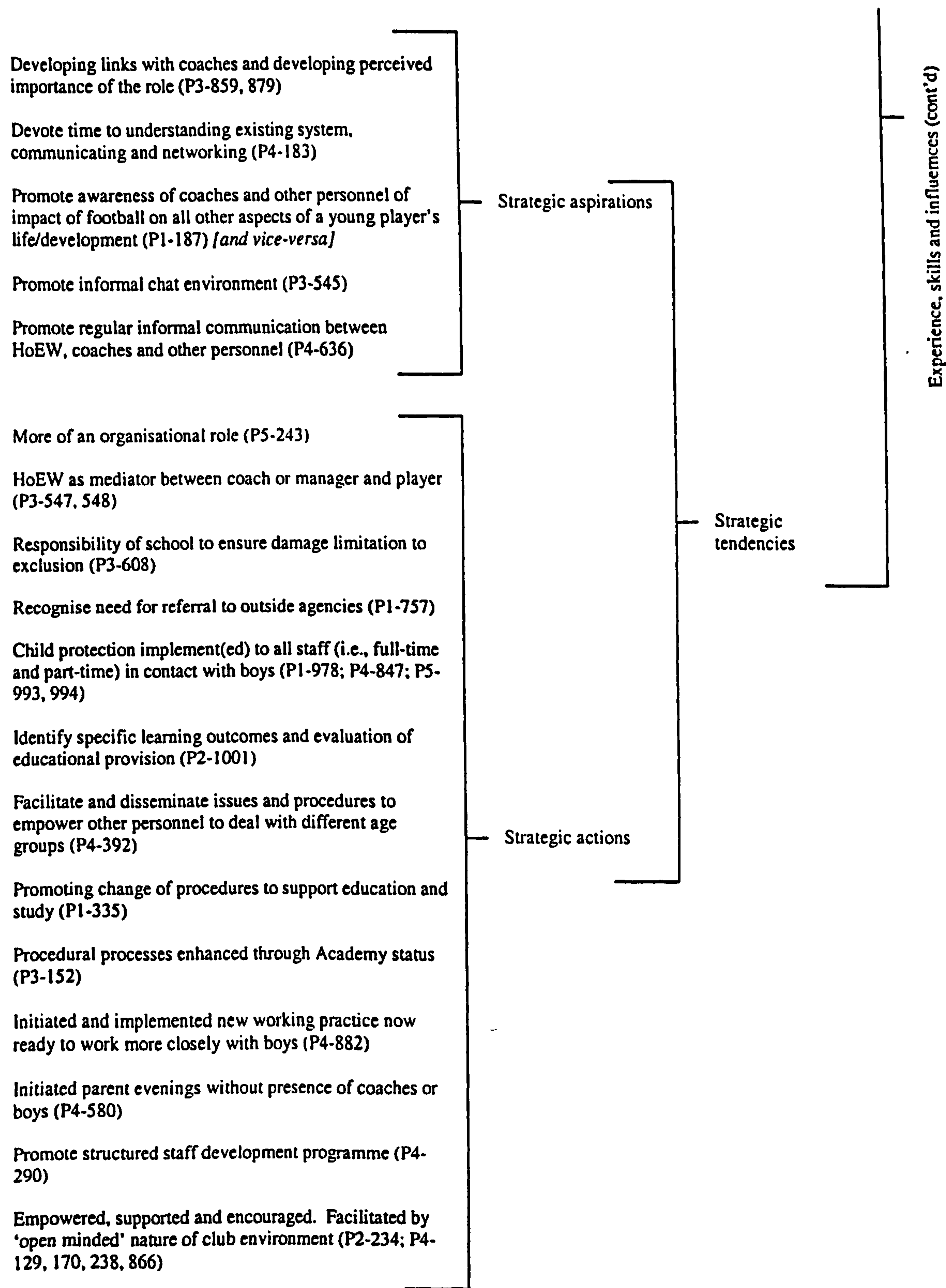


Figure 2.18 (cont'd). Elements of the HoEWs' experiences, skills and influences resulting from hierarchical content analysis of the results

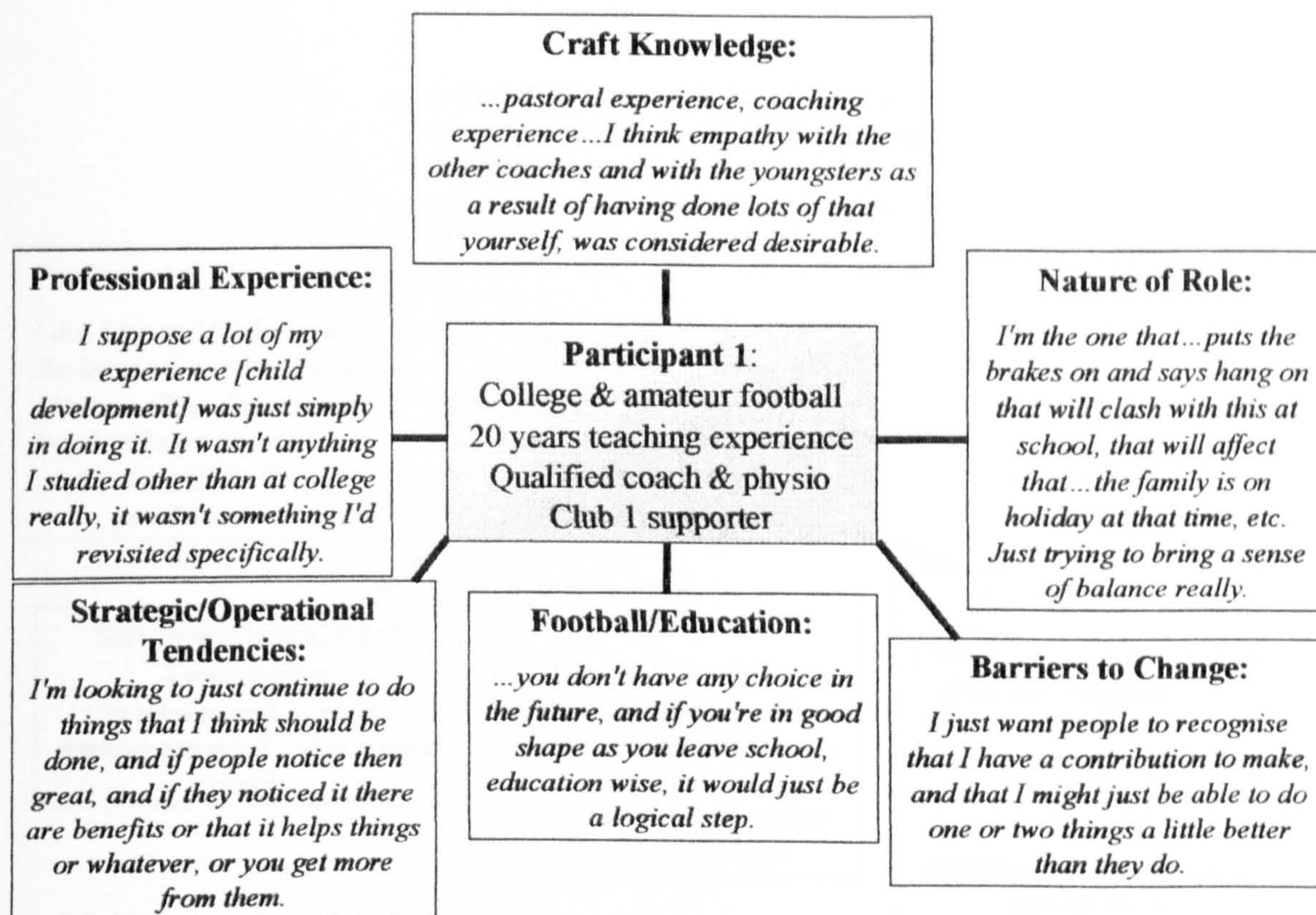


Figure 2.19. Synopsis of Participant 1's experience, influence and skills.

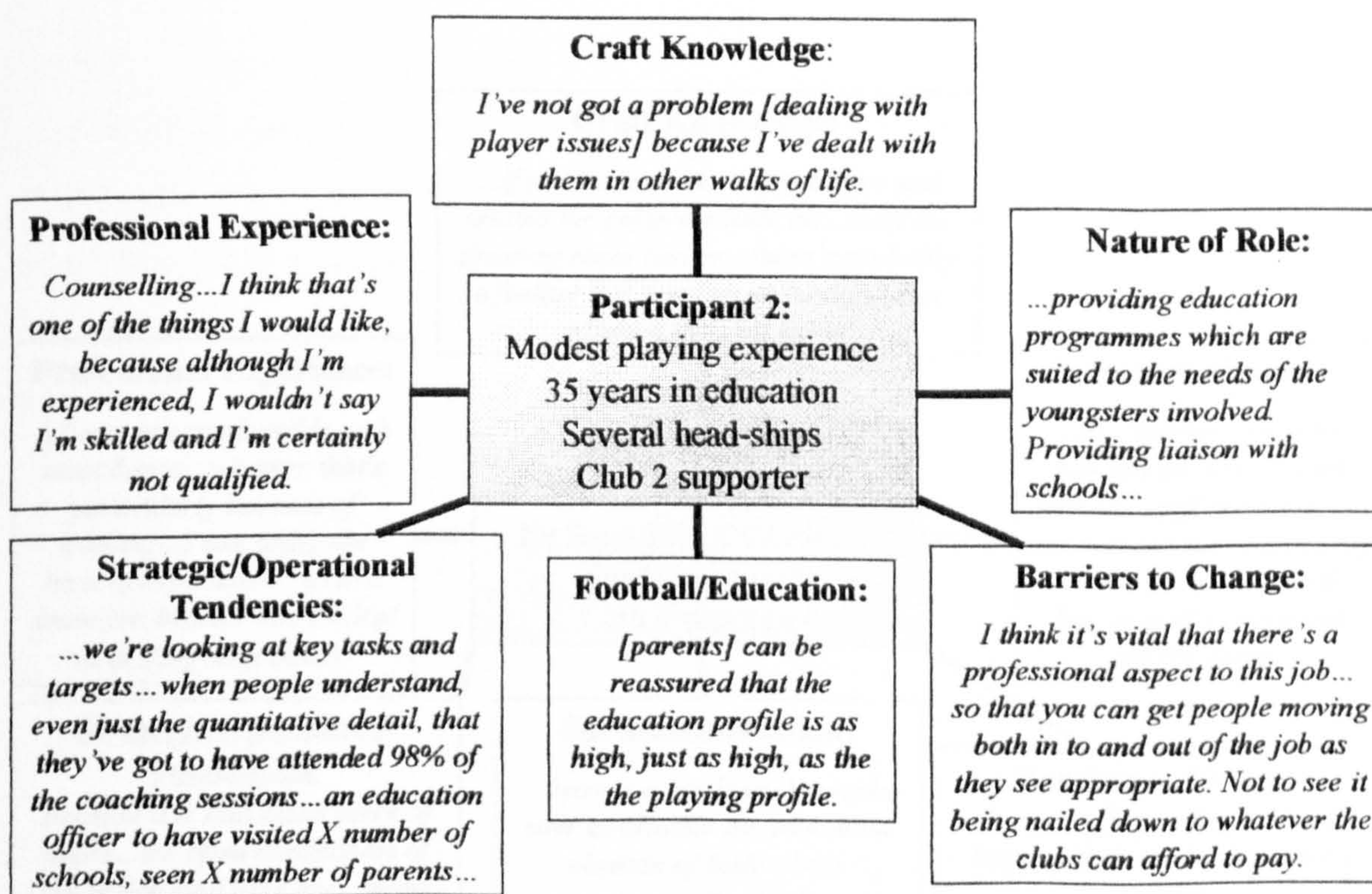


Figure 2.20. Synopsis of Participant 2's experience, influence and skills.

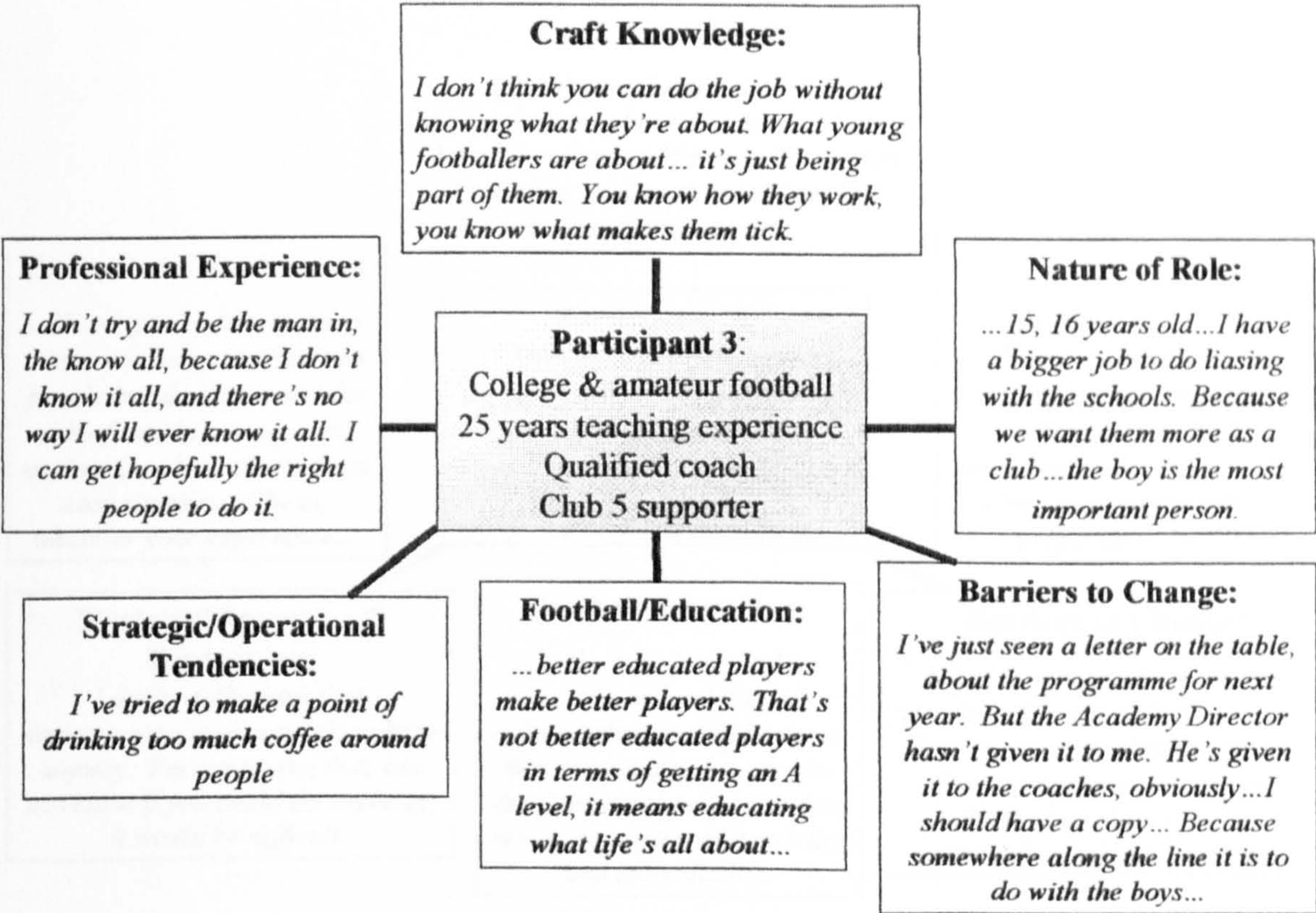


Figure 2.21. Synopsis of Participant 3's experience, influence and skills.

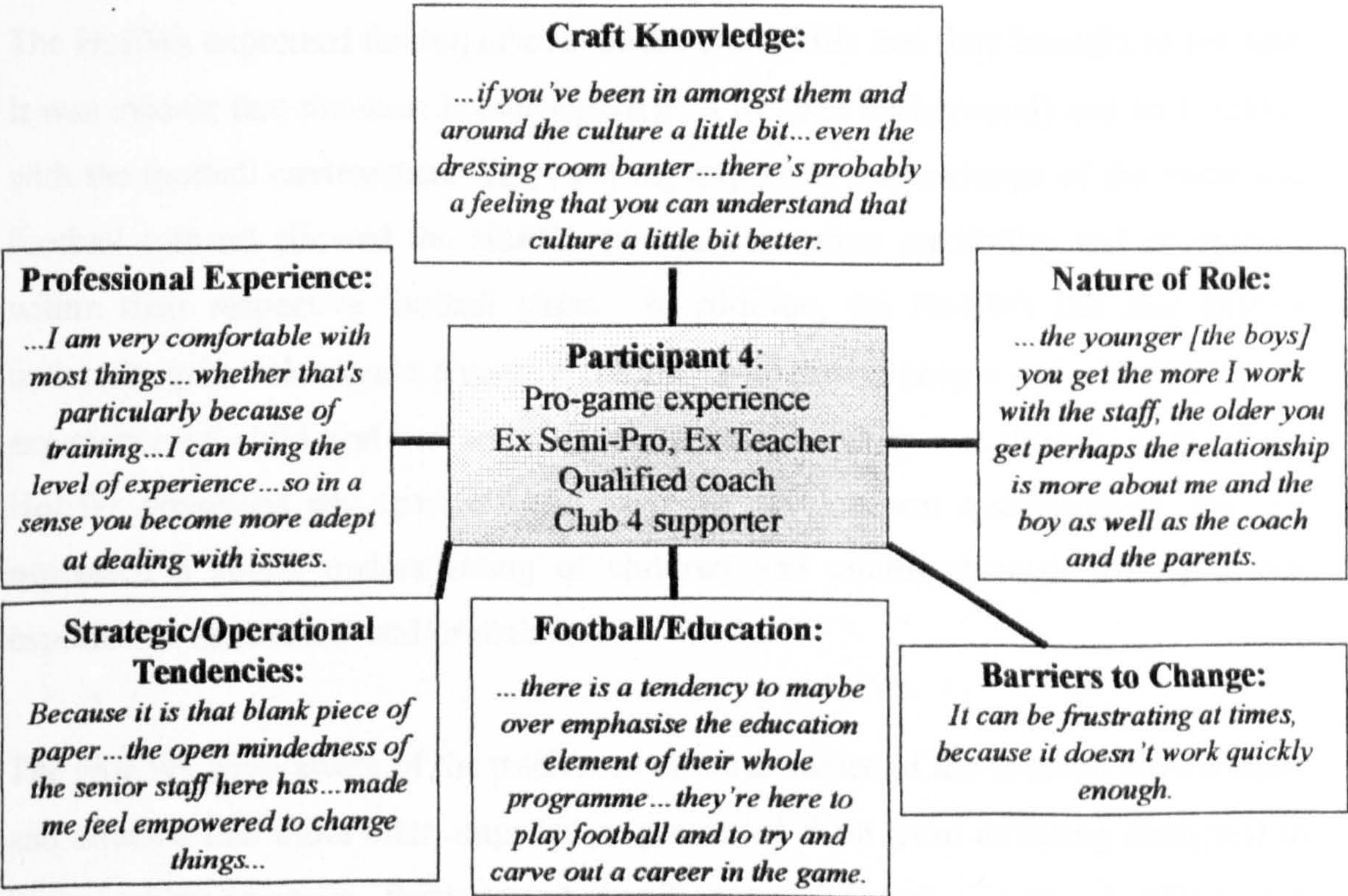


Figure 2.22. Synopsis of Participant 4's experience, influence and skills.

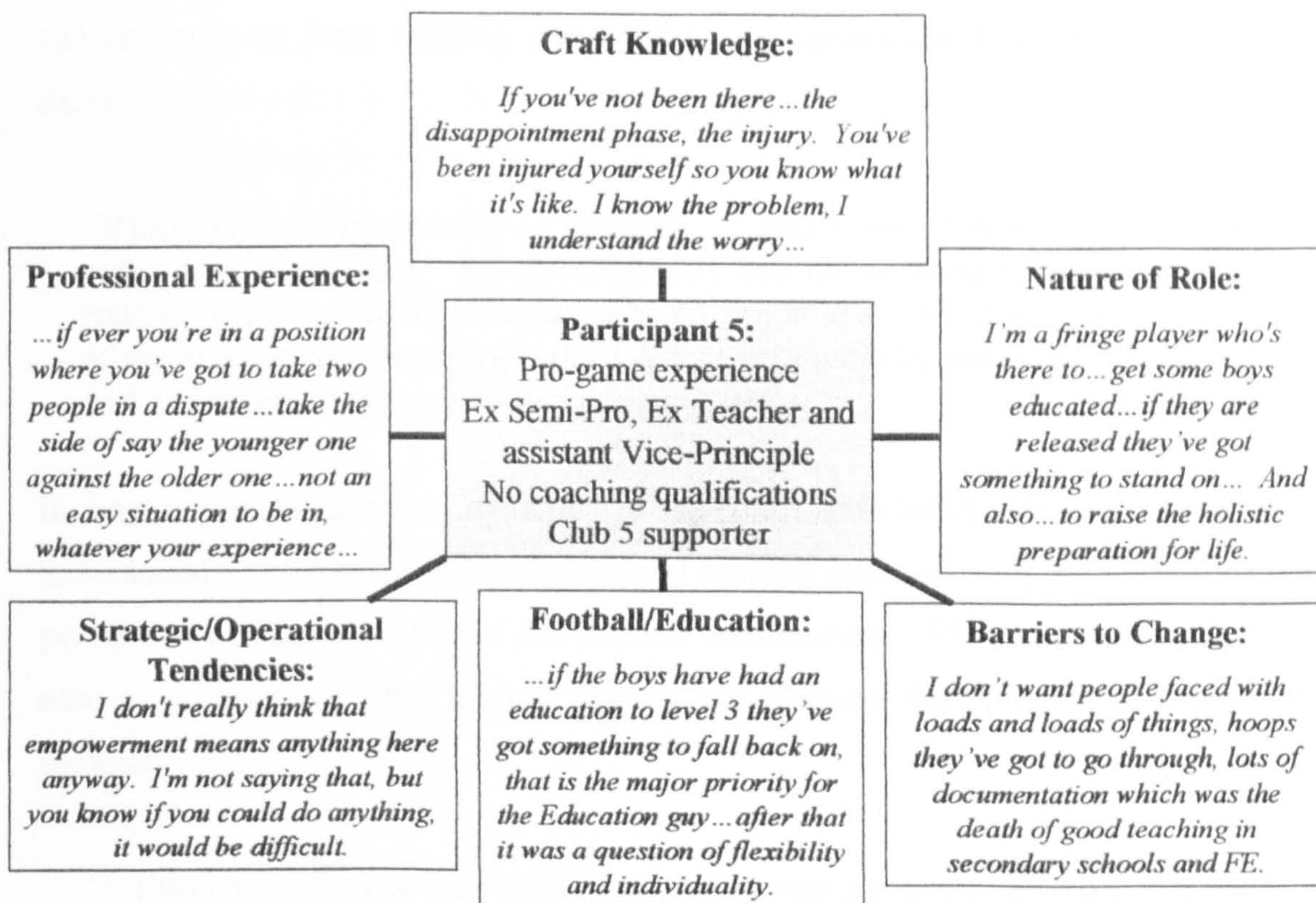


Figure 2.23. Synopsis of Participant 5's experience, influence and skills.

2.5.4.1 Section B – Synopsis

The HoEWs expressed the importance of the craft skills that they brought to the role. It was evident that previous knowledge (e.g., a football background) and an empathy with the football environment (e.g., playing experience, knowledge of the game and football culture) allowed the HoEWs to establish initial credibility and acceptance within their respective football clubs. In addition, the HoEWs felt that anyone undertaking the role should possess an affinity with young people and a knowledge or experience of child and /or youth development processes. Although none of the HoEWs possessed any specific child or youth development qualifications, they all expressed a sound understanding of children and youths through their previous experiences as teachers and/or coaches.

The HoEWs were aware of the traditional cultural values of the football environment and stressed that these often impeded or prevented them from initiating change(s) in their working practices. Participant 4 identified a current lack of pastoral skills within the football environment whereas participants 1 and 3 referred to a lack of respect,

tact and support from existing personnel (more specifically the existing coaching staff).

“Within minutes of arriving at the club... I told some of these boys that they didn't have to be there. So effectively they had the morning off and one of the coaches went absolutely bananas. I had no right to do this, I was going outside of my area of responsibility. And I learnt very quickly, two members of staff, and one in particular was really abusive.” (P1)

In most circumstances, the ‘dynamic’ of the coach and HoEW relationship appeared to be sound. However, conflicts of interest focused predominantly on the nature and perception of education within the football environment. Education was sometimes seen as a ‘nuisance’ that limited playing and training time (i.e., time away from football).

“... then one of the coaches tried to sort of impress upon me, ‘Who are you like? The education guy. We don't need you, we don't want you’. Because I'd taken some of the boys to do something. So I think there's a difficult, there's a teething period.” (P5)

Other barriers to implementing appropriate practice were identified. For example participants 1 and 5 stressed concern over the apparent lack of experience and foresight in educational guidance (and stipulated criteria) provided by the FFE and VTS. Participant 5 also considered the growing administrative burden of the role to be a real concern.

“...I'm on the working party for the professional development award. I don't want people faced with loads and loads of things, hoops they've got to go through. Lots of documentation, that was the death of good teaching in secondary schools and FE.” (P5)

The HoEWs stressed an ignorance and apathy toward the educational, social and psychological remit of player development. In some instances the HoEW was viewed with scepticism by others within the Academy, or as more of a ‘head tutor’ in a disciplinarian role.

“It's difficult to understand, difficult to know sometimes [if you're respected], because you feel sometimes there's a, you know like, the coaches are doing their coaching and they think they're so important it's untrue...” (P3)

It was evident that each HoEW experienced different levels of engagement and subsequent aspirations for the development of their respective roles. For example Participant 1 identified a desire to become an integral part of the academy, and participants 3 and 5 described themselves as 'fringe players'. Participant 4, on the other hand, suggested that the HoEW should be charged with co-ordinating staff development (e.g., coaches). Participant 2 attributed his experiences as an existing member of the club staff, to his smooth transition in to the role of the HoEW. A smoother, and more accepting, transition than that experienced by the majority of his counterparts.

"Because I already knew all of the people in the club, being education and welfare officer wasn't a problem. I know some of my colleagues have had difficulty in terms of their perception of how they're being received in the club and their role within the club, especially if they're not a tracksuit type." (P2)

Despite some transitional difficulties and barriers to implementing change the HoEWs appeared to acknowledge that the development and acceptance of their role, within the professional football environment, was likely to be a gradual process. In order to establish some clearer procedural and strategic elements of their role, it appeared that there was a need to establish a supportive relationship with the existing player development stakeholders. These key stakeholders included the Academy Director, the coaching staff, parents and, in some cases, the club manager. It appeared that all the HoEWs utilised predominantly operational mechanisms to raise the profile of their role, the perception of education and welfare and strengthen their relationship with the coaches and the academy director.

"...there's other ways of doing it [influencing change] than actually doing a straight confrontation. I think what I do is, I plant seeds." (P3)

"I try to organise things better here, but at the end of the day I'm not here to do that... And also, you know, to raise the profile of holistic preparation for life. Quite honestly for most of these boys it's, they'll get on even if it's somewhere else, but we are fringe players. I don't really think that empowerment means anything here anyway. I'm not saying that, but you know if you could do anything, it would be difficult." (P5)

In addition to these operational mechanisms it was evident that the HoEWs possessed strategic tendencies. The majority of these focused on the establishment of a more open and inclusive communication network (i.e., between the HoEW and the coaches). For example participant 3 perceived that the HoEW should be informed about everything to do with the boy.

"I've just seen a letter on a table, about the programme for next year, but [AD] hasn't given it to me, he's given it to the coaches, obviously. This is where I should come in. I should have a copy of every letter that's going on. Because somewhere along the line it is to do with the boys, so therefore I should know what's going on." (P3)

In some cases the HoEW had either identified or engaged in strategic actions. This strategic influence was predominantly related to issues of educational provision and child protection.

"We have all got similar core tasks in a way. Child protection, education post-16 package...we differ tremendously. I think it's largely down to two things. It's about access to the boys and it's about relationships with the rest of the staff. And I think we are all coming from a totally different viewpoint." (P4)

Participant 2 and Participant 4, however, believed that they could more readily engage in strategic actions due to the support, encouragement and open-minded nature of their respective environments.

2.5.5 Summary

The present inquiry suggests that the role of the HoEW is a diverse, dynamic and demanding occupation, where the HoEWs are engaging in a number of explicit and assumed roles and responsibilities (i.e., educational guidance and provision, pastoral care, release mechanism, child protection, accommodation and recruitment). Despite the range of responsibilities it would appear that the perception of the role of the HoEW echoes the previous (and existing) experiences of the Education and Welfare Officers (EWO) in local government. MacMillan (1977) referred to the EWO as a traditionally undervalued service that struggled to identify its role and establish credibility. This inquiry has identified that some of the NW HoEWs have suffered a similar fate. It would appear that some of the football clubs have received the role

of the HoEW as they would have received a traditional EWO (i.e., as an enforcer of educational provision). It is evident that the role of the HoEW, as perceived by the individuals themselves, is a far more encompassing role. This role incorporates educational provision, yet also appears to include a requirement to ensure that the boys are exposed to an appropriate and structured developmental environment. The perception of the educational enforcer has been compounded by the traditionally poor perceptions and engagement in education within the football environment (Parker, 2000). Coombes (1964 cited in MacMillan, 1977) expressed that schools, and more specifically school teachers, had failed to recognise the true value of the EWO. It would appear that, within the football Academy structure, the perceptions of the teacher towards the EWO are mirrored by the perceptions of the coach towards the HoEW. In this present inquiry, the HoEWs expressed consistent concerns over their relationship with the coaches. The suggestion that the coaches perceived education to be a 'nuisance' activity, that impeded the boys' playing and training time, was consistent across all five HoEWs.

The HoEWs also referred to both local and national discrepancies in the provision of education and welfare. The differentials that existed were predominantly determined by the nature and perception of the role within each Academy. For example participants 2 and 4 referred generally to experiencing an inclusive and open-minded environment that enabled more autonomy, respect and strategic action. Participants 1, 3 and 5 identified themselves as 'fringe' or 'peripheral' players within their respective Academies. Subsequently, this peripheral position made it difficult for them to influence practice within their Academy. Other discrepancies in budgetary allocation, wage differentials and internal support were also identified. Again these experiences bare the hallmarks of the disparate education and welfare services described in the Plowden report (1967), by MacMillan (1977) and more recently Atkinson (2002).

Today's education and welfare service is predominantly driven by issues surrounding school attendance, child protection, and youth justice (Buckinghamshire County Council, 2002). Similarly, it appears that the strategic actions and aspirations of the HoEWs were dominated by educational and child protection remits. Fundamentally, the HoEW possessed potential elements of strategic autonomy in these areas. Child protection was sometimes utilised in order to coerce and engage the staff (including

coaches) in debate about the boys' general well-being, and football development. Unfortunately, it appears that the HoEWs were required to utilise more operational mechanisms to promote the value of education. The HoEWs identified that, initially, extremely subtle approaches (i.e., primarily operational mechanisms) were utilised in order to promote a more understanding, supportive and accepting working environment.

The Football Association's Technical Department (1997; p3) stipulated that a "...player's match programme should be developed in the best interests of the player's educational, technical, academic and social needs, by the parents in conjunction with the player's school and Football Academy Education and Welfare Officer." It would appear that, in some instances, the HoEW is not an inclusive component within this process. Informed decisions concerning the best interests of the boy's educational, technical, academic and social needs, demand an inclusive communication network to exist within the academy (i.e., between the Academy Director, the coaches and the HoEW).

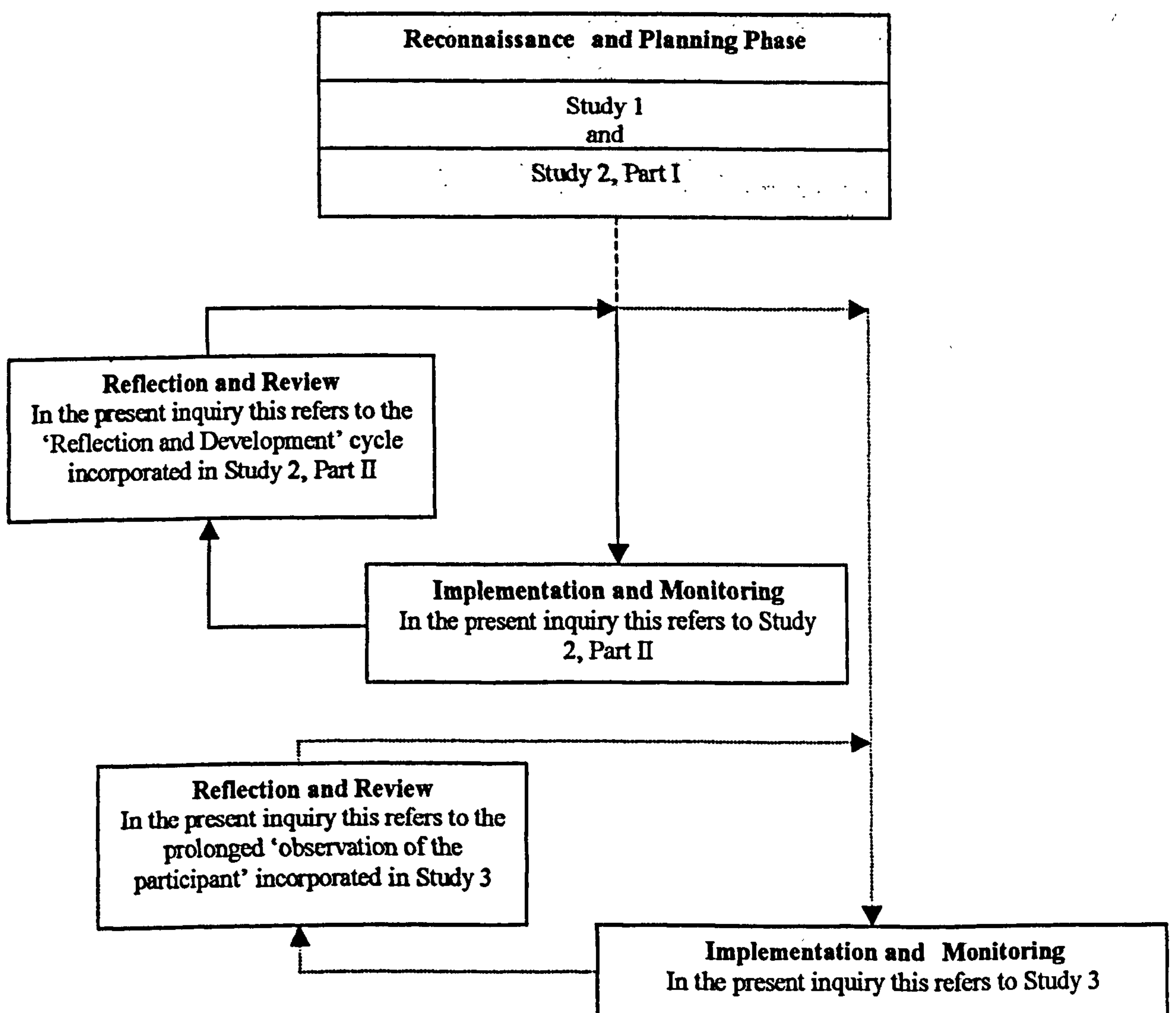
The HoEWs are dedicated to ensuring that every player has an opportunity to develop both their academics and their football, or as the NASWELB (1989; p2) stressed, "...for every child a chance." The HoEWs have identified the need to engage in subtle operational mechanisms to influence practice within their respective Academies. These operational mechanisms (and strategic aspirations and actions) appear to be dependent on the evolving relationship between the HoEW, his Academy Director and the coaches. Ultimately, this gradual persuasion should enable the HoEW to become more influential in implementing strategic policies that enhance the players' developmental experience within the Academy. At this point, it seems appropriate to explore how these relationships and subsequent working practices evolve over time.

Chapter Three

Part I:

Study 2, Part I:

A Further Exploration of the Working Practices for the HoEWs: Utilising the Focus Group



Author's note: The area highlighted in the above model reflects the location of the material presented in Chapter 3, Part I (i.e., Study 2, Part I - an extension to the reconnaissance and planning phase) within the action research cycle.

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this phase of the project was to explore and extend the dominant themes, relative to the HoEW's individual working practice, which emerged from the content analysis of Study 1. Study 1 concentrated on the individual and their respective working environment, and evidenced a multi-faceted composition of responsibility within the remit of each HoEW. However, the level of engagement in such activities appeared to differ across the group of HoEWs, and seemed to be dependent on the individual and environmental circumstances, expertise, opportunity and desire.

Study 1 highlighted that the extent and nature of each individual's role was also dependent on key interpersonal relationships that existed within their working environment. In some cases, there were elements of tension due to the differing perceptions, ignorance and general apathy toward the educational, social, psychological and welfare remit of the HoEW. Key elements of working practice emerged as the HoEWs identified subtle, primarily *operational*, mechanisms of working in order to promote and develop an understanding and acceptance of their role within the football environment. Elements of *strategic* frustration were also evidenced due to the traditional and cultural perceptions of their role that tended to 'hinder' the HoEWs from certain decision-making forums.

Due to the individual nature of the HoEWs' working practices evidenced in Study 1, it seemed appropriate to explore and share ideas on working practices, and to allow the HoEWs to comment on their own realities and ideals within a group situation. Study 2 explored the shared, generic issues of the HoEW to promote dialogue and collective understanding. The purpose of this study was to extend the issues generated in Study 1 and to encourage the HoEWs to engage in some form of change within the HoEW's respective working environment. This study was undertaken in two parts. Part I encouraged shared reflection and potential mechanisms to move forward through a focus group whereas Part II targeted explicit '*change strategies*' consistent with action research methodology.

3.2 Rationale, Design and Selection of Focus Group Methods

The focus group has been championed as a versatile method of qualitative inquiry that may be utilised to inform the planning of research, or provide summative and/or formative evaluation of the research (Basch, 1987). Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1956) applied the term "focus group" to a situation in which the researcher asks specific questions about a topic after considerable research has already been completed (cited in Fontana and Frey, 1994). Folch-Lyon and Trost (1981) noted that the stimulating nature of the focus group discussion yielded more and richer information than individual interviews with the same number of participants. The open and flexible nature of the focus groups allows intensive exploration of opinions, feelings, attitudes and behaviours (Murphy, et al., 1992). Similarly, Blumer (1969; p41) noted the importance of interviewing a select group of participants, "...who are acute observers and who are well informed...brought together as a discussion and resource group, is more valuable many times over than any representative sample" (cited in Fontana and Frey, 1994; p365). Basch (1987) reported that ascertaining the research interpretations of the participants is utilised infrequently but recognised that "...these individuals are in a unique and relevant position to help clarify the meaning and implications of observed findings" (Basch, 1987; p437). Likewise, Baker (1994) suggested that the focus group provides the researcher with an opportunity to talk directly to the participants in order to clarify, elaborate and better understand ideas and issues.

In the case of the present study the focus group was used to present some of the preliminary findings of Study 1 to the participants who were then encouraged to engaged in open dialogue and, offer further interpretations or explanations. In addition the process encouraged the group to consider possible solutions to the issues raised.

A certain familiarisation with group discussion had been previously encouraged by the pre-existence the NW HoEW forum. During their tenure as HoEW within the North West, the group members had regularly come together to share issues and ideas. The group met on a bi-monthly basis with formal agendas. Members of the group took turns in hosting the meeting at their respective clubs. Thus, the presence of 'participant behaviour adjustment' (i.e., where participants adjust their behaviour in

relation to their impressions of others, their own personal needs and history) often cited as a weakness of focus group research (Carey and Smith, 1994) was limited. The familiarity of the group with the researcher had also been enhanced by the regular presence of the researcher at these meetings (refer to points 1-4 in Table 3.1).

The design, construction, execution and analysis of the focus group utilised elements of Basch's (1987; p418) phenomenological approach to focus groups. This approach concerned the "...everyday knowledge from the shared perceptions of the particular respondent subgroups" (refer to Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. A phenomenological approach to focus groups (adapted from Basch, 1987; p419-421)

Primary Use	To see the world as respondents... or opinion leaders see it
1. Nature and extent of group interaction and interaction between moderator and group members	High level of group interaction is desirable; intent is to determine degree of intersubjectivity regarding various topics, thus examining the ways in which group members relate to each other provides insights about the extent to which their experiences are shared; moderator is actively involved in discourse in an attempt to affiliate with the group so s/he can truly see the world from their (our) perspective.
2. Requirement that group members be homogenous with respect to psychological, social and demographic characteristics	Homogeneity is important since intersubjectivity is unlikely to emerge if group members are dissimilar. Homogeneity with respect to some factors, such as ability level and social status, may promote higher levels of group interactions.
3. Importance of moderator's interviewing technique	Highly ritualised interviewing technique does not seem appropriate; though maintaining rapport with respondents and a comfortable atmosphere is important.
4. Expertise required by moderator	Ability to identify with group members is important; knowledge and skills of group dynamics are desirable.
5. Rationale for analysis and reporting results	Emphasis is placed on extensive verbatim quotes from group members. Objective is to communicate respondents' perspective in their own words.

3.2.1 Construction of the Focus Group Schedule

The function of the focus group was to enable the participants to explore, share, clarify, query and develop the researcher's interpretations of Study 1. The dominant themes emerging from Study 1 were further assessed and reviewed through a number of peer triangulation meetings by the researcher and two experienced colleagues. These analysis meetings followed a similar rubric to those conducted in Study 1. The interaction differed however, as the aim was to use the results from Study 1 as a baseline for the specific context of the focus group. The development and refinement of this process are evidenced in Appendix C. Six specific slides were constructed using a PowerPoint presentation package. It was evident from Study 1 that although

the role of the HoEW was extremely diverse and dynamic, it appeared that the extent and nature of their working practice was dependent on a number of pertinent themes. These themes included the nature and extent of the HoEWs' *interpersonal relationships* both internal (e.g., Academy Director, coaches) and external (e.g., school, parents) to the club and Academy. In addition the working practice of the HoEWs necessitated the utilisation of subtle *operational* techniques in order to alleviate certain elements of *strategic* frustration. The three generic themes were utilised as a consistent reference throughout the process (see Table 3.2). The group were guided towards exploring the rationale (e.g., behavioural, environmental, cultural) behind their current working practices, and to explore and identify potential mechanisms to enhance their own (and others) working practice. Table 3.2 outlines the content, flow and approximate timings of the focus group.

Table 3.2. Content, direction and timing of the focus group.

Introduction Purpose of focus group, importance of inclusive contribution, confidentiality. Emphasise personal and professional experiences of working practice. Ultimately, move towards identifying ways forward.	5-10 min.
Slide 1 <u>Football and education experiences</u> Exploration of football and educational experiences. Positive and negative experiences, actuality versus ideal, operational and strategic working practices. Identify ways forward.	15min.
Slide 2 <u>Internal club factors</u> Explore staff relationships (e.g., management, academy director, coaches). Positive and negative experiences, actuality versus ideal, operational and strategic working practices. Identify ways forward.	15min.
Slide 3 <u>School/FE/Educational providers</u> Explore relationships with School/FE/Educational providers. Positive and negative experiences, actuality versus ideal, operational and strategic working practices. Identify ways forward.	15min.
Slide 4 <u>Relationships with the players</u> Explore how relationships with staff, providers and parents influence their relationship with the players. Strategic and operational working practices were implicit.	15min.
Slide 5 <u>Empowerment and nature of role</u> Explore the HoEWs' securities and/or insecurities in their working practice. Strategic and operational working practices were inherent. Identify ways forward.	15min.
Slide 6 <u>Future training and developments</u> Identify and rationalise key areas for training and development for HoEWs, players and club staff in order to enhance current working practice and/or environment. Strategic and operational working practices were implicit.	15min.
Response and Summary Enable clarification and response.	10 min.

3.2.2 Focus Group Logistics

All five participants were informed of the focus group and invited to attend The Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences, Liverpool John Moores University

on the 12th December, 2000. Murphy et al. (1992; p37) recommended that, "In order to provide meaningful and useful data the focus group setting must promote freedom of expression and reduce inhibitions. Participants need to feel comfortable enough to share personal experiences openly and honestly, with no threat of judgement or disapproval." Although at this juncture, Participant 2 was replaced by his successor, it was thought that all of the above factors were employed to enhance the existing group dynamic. The group then comprised of four participants who had engaged in Study 1, plus participant two's successor¹.

Due to the professional background of the five individuals, the researcher went to great lengths to ensure that the focus group event would take place in an appropriate environment. A University meeting room was prepared and dedicated to the focus group for the whole day. The participants were welcomed with tea, coffee and biscuits and directed to their seats. The five participants were situated around a 2-metre square table with the researcher at the head of the table. Due to the existing relationship within the group (and between the group and the researcher) a prior seating plan was deemed inappropriate². Each PowerPoint slide was projected onto a screen situated behind the researcher, in full view of all participants. In addition participants were handed hard copies of the slides with allocated space for notes. An experienced qualitative researcher and colleague, who had previously engaged in the research process, acted as a rapporteur (i.e., note taker) throughout the proceedings. This enabled the researcher to concentrate on the script whilst simultaneously being sensitive to the evolving group discussion and interaction (Frey and Fontana, 1995). The verbal content of the focus group was recorded with audio-tape and video-tape to assist analysis.

3.2.3 Role of the Facilitator (researcher)

Murphy, et al. (1992) suggested that it is the skill, perceptiveness and sensitivity of the facilitator that ultimately determines the depth and relevance of the findings obtained. Throughout the focus group the facilitator must be flexible, objective, empathic, persuasive and a good listener (Fontana and Frey, 1994). The facilitator

¹ Prior to this juncture Participant 2, initially a temporary and part-time appointment, had been replaced by a new full-time HoEW. The new HoEW agreed to continue as a participant within the research. His background details are provided in Appendix D. For the purpose of the research he will be referred to as Participant 2a.

² In the highly competitive, defensive and sceptical world of professional football it is extremely unusual, yet inspiring, to witness such trust, friendship, openness and honesty between individuals associated with directly competing clubs.

must enable all participants to have an opportunity to respond, react to, and raise pertinent issues, in order to create a dynamic “synergistic” effect (i.e., the group dynamic and interaction is more valuable than the individual) (see Baker, 1994). In this instance the researcher adopted a relaxed and flexible questioning approach, similar to the tenets of Study 1 (Dale, 1996), in order encourage dialogue and collective interaction. In addition the facilitator tried to prevent particular individuals from ‘hogging’ the proceedings, whilst encouraging ‘less active’ participants to engage in the dialogue.

3.3 Analysis

The content of the focus group was typed verbatim and utilised in conjunction with the summary notes from both the researcher and the rapporteur, to provide a summary of feedback to the participants within a week of the focus group event taking place (see Appendix E). Commentators have reported that methods of focus group data analysis were not well developed (Carey and Smith, 1994) and that various obstacles such as, the limited availability of reliable and valid instruments to measure the constructs of interest within the focus group existed (Basch, 1987). Carey and Smith (1994) also noted that researchers often fail to recognise the impact and context of the *group* setting within their data. Moreover, researchers who do not address the impact of the group setting may incompletely or inappropriately analyse their data (Carey and Smith, 1994). In this instance the practitioners were provided with a summary of the session with a view to re-visiting this summary at a later date (see Study 2, Part II). This was deemed appropriate in order to stimulate the potential change strategies and action research process that the practitioners were to engage in during Part II of Study 2 (see Basch, 1987). In an attempt to capture the context of the practitioners’ responses, the summary notes, resulting from the interaction between the researcher and the rapporteur (see Appendix E), were utilised to guide the synthesis of verbatim citations from the session (see Lederman, 1990). The interaction between the researcher and the rapporteur utilised the principles of grounded theory witnessed in Study 1 (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Verbatim citations (i.e., the actual language of the practitioners³) helped to illustrate the reactions, motivations and feelings of the group (Lederman, 1990; Kitzinger, 1994). This

³ To ensure confidentiality and professional integrity participant numbers utilised in Study 1 are replaced with pseudonyms to represent the practitioners throughout Study 2 and Study 3 (see p116 for numerical to pseudonym transfer).

ensured that the contextualised focus group summary provided a greater sense of the nature and flavour of the discussion, in addition to the information provided by the group (Lederman, 1990).

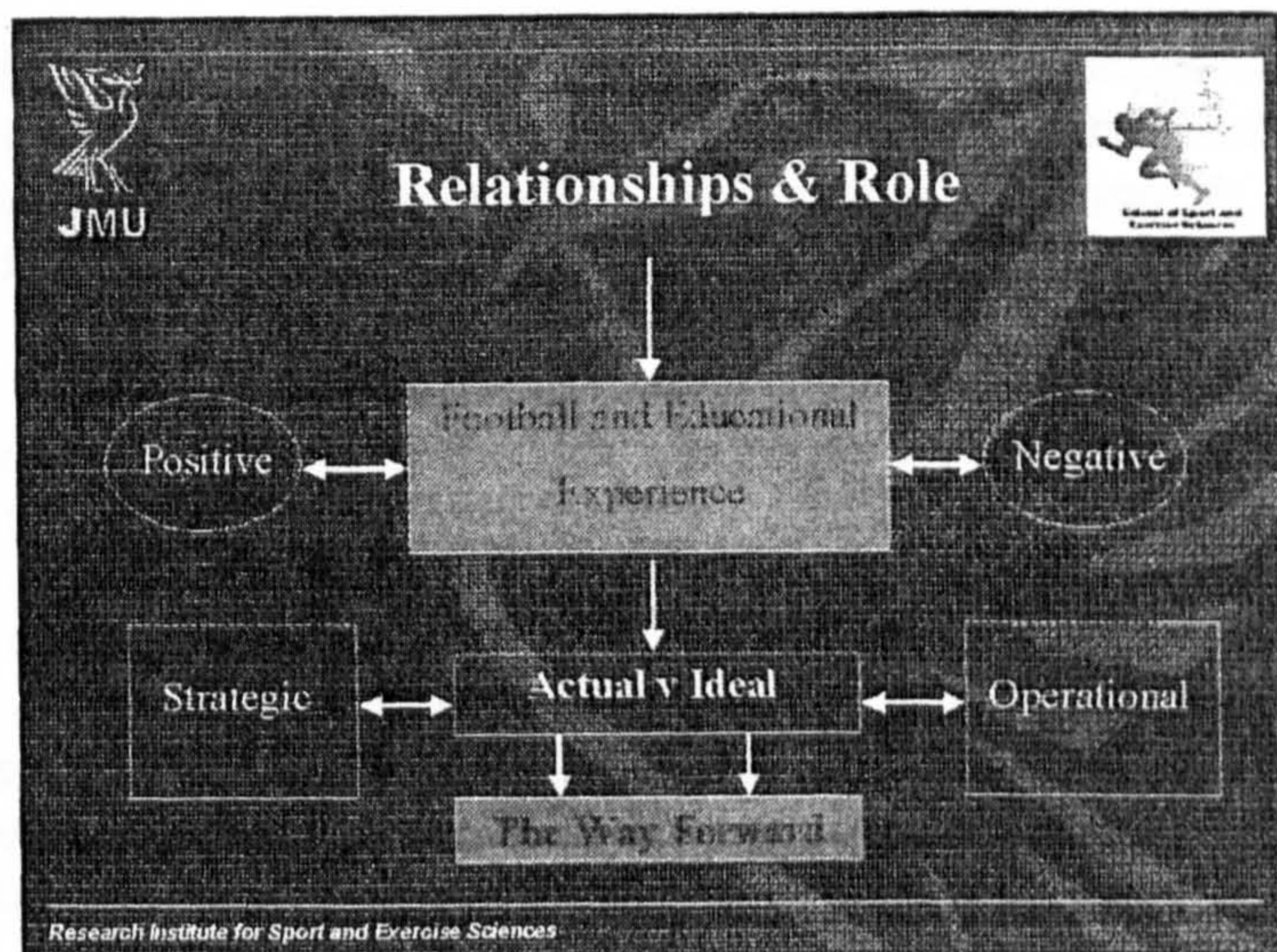
In order to allow the reader a greater understanding of the research process, and facilitate the synthesis of both Part I and Part II of the present study, the pertinent issues relating to both the group as a whole (i.e., the five north west HoEWs), and issues peculiar to each HoEW have been identified in **bold type set**. These issues are further discussed in the summary of both Part I and Part II at the end of this phase of results. Moreover, both these generic (i.e., group) and specific (i.e., to individual HoEWs) issues are explored further in Study 3.

Results - Study 2, Part I

North West Heads of Education and Welfare Focus Group, 12th December 2000

In attendance: Mr John Grayson (Participant 1), Mr Paul Harrison (Participant 2a), Mr Billy Drisdale (Participant 3), Mr Derek Traynor (Participant 4), Mr Frank O'Hare (Participant 5), Mr David Richardson (facilitator) Dr David Gilbourne (rapporteur), Mr Martin Littlewood (video)

Slide 1



Aims: To explore the football and educational background/experience of the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and identify how this has affected their ability to carry out the role. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Summation and Context of Response:

The HoEWs expressed a need for a football background in order to understand the existing football culture. It was perceived that this football background aided acceptance. Initially, this background was utilised primarily as a *vehicle* to establish credibility during the early stages of the role. However, it was suggested that this should not preclude others, *without* a football background from doing the job.

*BD: Well, I think I can speak for everybody in this room, I think the person who goes in to this role, **yes has an educational background, but that everybody has a football background as well.** I think you need to have that so you know what makes football people tick. Because not only, will **that help you to understand them, but in the future, more importantly, it might help you to change the culture of the football club.***

JG: I think it helps you to cope, in the short term, with the way they [football club people] operate and the way they think.

*PH: I think there's also a need to be accepted, if you like. A football background, so to speak, lends an ability for other people within the club to accept you. **Especially if you're going to try and change things, I think that that's important. Particularly where the coaches are concerned.***

DT: *I think that that credibility helps you but I'm not sure, deep down, whether that would preclude people, who don't have a football background, being able to establish some sort of role within the club. By the very fact that they will have other skills and experiences. And depending on what the culture is within each club they may be able to impact on that. So I'm not sure about that.*

It was expressed that an understanding of the coach's role helped broker relationships and enabled the coaches to *understand* the remit of the HoEW. Operational tendencies were evident in establishing credibility (e.g., engaging with boys and the coaches in order to promote openness).

BD: *...I think John's word cope is one we use a lot. And we have to work on ourselves because we do get pigged off at times. Because we get what we think is the short end of the stick sometimes. Our area where we're actually mixing with the seniors as well as the Academy players, we have to work slowly on. Not re-educating the coaches, but changing their thoughts on what's going on, yet, not stepping on their toes, because I understand where they are coming from. If I was to go in and just make a blunt statement or demands then I'd soon get told where to go. So you have to do it in a round about way sometimes.*

It was perceived that a football background was not necessary when establishing credibility with the boys. The issue was more pertinent to establishing credibility and acceptance with existing staff.

JG: *To have not played to a particularly high level would mean that your acceptance by the staff would be a bit of a problem. I don't think [acceptance], by the boys, it would be a problem. They will accept you for what you are and they are happy to do so. Some of the coaches who are working with the full-time scholars have played at a very high level, but the young lads won't even remember them. And one or two of them are not actually fit enough to take part. It isn't as if by playing and being out there with the boys that that impresses the boys, it's reputation. I think the young lads are more than happy to take you as you are...*

BD: *I think one of the first positives that I took from Derek, was when he said he makes a point of going out with the scholars at least once a week. It is a positive in my mind because you're out there whilst they are doing their job. You can see things, just by picking up balls, just by being around. You might end up talking to one or two of the lads. And you enjoy it. You can see the ones who are struggling whilst you're out there.*

JG: *It's the closeness.*

BD: *Yeah.*

DT: *I would think it comes back to how you define your role. I would say that being able to go out gives you an opportunity to see them in a different environment and that can only help you in trying to understand them. And I've seen it happen with some of the tutors who work with the boys, male and female. They see them in a classroom environment, as I do, and they see things that are useful for their relationship. But if you can't go on the field with them, then that doesn't necessarily preclude you from doing the job in an ideal way. It's just another environment that we get access to them... It helps me more as a coping mechanism to establish credibility early, rather than necessarily having an impact on the job. That's why I think anybody can do this job. I think the boys generally, as John said, will respect you for what you do. The staff don't, the adults don't. You have to earn respect, whatever that is. But I think kids generally give it unconditionally, but if you don't treat them properly you'll lose their respect. But I think adults want to see something. They want to see where you're coming from.*

JG: *It's a false premise. I thought that on arrival, even though having worked part-time there I was still conscious of having to 'earn my spurs' so to speak, and I've always looked at it that way, rightly or wrongly... as Derek said, you start off with the lads on the level, on zero but with the staff you start off below that and you're working hard to get to naught. I'm conscious that you have to try that little bit harder, and unfortunately not always be yourself.*

It was evident that the educational background and experience provided essential 'craft' skills that equipped the HoEWs with the necessary skills to cope with, and manage children and youths. The HoEWs had an ability to offer solutions to day to day problems (i.e., fire-fighting skills, organisational skills) and an understanding of ethics and disclosure.

DT: *I think, the educational experience, I think just being exposed to the kids, the formal qualification hasn't helped as such. I think it's more the teaching experience and being in and around kids has been a major factor. I don't know, I think some people would see that as being a pre-requisite, I don't know.*

PH: *I think the ability to organize and the ability to work with kids. I think that undoubtedly helps you. I agree with Derek, I don't think the qualification in truth means a great deal in your ability to do the job. I think it's the other things that come with it, the working with groups, the ability to solve problems on the spot, dealing with the instant problems, dealing with young boys, that some people will undoubtedly feel uncomfortable with, possibly on a one to one. And then what do you do with that information once you've got it, because that's the frightening thing for most.*

FO: *I think in terms of education, you're probably unlikely to come across a situation, even in a football club and even from a welfare perspective, that you've come across before. But you'll have the experience from teaching particularly if you've been involved in a*

pastoral role within teaching. And if they come to you with a curriculum problem, because you've been in teaching, you know how the system works. Dealing with teachers and the system, so from that perspective it's useful. At the end of the day once you work in that room you've got to get on with it.

It was perceived that understanding what makes people tick on both sides (i.e., football and education) was helpful in carrying out the role, although it was agreed that an *ideal* was difficult to isolate.

In order to facilitate change, a change of current 'attitudes' would be the preferred ideal (e.g., embrace educational/intelligence ideals, new ideas and working practices).

BD: *It helps whether it's important or not. The experience you have whether it be in education or in football, it helps you understand and know what makes people tick. If you know what makes people tick then you can get into both sets of people. And I think because of the experience you feel comfortable in areas where I know some of the coaches won't feel comfortable. So I know I can deal with youngsters problems because I'm not fearful, because I got over twenty years of experience.*

DT: *I honestly don't think you can create an ideal template for the role. I mean I've got a coaching background and a teaching background. I've played football at reasonably high level but I know that I've come across ex-players and or tutors that could do my job better, or at least as well as me but their profile is completely different.*

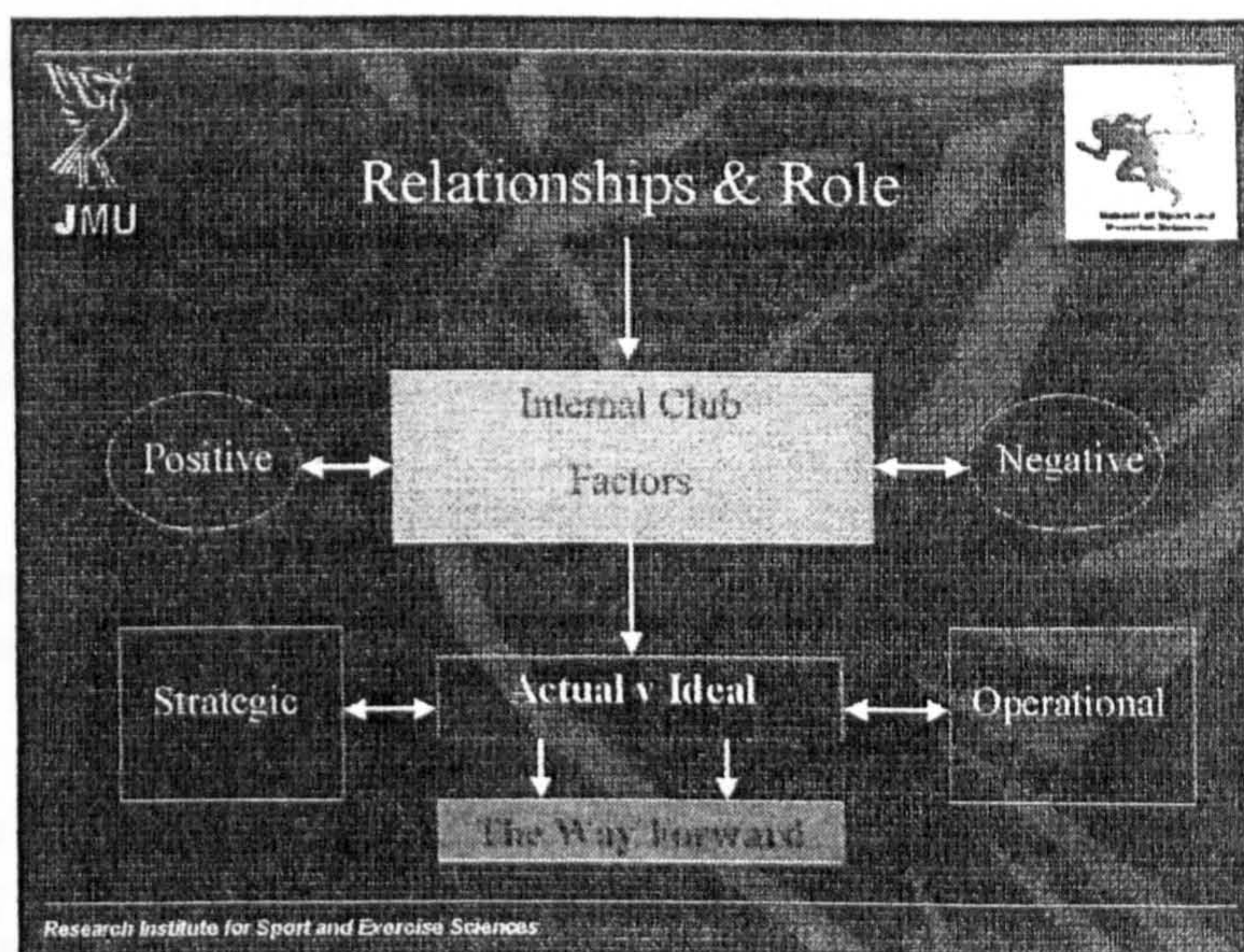
PH: *I think to a degree, and I can't speak for clubs that aren't in the room, but I'm sure to a degree that they are quite different in make-up and how they deal with different things. In the short time that I've been in the game, I've come across a number of different working environments and it didn't take me long to discover that it was unique. Totally different to education. And I find to a greater degree that there are closed minds and a lack of desire to accept new ideas.*

JG: *One word comes to mind for me when we talk about an ideal, and that's openness.*

PH: *No question, closed minds and a lack of desire to want to facilitate change or sometimes even to recognize change... you can't change anything unless you can change attitude.*

JG: *You have to recognize that there is a need to change.*

PH: *...a very good friend of mine who's a very good coach, said that the biggest problem with football is fear. People spend that much time looking over their shoulder that whenever they see a new man walk through the door, they see him as a threat rather than an opportunity. And that's part of the attitude change.*



Aims: To explore relationships that exist between the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and internal club staff (e.g., management, academy director, coaches) and identify how this has affected their ability to carry out the role. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Summation and Context of Response:

Having *access* to numerous levels of the club (e.g., personnel, players and coaches) gives rise to the perception of *others* being threatened by the existence of the HoEW. It was suggested that sometimes information related to the players may not be forthcoming (e.g., players being released on loan without the HoEW being informed) which has inevitable educational consequences for the player. This view was expressed as a deficient awareness and/or knowledge concerning the role of the HoEW, by other segments (or individuals) within the club, rather than a lack of professionalism.

As the role of the HoEW expands and develops (i.e., being perceived to touch on other peoples' patch), then certain staff can appear threatened, uncertain or insecure.

DT: Well, I think in my particular case, I think I'm quite unique, because I get to see almost everything that goes on in the club. Almost at every level which I don't think other members of staff necessarily have access to, and there's massive implications for that. Because again, because you get to go into certain situations you can be seen as a threat to people because you've got access to certain people. And having access to people almost automatically means that they think you've got influence and that you're perhaps going to change things. And people get very nervous of that. I think I'm beginning to, only now and you'd think that this would have happened straight away, but only now two or three years into the job, it's only just beginning to creep up on me. The realisation that people see me as a threat in some areas, where I've just been going about things quite happily. I'm starting to get that feeling now because I have that access.

BD: *I don't think the senior staff know how many areas that I touch on. One of my gripes is that I don't know something that has happened. A boy might be 19 or 20 but I still have a responsibility to him but because he's moved on to the reserves or first team, but suddenly something happens, say he goes on loan somewhere. I find it out from a newspaper! It's not ignorance, it's just that they've never thought, it might be his accommodation or his schooling.*

PH: *I agree with Billy on that one. That's my biggest bugbear. I agree that they don't keep information away from you on purpose, it just happens that way. Sometimes the length of time it comes to you...*

JG: *It doesn't occur to them. Why should I tell Billy Drisdale? What's it got to do with him? But it comes back to what you said earlier, Billy, that they [coaches] don't have an understanding of our role. And it's difficult to criticize them for not letting you know. If they [coaches] had a wider perception of what was going on, and in particular our role in that, then maybe they would communicate.*

DT: *Funnily enough, that happened to me once. And when I thought about it I was a bit disappointed because the boy had failed to tell me. So I felt it was my responsibility as well that I hadn't established a relationship with the boy so that he could pick the phone up and tell me.*

BD: *No, no, I don't think so Derek. I think we're going to delude ourselves if we think that we can have that sort of relationship with all the boys. Because, I think that we're in the game to mother them through the first few months depending on how successful they are. But the more successful they are, it's not that they don't talk to you or anything, it's just that they don't need you. Some boys are different from others, but as they become more successful and therefore 'growing up' in the club, they don't need you. We're needed until we're not needed and when we're not needed it's kind of, end of story...*

FO: *Well I was just going to mention, just digressing slightly. Certainly I find resentment from people as you take on responsibility. It's not there all the time but it comes in waves. Firstly if you're seen to tread on their patch. There's a culture of insecurity, and yes I feel more secure. And because of our organizational skills we can get things done, but most of them can't. I mean I look at some of the coaches and think, "Gosh he's busy." And an hour later I see he's only written four lines! And then you have to correct it! I mean on the field they're [coaches] great but in any organizational capacity then, you know... You were bloody shoddy on that! Then they take it as a criticism. So in many ways you go the other way and avoid the tracksuit role so you can integrate as a team. Because it is a team.*

Conflict was expressed over what is 'best' for the player (i.e., between the coach and the HoEW).

Operational mechanisms were utilised in order to promote good practice. The key relationships here included the coaches and players. The young players' reliance on the HoEW appeared to diminish as the players' progressed through the Academy. It was evident that players were utilised as mediators (sometimes) keeping the HoEW informed of other segments of the club.

It was identified that there were alternative mechanisms that should be explored in order to establish more strategic change and/or influence culture. The Academy Director was identified as the key individual (or gatekeeper) in connecting/influencing people from isolated pockets within the club.

JG: One of the things that gets in the way of the openness and I've put this to one of my colleagues you know, is this the best for the club? They have to see if this is the best thing for the club. We have to be driven by what is best for the scholars and ultimately, that will become what is best for the club. They don't think enough about these players as people. And it sounds like an absolute hammering but...

DR: How do you achieve that?

JG: I think there's only one way as with any of this. The only way I'm going to affect anything in our club is to do it, and hope that others will be influenced by the way that I treat the boys. The openness and the teamwork, it's not about me it's about what's best for them. And I just hope that they can pick up off that. I see that as the only way.

BD: We've all got to learn by experience, including the coaches. If a player is not doing the business they ignore them or replace them. That's how it's done in football. They lose interest.

DT: I think that John's right there in terms of hoping you can rub off on others, but I see that as very much an operational thing. They may look at your day-to-day practice that may bring something new. But my problem is that I feel those operational demands in a sense impinge on the strategic way that you can influence the culture. John's right that that is one way of doing things but it's not the only way.

JG: It's a slower way probably.

DT: Yeah, it's a slower way but what I struggle with is that I need support not necessarily within the club, but possibly external to the club, of strategic ways of influencing culture, in a small organization. As far as I can see there is not an awful lot wrong. There's bits missing but the way to fill those gaps is to find techniques to try and get to people and influence them. Now I'm relying on my own individual means and experiences but I'm sure there's a lot more out there. Essentially, getting people around the table, this is what I think this is what you think, how can we move that forward? Certainly in our Academy and talking to other people, communication between key staff. Communication in Academies, especially in our Academy, is a dead issue. They're all in these little pockets getting on with their own job.

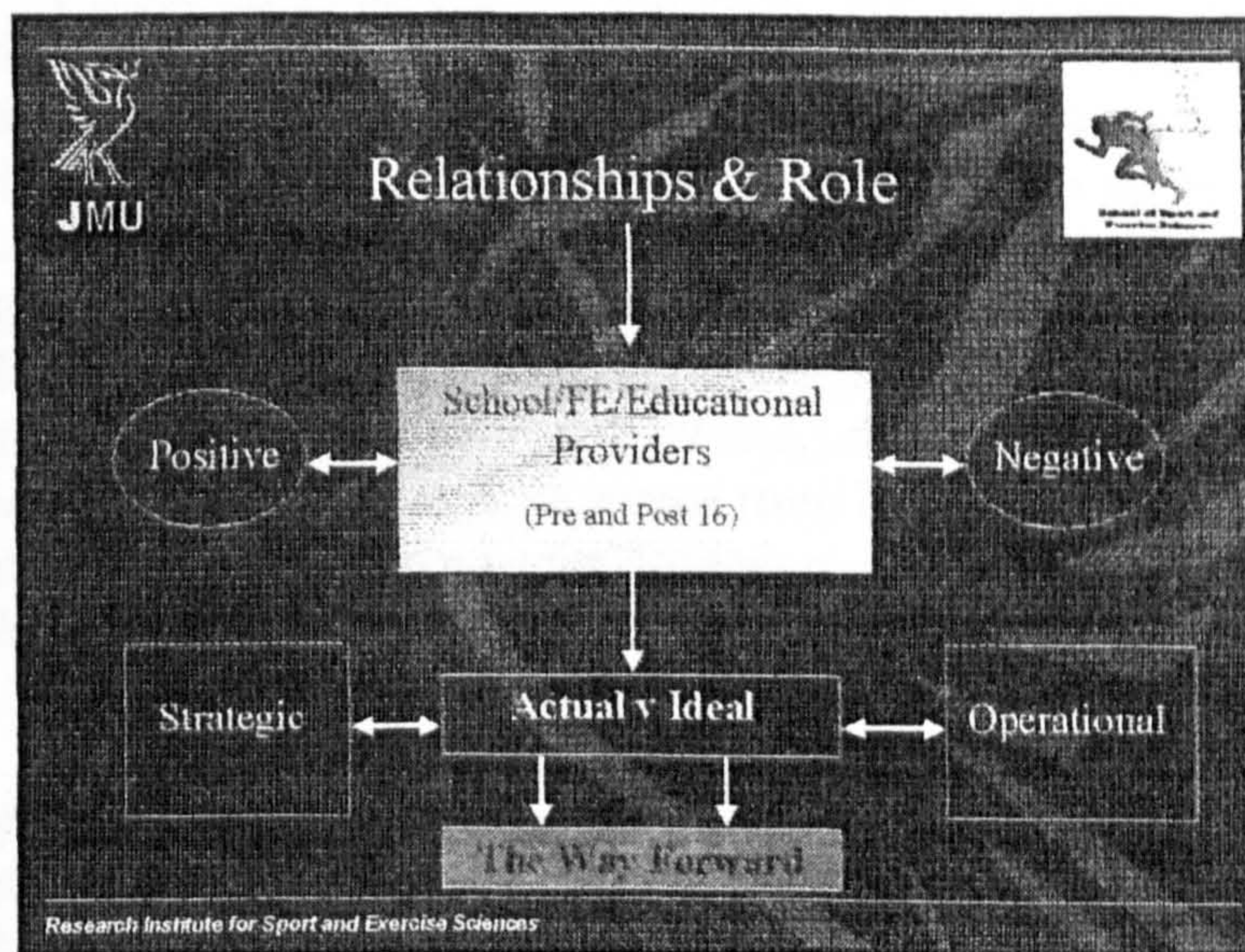
DR: Moving on from that who do you see as the key staff to move on from that?

DT: Well I think the key staff are myself and the Academy Director. I think those two people are the catalyst around how that can happen. But in the first instance you may have to influence the Academy Director to go along with some of your ideas.

FO: I would go along with that.

JG: Definitely.

DT: If that doesn't work, then you've got to go back to what John said. Perhaps the influence I can have is to work with an individual coach. He's responsible for a group of 15 or 16 players, and he can spread the word if you like. So if I can work with him more he can actually spread that influence to the players. I can influence some players. Sometimes I think that some of these issues take me away from the players and sometimes I think that's wrong and perhaps I need to spend more time with the players again. But perhaps it may accelerate the process if we work with coaches more because they are working directly with the boys. And you could probably reach more boys.



Aims: To explore relationships that exist between the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and schools/FE/Educational providers and identify how this has affected their ability to carry out the role. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Summation of Context and Response:

The general consensus was that the educational aspect of the role was one of the *easier* aspects of the role in terms of implementation (operational), control and influence (strategic).

There was universal concern that the FFE and VTS funding formula may not be in the best interests of the players. The HoEWs were striving for a more *flexible* approach to the educational provision, based on the needs of the boy rather than the funding criteria (needs) of the FFE and VTS.

DT: *I would say myself that this [education] is the easiest part of the job. I don't really spend that much time on it now. Strategically, you're looking at how you can improve the provision for your boys with new initiatives, new relationships etc. Operationally, it's just about co-ordinating the implementation of the tutors on a day-to-day level. I'd say I've got far more problems in other areas, you know say the welfare areas than the education.*

BD: *We're the first people that have really dealt with education at the club. Before I came in to do a youth development role, I thought that was my job. And it was in tatters, no matter what the FA say or the FFE and no matter what the provider for Wigan say, who are making money for old rope! The reason it was in tatters was that the FFE, quite rightly, wanted to look after the young YTS players and manage the education and they managed to get a day off on a Thursday. But it was, it was a day off, the coaches didn't come in on a Thursday. So they [the coaches] didn't have anything to do with it. So if a kid missed college they just got fined. So when we came in we've stood on their toes.*

FO: *I think all situations are different. We've all got different terms, but I think the biggest move that has made it a bit easier for us is the provision of half days as opposed to a single day. Because it made the provision of education easier and it pushed education up in the order of things. I think if we were trying to organize one whole day of education we might struggle. I agree with Derek that it's [education] certainly not a problem area for me. The relationship I have with the college is excellent. I certainly think that the third year situation has brought it's problems but that seems to have sorted itself out. And I still don't like this magical number 18, you know for funding purposes and some interference from the FFE/VTs...*

PH: *Unquestionably, my biggest problem is with the FFE/VTs. The idea of the scholarship is to provide every player that comes to you with an individual education package that is appropriate to their needs. I have found myself...*

BD: *I'm just waiting for Gracie [JG] to join you. I can see him winding up now...*

PH: *I personally... is that the FFE want to push the boys to do things that they feel are easier for them to do logistically, and more importantly on a financial basis because they have a package to run to. I've found myself arguing with them over the appropriate provision.*

JG: *If they just said to you, you have this much money. This is the maximum amount of money we will pay. Fair enough, if it costs more, you know what the cost is going to be to the club. But it's so devious, and I'm only now after two and half years realizing that they want the lads to do certain courses. Because they attract funding that goes into the central fund, which they then manipulate as and how they feel. For example, our lads are not, on block, going to do the coaching certificate this year. It's too difficult for them. If they're not interested, they're not interested and I don't think that it should be forced upon them. But because some of them are doing courses which are not considered to be within that list, they're considered to be non-fundable. But if they do the coaching NVQ we can get funding for that. Because it's an NVQ it's on the list and then the funding they then use. So they don't want the funding so that it costs us any less. They [FFE and VTs] want the funding so it increases their pot in the middle of the table so that they can then manage that money. I don't think that they are desperately concerned with our boys and what's best for the individual.*

DR: *The general consensus appears to be that this is an easier part of the job to carry out than the other areas. Is there any particular reason why that is?*

PH: *Well, we've got experience with these matters [education].*

BD: *And nobody else wants to deal with it [education]. As long as it doesn't step on the toes of the football. Now, I think that the FFE have to*

change their thoughts a little bit. Our job is to produce a young man to play for the first team. We're trying to produce them in a different way to which its been done before. We're trying to help I suppose. So the FFE have to be flexible, especially with the funding. I can't believe we're talking about funding when everyone of our players is a millionaire. If we could get just a fifth of a percent of all players who make millionaire status for our education programme. I can't believe that they haven't got enough money. Then all we would require is someone to monitor us. I'd rather have Peter [Cates] doing it. But somebody being auditors or monitors for us, just to make sure that we are trying our best for each individual boy. And whether that's a boy who's gone off to play on the continent or whether it's a boy who's playing under 19's football.

FO: My fear is that the funding issue is far more complex than what the FFE/VTs actually wants it to be. The problems of funding by the government through these local government councils, because I had experience of this at the college where there was a squeeze on the amount of money made available.

BD: But relatively speaking the clubs of the Premier league should be able to fund us. Bill Burley [manager of Club 5] should realize that if you had a pot of money you would be able to help the boys' football development, because you would be able to work them through a more flexible programme.

It was apparent that the educational package was viewed as an important and integral part of the scholarship programme by (the majority of) parents. There was an appreciation that elements of education and football were slowly merging together as the nature and demands of the game evolve (i.e., both coach and player awareness). The HoEWs suggested that the *holistic development* of players was also beginning to be viewed as *critical* by club managers. The development of well-rounded, balanced and motivated individuals would ultimately produce better players (i.e., integrating football and education).

There appeared to be little 'role conflict' concerning the educational remit of the HoEW within the club. Occasional tensions arose but generally it was not a job that anyone else (i.e., within the club) wanted. Consequently, the group stressed that it was important to capitalise on the strategic opportunities that this presented in order to move the educational issues forward.

DT: I think it's changed more so in the past two or three years. There's been a sea change. If you talk to people in the game they can sense that the game is changing quickly, and I think that in some areas it's not changing for the better but in some it is. Particularly in looking after youngsters it is. I think we've got strategic opportunities to have a voice, be it through the Premier League, the PFA, through the FA, FFE/VTs but I think all of us touch upon those discussions and I think that changes will take place.

FO: *I think you're right about that. I think that parents now bringing a boy to your club they're more often than not interested in the education of the young boys.*

DT: *It's an expectation.*

PH: *Personally I find that more and more. There's more talk about education amongst prospective signings than ever before. One set of parents viewed it as important as his professional career, and the boy will sign with somebody, whether it be with us or somebody else. We all know anyway from figures from the FFE/VTS is that three years ago after the end of the YTS 43% stayed in the game and something like only 19% left in the game by the time they were 21. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to work out that education is important.*

BD: *But was one of the rocket scientists one of the ones that didn't make it!! [laughter]*

DT: *It's not just about something to fall back on, even now coaches and managers recognize that the well-rounded, better balanced and well motivated individual, with good interests is more likely to be a better player. Certainly the manager at our football club is keen to see pros involved in other interests.*

JG: *I think though that the perceived threat to some of the staff, I just wish that I was 20 years younger doing this job. Because then I would outlive some of these dinosaurs. And I think that that's the only way, in certain situations.*

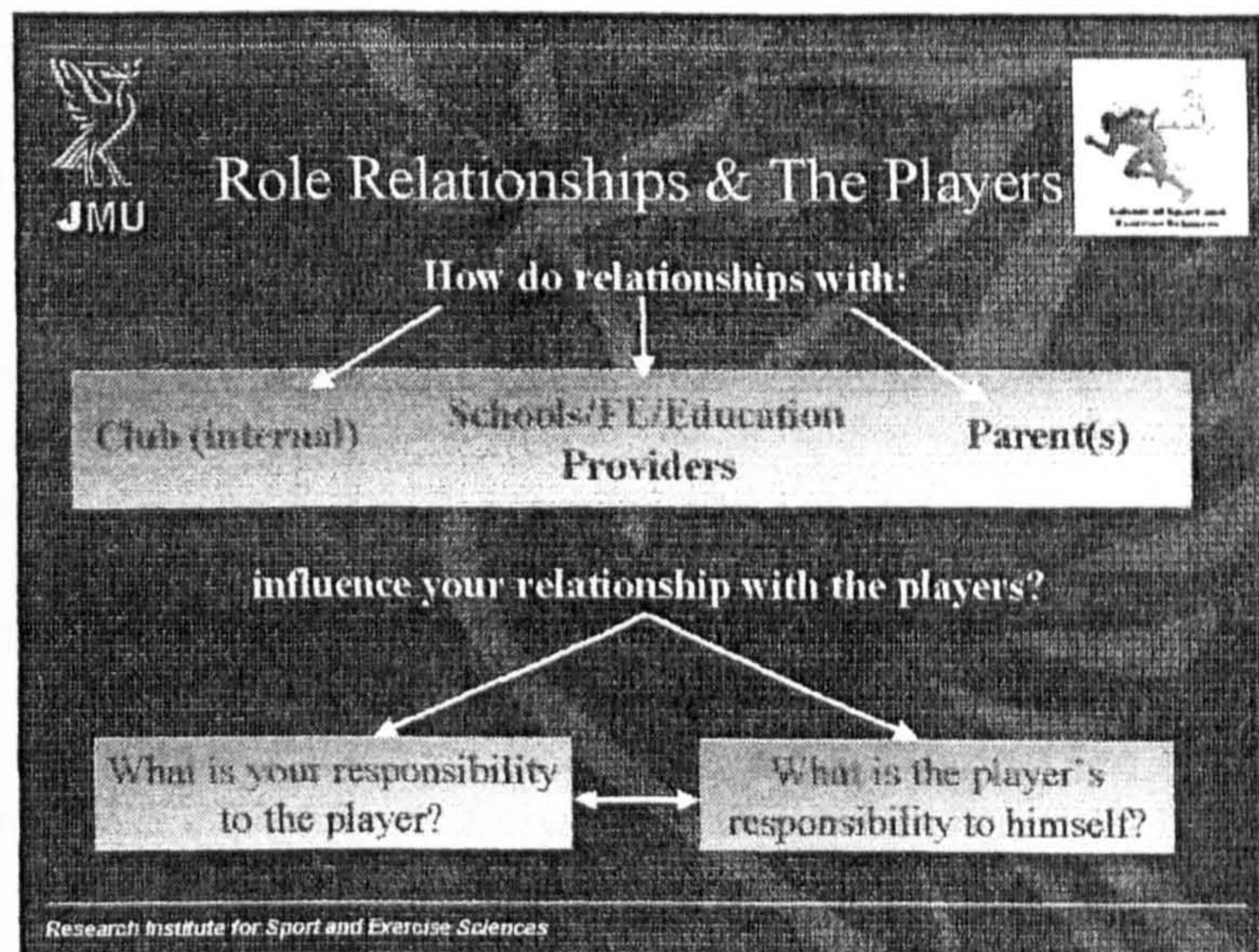
DT: *He's only 23 as well!!! [laughter]*

JG: *But unless you outlive some people, I think seriously, before real change can occur.*

DR: *Is there any distinction between education and elements of overall, personal or football intelligence that Derek alluded to?*

BD: *I think we're trying to sell that to our older kids. We're not trying to sell the 'you have to pass' so that the FFE get their extra bit of funding. We're trying to tell them that it does help them as people to come in and get on with these things. But sometimes they don't want it. We played Reading midweek so we were back late, the coaches wanted to give them a day off but they had college the next day. They won one nil and I told them afterwards, "See you at nine tomorrow morning." We got back at quarter past two to the training ground, so we saw them home safely. I was there [at college] at ten to nine the following day. And I shook everybody's hand that morning. Every one of them made it. I congratulated each one because I thought they were brilliant. They could have easily thought of a skive. Then on Saturday we won 2-1 [under 17's] and 6-1 [under 19's]. So if the coaches try to come back to me with tiredness I can mention that day.*

DT: I think the distinction is not like education in terms of qualifications, and I'm lucky because where I work, the culture is about education. They try to wrap the whole experience together. I think we have moved from having football over here and education over here. The two are coming closer together. Hopefully, over the next five years they'll become closer. I think the pace of change will be different in different clubs because of the cultures, the kind of things that we've been talking about. I mean, John painted a bit of a pessimistic picture before. I mean I can be idealistic about the future but I don't think it's wrong to be idealistic about the future. I think we can be optimistic.



Aim: To identify how the relationships that exist between the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and internal club staff, schools/FE/education providers and parents influence their relationship with the players. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Summation and Context of Response:

It was recognised that the HoEWs need the support of the young player's parents (or guardian) to enable them to influence his educational motivation. There was a need to broker the school/college issue at times when parents may not have a complete grasp of, or commitment to the wider elements of the scholarship programme.

BD: I think with the parents, we're the person who opens the door. An initial point of contact but once it gets more serious with the football side, they want to speak to the people who they perceive are more influential in his career. Some parents stay with us, because they are comfortable with us and they might want to use us at a later date. But certainly they want to get into the coaches. It travels along nicely until there's a problem and then they come back to you.

*JG: I think it splits into two halves. **There are some parents who would be happy for their boys not to be involved in the education at all. And I know that's a bit extreme, but it's because it matters to them, the football, possibly even more than it does to the lad himself.** And also because they get hassle that they are not strong enough to deal with, "Why do I have to go to college?" Well why does he have to go to college? And you get, "Well, to be honest John he doesn't really need to go to college, and we don't want to make him go to college." And **they're [the parents] trying to cop out as much as the boy.** Then you get the other set of parents who may not agree with everything that you want them to do but they will discuss the situation and support you. They are handing over their young son to you. We are the experts and you have our complete support.*

The HoEWs again identified the need for a flexible education programme to suit the needs of each individual player (i.e., educational needs and ultimately football needs). However, moral concerns were expressed with regard to the dangers of perceived favouritism (i.e., reducing the educational workload at appropriate times for boys who were *more likely* to make the grade) or discrimination (i.e., toward the boys *less likely* to make the grade).

Education was perceived as both a recruitment tool but also as '*football's conscience*'. The group nevertheless thought that both of these perceptions could be viewed as strategic opportunities to move the education agenda forward. It was evident that there were both operational and strategic benefits of empowering the boys to take responsibility for their own personal development (i.e., football and education).

JG: I think in some cases you never will [convince defiant parents]. In others you will push and prod to move things in the right direction.

DT: The boys can help as well as the parents. The boys can send the messages so it works the other way around. I think that model's quite good [DT points to the slide], because my relationship with the players again is on an operational level, like on a one to one or little focus groups. Where I know that I can have far more influence over the players strategically if I get to the other three groups. So if I work with the staff, the providers and the parents they can send the messages to the players more than I can on a one to one basis. Then my responsibility to the player, through those groups, and on a one to one level, is to encourage him to take responsibility for himself. So it's about him dealing with all of these issues rather than me being the fountain of all knowledge. So if a player comes to you with a problem then your first response is, "Well how are you going to deal with it?" And then you can assist them in dealing with it. So I'd say that those three groups are the key groups for establishing relationships.

FO: I think in some instances, coming back to what John said, particularly in the third year, but sometimes earlier, you know this window of opportunity to play football is not open for long. The education you can come back in to. Now I've actually sat down with parents and said, "Well yes I agree with you in this particular instance, that this is appropriate. Your boy needs more football time." If he's going to have a chance at all this is quite important. I mean we've had this constant battle with the 3rd year. You know, you've done two years, you've got two 'A' levels. You could have a gap year.

BD: I certainly think that it would be nice. We're saying that they don't have the time to do some of these courses properly. I'm certainly pushing for my boys to have some sort of completion after two years so at least they might want to follow that up. It might be at the end of the 1st year where you can discuss options. It may be a decision they would make having been in the business for a year. Generally, the only people picking the education, in the beginning, are the parents.

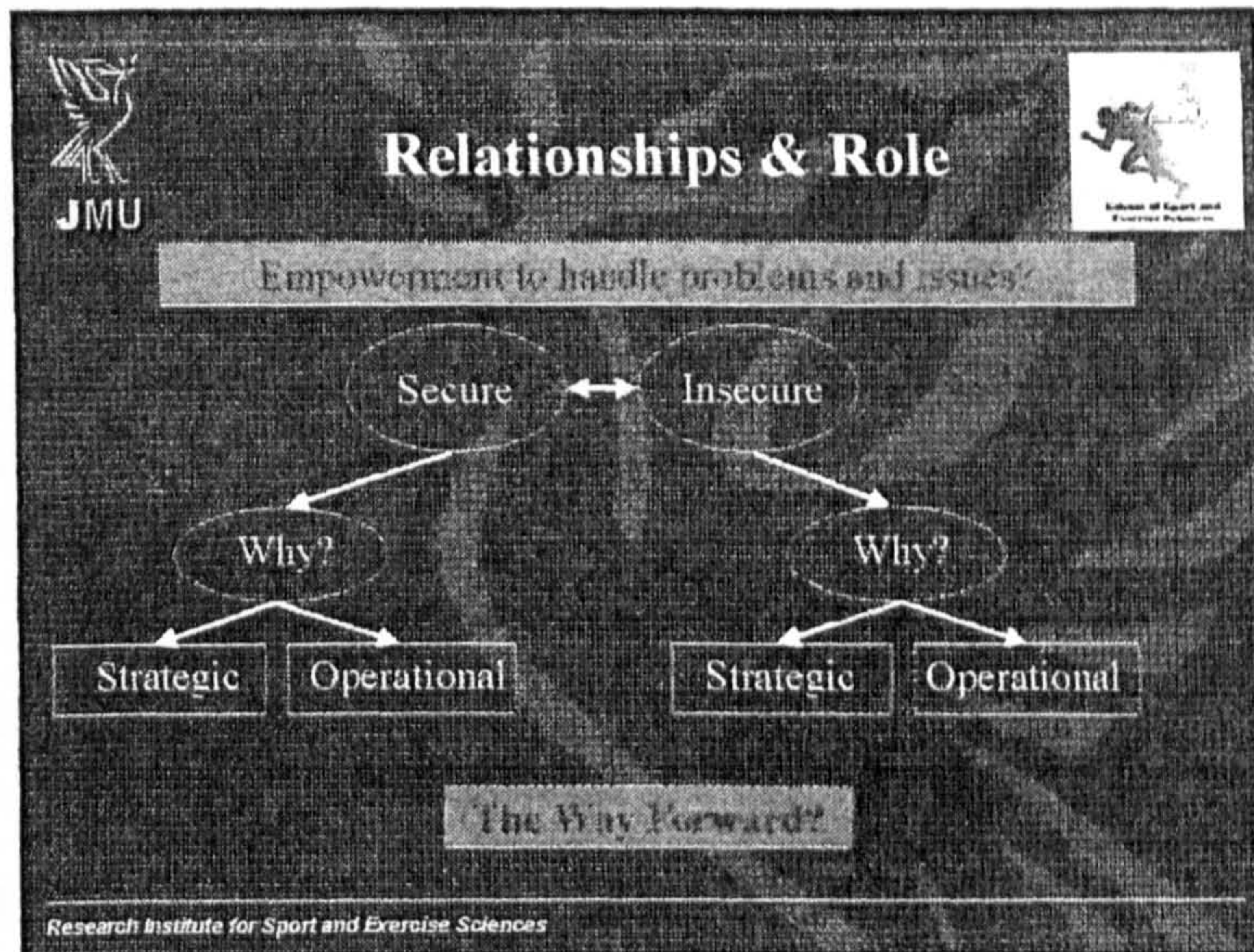
JG: *In an ideal world you would want to assess his football chances and tailor his education around it. So, ok, he has a real chance of making it and lets ensure that he doesn't have a high workload at the appropriate times. I know some of the boys may read into that, "You don't think I'm going to make it." But I think we need to have the flexibility to be able to mix and match individual programmes to meet individual needs. In so far as its still 10 hours [education] in the first two years and whatever we can, dare I say, get away with, in the 3rd year. So in a way it's prescribed isn't it. We don't have creativity and flexibility to apply.*

FO: *I think you've synthesized what I'm trying to say really.*

PH: *The view of the football club, including the Directors, is that they view the education side is very much part of the recruitment at the club. It's so good for recruitment. When we go to sign a lad, I go with the recruitment officer. And the issue of parents saying we don't want our boy to go to college is scotched there and then. We say to them that it's part of your contractual obligation with the club. There is no negotiation. And up to now we've had no problems with that. You will get lads saying that we don't want to go, but you just remind them of their contractual obligation. It comes back to what we were saying as regards the FFE and the providers. I can see them being more of a problem in terms of dictating where the boys go. But the club sees the value of education itself, and within the recruitment. So if we have to put the money up we'll put the money up. I mean on a side issue we were told by the FFE that 'A' levels would cost a damn sight more money than GNVQ's. Now we've got them for £2 cheaper.*

JG: *What they mean is that it's not funded by the TEC's, and it has to be an FFE and VTS grant that pays for 'A' levels.*

DT: *...But the game has changed dramatically now. I still think that really in terms of education in football clubs we're still playing around with it. Education is still seen as football's conscience and we're not going to change it unless we have a radical shake up of what education actually means to a young player. We still see it as, a boy has his football training and then for one and a half days or whatever equivalent, he goes in to a classroom and studies for his qualification. Now my concept of his education is a little bit different from that. And I think the only way we've got is for people like ourselves in clubs. To get our Academy Directors on board and other staff, including the coaches, and through the education forum and our representatives, and let them take the argument to that table. To try and change the situation. I mean we're trying to do it ourselves with individual boys, now that helps that boy at that particular time but it just perpetuates this style of education in clubs. And that needs changing, quite radically. And then we can have the best of both worlds. It's a whole experience of a boy that should be the educational experience not just something that's stuck over here like a couple of 'A' levels or a GNVQ or something like that.*



Aims: To explore and identify particular situations where the HoEW has felt both secure and/or insecure in their working practice. Identification of both strategic and operational processes is implicit. The slide also encourages the group to identify ways forward.

Summation and Context of Response:

It was evident that empowerment of the HoEWs' role (i.e., ability to delegate and implement) was predominantly associated with their perceived 'key' responsibilities (e.g., child protection). This empowerment was also associated with the organisational and delegation skills of the HoEWs learned through teaching experience (i.e., craft skills).

Personal insecurity was apparent in establishing strategic change due to the perceived 'nuisance' value (e.g., change in traditional, comfortable procedures) of the HoEW. Insecurities also emerged from a sense that suggested ideas and/or changes were not being instigated. In addition, the operational demands of the role (i.e., the diversity of the role) could become overwhelming.

BD: Ok, we've mentioned a few things that we do but one thing we haven't covered is child protection. Now we have a number of boys coming through the club, so yes we should be involved [in child protection] but I really do feel that there are that many people that should be covered so I don't think it should be my job to cover the whole thing or educate the whole club. At the moment I'm using an outside professional body to deal with it. I think it comes better from professionals who can apply it to football clubs. It makes it a more serious issue rather than me delivering it because they can bring greater generalizations to the floor. I don't think that I would be happy; I don't feel as though I should be the child protection officer. I keep writing the word 'facilitator' because that's what we are. We are experienced in many areas so we can assist. I know when it's something I can deal with myself sometimes but I know when I need to bring in support. I

think that with such an issue as this the actual teaching should be done by an outside organisation.

FO: *There's a general problem with the terms secure and insecure. I'm slightly secure when we talked about the instigating change earlier, but slightly insecure if I to try instigate too much change too quickly. I could be down the road. Now that's a real problem. If I try to push out too many boats at once, because of the culture of the football club, I could be seen as a bit of nuisance, rather than being useful. So that's just a general feeling rather than specific...*

DR: *Can I bring you back a little to your own general insecurity or security within your ability to instigate and implement change?*

FO: *Well secure in a sense that it [change] has to be done slowly. Derek's going on about strategic and operational and if you can pull them both up very slowly you would probably feel very secure about them. You certainly can't be responsible if the volcano has erupted and you're trying to create a sea change that will not work.*

DT: *There's a few metaphors in there! You lost me there.*

JG: *They're what you call mixed metaphors! (general laughter ensues and the banter continues)*

DT: *The sea change volcano...*

FO: *Yeah, but at the top level, heaven's above!*

DT: *What more can we say...*

JG: *Don't put all that down Dave...*

DT: *The biggest problem I've got in handling problems and issues is that there are so many of them. And the biggest problem is the operational, day-to-day stuff. You're trouble shooting that much that you can't sometimes begin to think about the strategic overview. I mean, I can go in to work with about ten things to do and never get to the first one. And that list of ten things may stay there for a week. And sometimes they might be things that may have a more far-reaching effect, but you can never get to it, because you're picking up the pieces almost as soon as you walk through the door. That's why I feel insecure sometimes because I feel like I'm not getting anywhere... And because you're doing that, it can make you feel that you have a light touch on a number of things, rather than a more in depth handle on fewer things.*

BD: *And they'll ask you to do all those things because you'll always get it done.*

DR: Does the diversity of the role negate against how the role is carried out?

JG: It affects your effectiveness.

DT: Unless you accept that that is your role. That your role is a trouble-shooting role. That you are just there as a support mechanism, almost just mopping up underneath everything. So, strategically, you haven't got a role.

BD: Pooper scooper!

DT: You can't say that.

JG: If you felt respected and trusted a little bit more with all those things then I think you'd be flattered. But I'm not sure that that's the reason why all of those things land on your doorstep.

BD: It's because we're the only ones that can do it.

DT: I mean that's partly because of, you know to be fair, what we learn in teaching is that you learn to deal with that. If you separate it out, this is something that I can do that other people can't do. And if this is something I can do, but I know other people can do it as well, I've got to have the ability to say no I'm not doing it, or the ability to delegate it to someone else. In the three years I've been at the club I've become adept at feeding things back out to people and saying, "That's your job, get on with it."

Contention and conflict of interests were expressed between the HoEW and the coaches, with regard to the 'the best interests of the boy' (i.e., the boy's general well-being being compromised by the pressures of performance).

PH: In terms of insecurity, what worries me is being seen as what people might perceive as being negative. Pointing out what I think might be quite obvious. "Why's that not being done? Why are you talking about the doctor or whatever?" I mean, I think these are basic things... We had a boy the other week who had a really bad stomach complaint, and it's come back this week. One of the coaches came to me and said, "I think he's a real skiver." I mean, I couldn't believe it. Its just garbage, then we almost went in to a full-scale argument, I said, "Where have you got that from? Have you ensured that he's seen the doctor?" Which is his job within our framework, to which he replied, "No." Now how can you criticize somebody? Now part of that is that the lad, who is a talented boy, isn't doing very well. He's getting found out in certain quarters of the job. Which is nothing to do with his football, it's down to his personality and character. But it's almost the deviousness of the coach's mind, where he's twisting it so he can turn around and say, "I told you about him." And I really don't like that. He has another agenda. And the one I really don't like is almost having to stand up

against that. I'm not frightened of that but it's the context it puts you in. It's you against the coach or the coaches.

BD: And you're seen as being soft anyway, soft to the lad.

PH: Correct. It's the negative aspect. I mean I have to say, that the coaches that I work with are great. One of them blows hot and cold very regularly and in truth I don't know where he's coming from. And he's where the main problem lies, if you like. But the other two are very open minded, and can see through that to a large degree, fortunately. But it's the desire not to be seen negatively, because you are bringing up these things. That needs to be done, this needs to be done. And they are quite trivial things. But they have to be done because otherwise the whole thing breaks down, the wheel doesn't turn properly.

FO: I had a similar thing with a coach about one of our lads who'd rung in. And I actually had to take a step back. He's one of those, he's totally professional, I know that if he's said he's ill, and his landlady has rung in then he would be ill. But it was, "No, we want to see him." So he came in, he saw the physio, and was then sent home for a couple of days. But he was put under an enormous amount of pressure to be in. And he ended up playing at the weekend. But at the end of it he was absolutely goosed. As soon as he finished he went straight to bed and he never got out of bed until the Sunday evening because he was so tired. And I said, "Look, if something happens, who's responsible?"

PH: I have to say that our physio has turned round to me and said that, "I'm not a qualified doctor, and I'm not in a position to be able to say whether a boy is fit enough to train or not. My matter is a different medical nature." And he's right to say that. Now he's forced an issue within the football club but something similar happened. And it was brought about by the dogmatic nature of a coach. He's done me a favour. Now we have a process in place where the club doctor has to go round and see him before he's allowed back in to training.

FO: I must admit, I find it complete nonsense that the physio can diagnose state of health.



Aim: To identify and rationalise key areas for training and development for HoEWs, players and club staff in order to enhance the working practice and/or environment of the HoEW. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Summation and Context of Response:

The HoEWs identified the need for generic staff development, with an explicit requirement to influence or instigate an *in-house* attitude change toward education. The wider issues incorporated a need for staff to appreciate the role of the HoEW (i.e., Academy Director and coaches). (e.g., shadowing of HoEW to appreciate role, away day). The HoEWs identified the Academy Directors as the core elements in this strategic mission. The Academy-Director needs to understand and promote the role of the HoEW within the Academy. Consequently, the HoEW should have more influence over and/or with the coaches, the young players and generic working practice. There was an implicit recognition of the need to review and reflect on the meaning of the role within the wider scheme of things. This implied a strategic process that would therefore need the support and influence of the ‘gatekeepers’ in order to organise and implement such ideas and/or procedures.

DT: I think the key issue for me really is attitude. John's talked about outliving people. That's about attitudes and coaching. I think we can have far more of an impact if we can work alongside the Academy Directors, bring them on board with some of our ideas, to change the culture and influence attitudes. So for me, training is about that area for education and welfare. There are a lot of operational, trouble-shooting jobs that we're all capable of achieving, but personally, that's an area where I need support, influencing culture change. And I think rather than being alongside players, staff, parents and coaches. If you see yourself getting to those people then they will have far more impact for us further down the line. So that first box training, I'd like to flag that up straight away. Influencing attitudes and culture change is a big training need for me.

FO: A big training need starts with the other staff within the club so that they start to appreciate the role. So they can just see some of the

issues that we deal with, so that they can appreciate exactly where you are coming from.

DR: *Who would you identify as the key staff that would be involved in that?*

FO: *Well, I suppose to a greater or lesser extent from the Academy Director down to the three main coaches and also the physio...*

PH: *I think people tend to very easily forget the past. To a large degree the jobs that we do are things that the Academy has to do. You have to have an Education and Welfare officer. And therefore to a degree we are still going through an education process and they are being educated in what our jobs actually are. Some of them just accept that you are there because you have to be there. I think things like job shadowing may assist. Whether they are achievable I don't know. And within our environment whether other people would want to do it is another thing.*

DT: *Well, that's just one technique isn't it. Which is one way of influencing attitudes. You talk about the general concept and then you say well one way of doing it is. There are lots of other specific ways...*

Concern was expressed over how the HoEW could realise a strategic influence within the Academy. Both operational and strategic mechanisms were identified. They recognised the need to involve, coerce, manipulate and convince significant others of the value of their role (i.e., the whole player experience not just education). It was even suggested that one should try to make procedures other people's ideas (i.e., not just the remit of the HoEW), to reduce the fuelling of the perceived scepticism and nuisance factor of the role.

DT: *But again, it comes back to that problem. That if you have an idea, and you may have a raft of good ideas, it's actually getting to the decision makers and influencing them to say, "Yes, I'll go along with that." It's a bit like the club staff thing, what goes alongside that is, in a sense, is not only working with the existing staff but trying to influence attitudes when it comes to recruitment. So that if there's a job going, say a 9-16 fellow or an under 17's coach, then he [AD] doesn't just pick up the phone and phone his mate and say there's a job here for you. Try to make sure that they actually go through the recruitment process of what this job actually is. For instance if your going to recruit an under 17 coach, you don't just look at their coaching background, you're actually saying, in the job description probably, that there's a welfare responsibility as well. So you identify the responsibility further down the line and then you get the right person to do it.*

FO: *But I think some clubs are a long way from that.*

BD: *We're looking for a culture change. We're looking to find out what others jobs are anyway. Because we're saying that they are just coaches and they do this, this and this, but we might be doing them down*

in some respects. They do use us and they allow that. But I do like that idea, maybe the team building idea, maybe something to do with the club or maybe with certain members of other clubs to look at a development plan. Without giving away too much because we're all different. But just to see what chip each person has got on their shoulder.

JG: I've just written down a few, mission statement, team building, breaking down barriers and re-establishing, or establishing in the first place a structure.

PH: Five weeks ago our first team coach set something up over two days at his local golf club. And it was aimed at different forms of coaching, talking to players etc. So he called in all staff associated with players. I found myself disagreeing with a lot of the things that the two lads who took the sessions were saying. Practically they wouldn't work but, it was not what they were saying. I looked around the room we had the reserve team manager, the kit manager, the new physio, who didn't know anyone, the first team coach, and within two days you had a group of new friends around the room. Absolutely fantastic. The power of what they did really for two days was a different class. Whether that was the intention or not, I don't know. But I know that the first team coach is heavily in to the psychology and that...

DT: I mean, there's one thing I can say, having been to a number of heads of education and welfare meetings is that there is no shortage of ideas. The biggest problem is going back to the club and trying to influence people to take them on board. I mean I think those things are great. I mean I get on really well with my Academy Director. I have a really good relationship with him, but as soon as I start talking, it's taken me three years to break him down a little bit, but if I start talking to him about bringing people in from outside. Straight away the shutters come down, "The expertise is in this club." So you've got to try and manipulate. Part of the skill is to manipulate them to take the ideas on, because you believe passionately that there is a different way of doing things. So if come back to the original point again which is, how can somebody support me? Can you give me, around the table if you like, help me, with ideas about how I can influence my Academy Director? I can come up with the ideas, but if I went back now and said why don't we go away for the weekend? Straight away I'd probably get, "We haven't got time for that." And that would be the end of the conversation. Now if it's a great idea then I've got to find a way and it may take two years to convince him. But give me ways of getting it through the back door or underneath, or getting through the skin.

BD: Well you need to get the first team coach to do it, like Paul.

DT: It's the process rather than the ideas. One of the strategies might be to get access to the chairman rather than the Academy Director.

PH: Can I just take what you said there Billy? If you just tap into people's interest within the club, our first team coach, for example, does

things with the whole first team squad and the under 19s who train up there with them. And he does little bits of psychology with them, and I've personally got a belief that the first and second years should do bits of that as well. Because nothing should be alien to them when they get up there. But I've also got a belief that the coaches should know as well. Because they should buy into the vision if you like, of what the club is up to. Now I've had a quiet word with him, and after Christmas we're going to do some work with the players. And he turned round and said "Don't you think the staff should do it as well?" Then I've said, "Well, how can I get them involved?" and he's turned round and said, "Leave it with me, I'll sort that out." Now in some ways I'm glad that he's said that but I've had to try and tap into the areas of interest, because he's an influential man within the club. And straight away other people will buy what's going on because he's the first team coach.

BD: *I think Gracie's got a great idea there, but it can't be seen to be his idea.*

JG: *But it comes back to what Derek said. Where you're trying to chip away at people. And I thought that was what you were going to say there Paul, was that you went to him with an idea, you spoke to someone about it and they came back with it as their idea. And you want to say, "You cheeky so and so." But at the end of the day who cares as long as it happens.*

DT: *That's why I think that external people are invaluable. Because they can come in with experiences from other industries and say here's some ideas on how we influenced the change. Here's some ideas or tactics to influence change.*

JG: *But if change is ultimately what you're trying to bring about there has to be an acceptance and recognition that change is necessary. Because with so many staff its like, "Why? Is there something wrong with what we're doing? Is there a problem?" And there might not be a problem but surely we can look at ways of making things better. So it's that that we must bear in mind if we're looking to bring about some of these changes.*

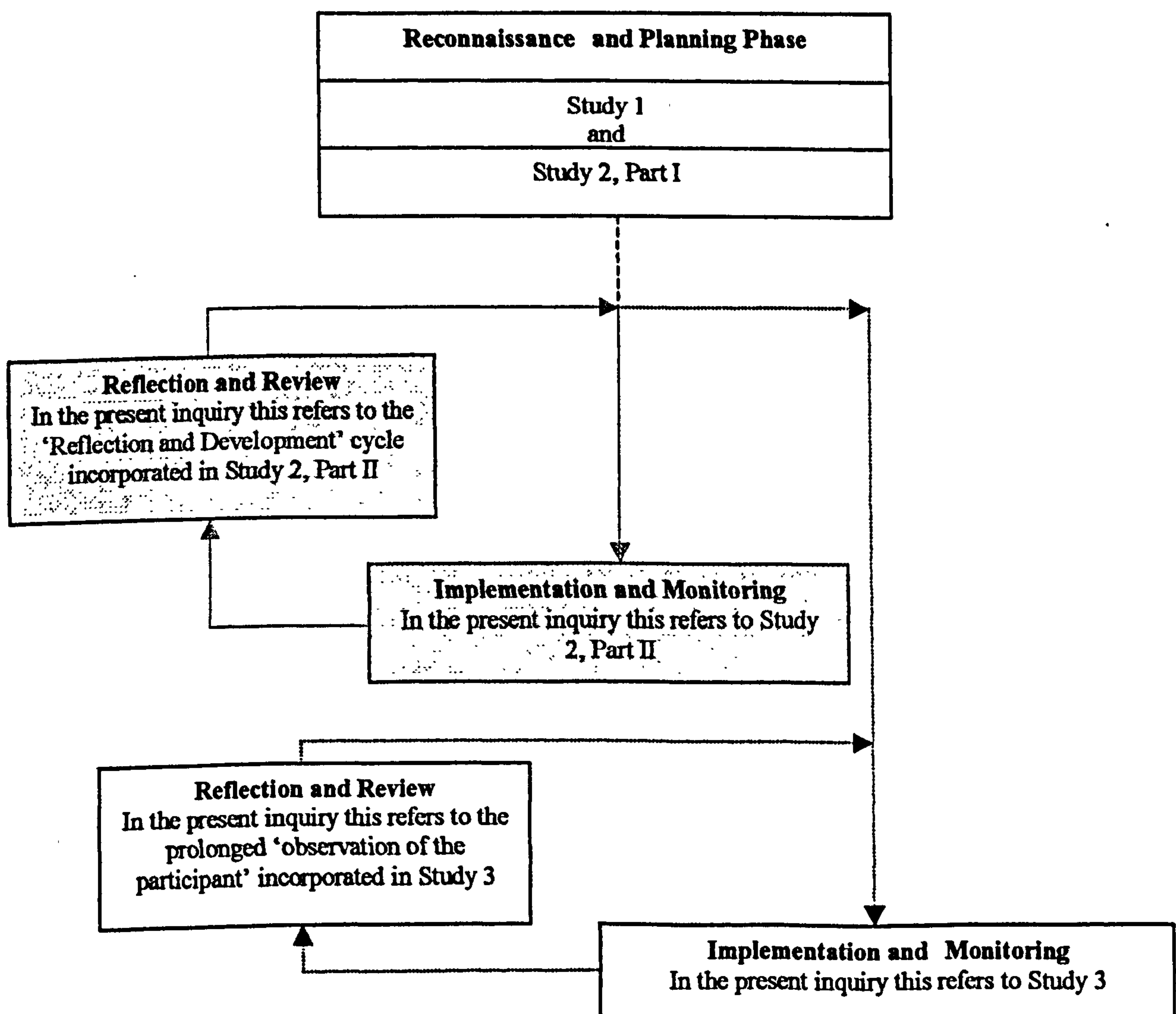
At this point proceedings were brought to a conclusion by the author. Due to time constraints it was deemed inappropriate to provide a verbal summation of the focus group. It was therefore agreed that the researcher and the rapporteur would summarize the session and provide each HoEW with written feedback.

Chapter Three

Part II:

Study 2, Part II:

Engaging in Action, Reflection and Refinement



Author's note: The area highlighted in the above model reflects the location of the material presented in Chapter 3, Part II (i.e., Study 2, Part II – implementation, monitoring, reflecting and reviewing action) within the action research cycle.

3.5 Introduction

Action research has been identified as a group process that requires explicit collaboration between the researcher and researched (Tinning, 1992). Following the extensive reconnaissance phases of Study 1 (i.e., the interviews) and Part I of Study 2 (i.e., the focus group) the aim of Study 2, Part II was to encourage the HoEWs to identify, engage and reflect on potential *action* within their respective working environment. In the present study the process of action research was utilised in order to facilitate a process of social change. In this sense, action research, through active collaboration between the practitioners and the researcher, was deemed an appropriate vehicle to generate and/or stimulate a process of change and promote elements of fairness, wellness, and self-determination (Greenwood and Levin, 2000; p94).

“Action research ignores the boundaries between disciplines when they restrict effective understanding and action and advocates crossing the boundary between academia and society as a basic principle of operation.” (Greenwood and Levin, 2000; p94).

The five HoEWs were invited to attend an *Action* meeting with the researcher and a colleague. The purpose of this meeting was to revisit and further explore the summation of the earlier focus group. This process aimed to enable the practitioners to define their own personal objectives, construct meaning, and pool their knowledge in order to apply what is learned to produce positive social change (Greenwood and Levin, 2000). The concepts of action research were outlined and each HoEW was encouraged, to share, reflect, and identify his appropriate action. Each HoEW was encouraged to identify potential action, identify the area of impact (e.g., education, welfare, performance), identify the anticipated scale of his action, and the individuals they may affect. Implicit within this process were the operational, strategic and relationship themes resulting from Study 1, and further explored in Study 2, Part I (i.e., the reconnaissance phase of the action research).

The process of action research is thought to involve predominantly a spiral of self-reflective cycles. These cycles include; “...planning the change, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, reflecting on these processes and consequences, and then re-planning, acting and observing, reflecting, and so on...” (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000; p595). Similarly, Elliot (1991) referred to the action

research process as a process based around cyclical stages of reconnaissance, planning, observation and reflection. Figure 3.1 offers a reminder of the action research cycle in relation to the present inquiry.

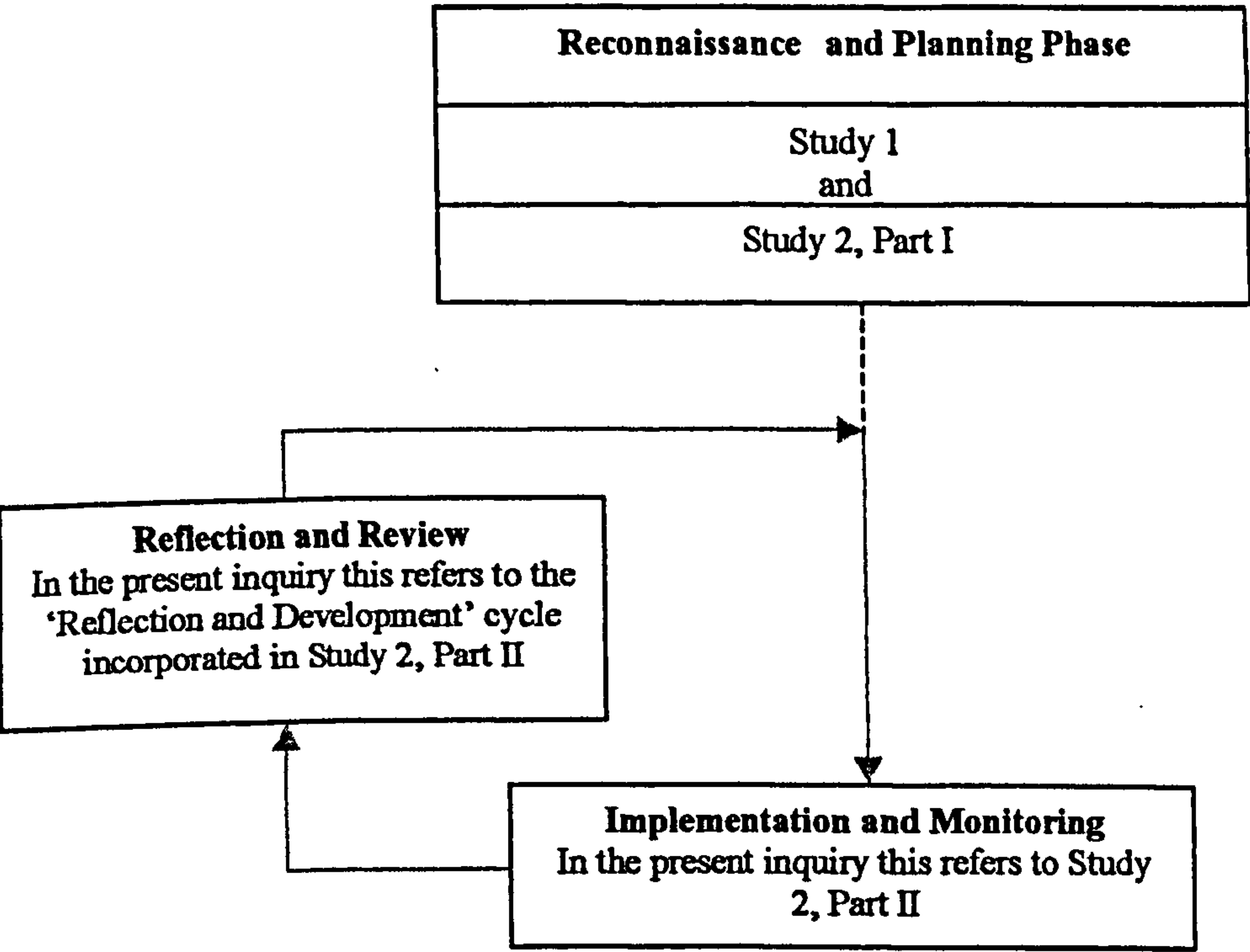


Figure 3.1. The action research cycle in relation to the present inquiry

The participants were encouraged to focus on solving *real* problems (i.e., issues that emerged from the interviews and focus group) specific to their working environment (i.e., solving practical problems in specific locations) (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

Further to the identification of action, the role of the researcher was to stimulate and facilitate the participants' change strategy. The relationship between the researcher and the researched is consistent with the requirements of both constructivism and critical theory where the researcher and the researched are inextricably linked. The "test" for social research is whether this process provides effective support for the practitioners' actions, organizations, and/or communities in their processes of self-determining social change (Greenwood and Levin, 2000; p94).

3.6 Reflection, Refinement and Representation

Due to circumstances beyond both the researcher's and the participants' control neither participant 1, nor participant 2a were able to attend the initial *action* meeting on the 8th May 2001. A number of telephone conversations between Participant 1, John Grayson, Participant 2, Paul Harrison and the researcher ensued over the coming months. A further action phase meeting involving both the remaining participants was arranged. Throughout this time both participants identified their continued support and commitment to the project. Unfortunately, it was not until 23rd January 2002 that we were able to arrange an appropriate time to explore potential action. Participant 1 was again prevented from attending due to an urgent request from his Academy Director to talk to some parents. Hence, Participant 1 (20th March, 2002) and Participant 2a (23rd January, 2002) engaged in separate, individual action meetings with the researcher and a research colleague. The procedures employed were similar to those employed in the initial action phase meeting.

Following the identification of the three practitioners' action (i.e., 8th May, 2001) each participant was encouraged to engage in the action and self-monitor his progress (e.g., diaries, notes etc.) (Hart and Bond, 1995). During the consultation with the participants, it was agreed that a reasonable period of time should be allowed for them to engage in, and monitor their respective actions prior to any, 'more formal' reflection and development meetings being set up. During this time, there was regular contact between the practitioners and the researcher (i.e., telephone conversations and attendance at the NW HoEW meetings). The primary aim of this contact was to encourage the HoEWs to monitor their progress. In essence the facilitator's role was not to impose but to stimulate change (Gilbourne, 2001). Due to the late engagement of both participant 1 and participant 2a in their action phase, the researcher was unable to afford them the same time scale as the other three participants.

Further to this contact more formal 'reflection and development' meetings were arranged between each HoEW and the researcher. In this sense the emphasis on 'action' is inextricably linked to reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). This 'critical' approach allows reflection (of a systematic kind) to enable the practitioners to improve practice in their workplace (Gilbourne, 2001). All reflection and development meetings took place at the HoEW's respective Academy. The reflection

and development meetings constituted an informal interview process that enabled the practitioner to reflect on and/or review the impact of any changes that had been, or were being, implemented (meetings were recorded on audiotape where appropriate). These meetings provided an opportunity for each HoEW to:

- clarify their change strategy (i.e., ideal),
- revisit the purpose, aim and rationale that influenced such change,
- recount the implementation process of change (i.e., process undertaken, time period),
- identify the benefits of the change (i.e., individual, internal, external),
- identify the perceived (and actual) barriers to change (i.e., individual, internal, external)
- explore their personal feelings related to change,
- develop, review, or refine the process of change (i.e., operational and/or strategic),
- or identify a new change strategy (i.e., operational and/or strategic)

These agenda were primarily utilised to guide the dialogue between the researcher and the HoEW. The researcher adopted an exploratory and empathic listener approach (Rogers, 1991) in order to allow the HoEW to reflect on their personal perceptions of 'progress' and enable any refinement, or new change to evolve from the discussion. In this sense, each HoEW was specifically encouraged to articulate his reflections and identify, or develop his *own* solutions to his *own* existing issues in his working environment and/or practice (see Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

Following this protracted level of engagement (i.e., approximately eleven months for participants 3, 4 and 5; four months for Participant 2a and one month for Participant 1), the HoEWs were invited to attend a 'shared reflection' meeting at the University. The purpose of this shared reflection was to allow the HoEWs to articulate and explore their experiences with the group. Each HoEW would be able to share his, intellectual and effective, practices with the group in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations (Kemmis, 1985; Gibbs, 1988).

Greenwood and Levin (2000) suggested that one of the challenges of action research was in:

"...communicating and abstracting results of action research in a way that others who did not participate in a particular project (including other

stakeholder groups facing comparable but not identical situations) will understand and believe, and that will enable them to generate their own effective courses of action.” (p 97)

At this stage of the project it seemed appropriate to present the action phase as a series of collaborative case studies. The case studies followed the rubric of the action research cycle (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000), where verbatim citations were used, as in Study 2, Part I, to provide a specific insight into the working practices undertaken by each HoEW (including barriers, benefits and self reflections) during the process of change. This process was also utilised to represent the context of the shared reflection meeting (Lederman, 1990).

3.7 Results – Study 2, Part II

The following section details the beginnings of the action phase of the HoEWs. The process of action research demands longitudinal engagement, a commitment to initiating and implementing change, and the demonstration of on-going reflection and development of change (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). The results of this phase are presented as individual case studies. First, the details of each participant's action are outlined. The actions are followed by individual accounts of on-going reflection and development.

The *action* meeting took place on the 8th May 2001 at the Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences, Liverpool John Moores University. Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond their control neither Participant 1, nor Participant 2a was able to attend the initial *action* meeting. A number of telephone conversations between Participant 1, John Grayson, Participant 2, Paul Harrison and the researcher ensued over the coming months. A further action phase meeting involving both the remaining participants was subsequently arranged (23rd January, 2002). Throughout this time both participants identified their continued support and commitment to the project. However, participant 1 was again prevented from attending due to a 'last minute' request from his Academy Director to talk to parents. Hence, Participant 1 (20th March, 2002) and Participant 2a (23rd January, 2002) engaged in separate, individual action meetings with the author and an additional research colleague. The procedures followed similar procedural guidelines to those employed in the initial action phase meeting.

3.7.1 Identifying Action: Participant 1, John Grayson, Head of Education and Welfare, Club 1

The following text outlines the discussion and agreed action that was undertaken by Participant 1, Mr John Grayson. John firstly alluded to 'personal' changes, such as developing his own computer skills. He envisaged that this would create a more substantial change in his working mechanisms. This was primarily directed to assisting the boys with their educational work in the Academy classroom. He also identified this as a vehicle to get close to the boys. He explained that whilst assisting them with their work, he could chat generally about their personal and football

development. He expressed concern over the increased number of boys being offered scholarships the following year, and whether he would be able to manage the links between Garland College and St Edwards High School. He identified this as a challenge for next season.

In our initial interviews John had experienced some conflict with other members of staff about the development of his role. More specifically, he perceived that the physiotherapist felt threatened by his existence. John made us aware that there had been a change in personnel that had eradicated that situation. John then detailed the introduction of a new 'Personal Social Education' programme that he and the assistant Academy Director had discussed. This had been introduced on a piecemeal basis with the under 16s. The overall agenda included issues such as bullying and how to cope with it, gambling, smoking, tobacco use and abuse, relationships and so on. He referred to these issues generally as, the things in society that affect young people of that age.

Throughout the meeting John referred to some concern over the sporadic communication between the Academy staff in general (i.e., including the coaches, physiotherapists and support staff). It appeared that the communication process could be improved significantly. Although the Academy staff held weekly meetings, it was evident that the coaches did not attend. John was unsure as to whether they received, or wished to receive, any minutes from such a forum. The rationale for their non-inclusion was that they were engaged in coaching sessions during this time.

John appeared perturbed with the release process at the club. He believed it imperative that he was in attendance at such times. However, it was apparent that due predominantly to traditional values and practice, the boys were being informed of their release by *football* people (i.e., the coach and the Academy Director). John was not suggesting that he should inform them, more that he was informed so he could provide them with the appropriate support at a vulnerable time.

3.7.1.1 Action – John Grayson

Although John expressed a desire to move forward with all of the above areas, he decided that his dominant action phase would concentrate on increasing access to the

under 16s players. This was suggested as a mechanism to involve the pre-scholarship boys more within the club, and to allow the coaches more time with them. John was aware of a recent government white paper, 'Success in Schools' which referred to a more creative approach to educating young people outside, off-site, and in vocational terms. His intention was to utilise this as a lever to increase educational (and coaching) opportunities at the club. He had come to the view that an increase in the 'quality' time that the boys spent at the club would have long-term benefits for both the boys, and the club. He stated that he would *try to engage in an inclusive approach (i.e., schools, parents and coaches)* to achieve this aim.

3.7.2 Identifying Action: Participant 2a, Paul Harrison, Head of Education and Welfare, Club 2

The following text outlines the discussion and agreed action that was undertaken by participant 2a, Mr Paul Harrison. Initial discussion centred on the difficulty of identifying what is within, and what is beyond the remit of the HoEW. This was extended as the 'blurred' boundaries of the 'job specification' and the actual role itself were reflected upon. As the discussion continued, the possibility of addressing these discrepancies was considered. For example, *the identification of specific roles undertaken at the present time in comparison to the job specification was thought to be a useful exercise*. It was then intimated that this could be used as a vehicle to approach the Academy Director with the intention of 'refining' the role itself.

Further concern surrounded the potential of the implementation of child protection procedures becoming an onerous task for the HoEW. *There was recognition of a need to 'bring in' specialist help to operationalise the process whilst maintaining a strategic grasp*. The HoEW would ultimately become *the facilitator* of child protection. However, 'cost' was identified as a real barrier.

The perceived constraints of the FFE and VTS funding criteria were outlined. The potential for reducing costs and providing a 'more appropriate' education package for the boys could be realised if funding criteria were more flexible. In this sense, he believed that the education package was constrained by the restrictive funding mechanisms of the FFE and VTS.

Throughout the discussion he referred to conflicts of interests between the HoEW and the coaches over 'what is best for the player'. This was supplemented by a perceived need to develop a more *team* orientated ownership and responsibility towards player development rather than (what he saw as people) seeking *individual* kudos. It was suggested that some sort of mentor system, similar to an academic personal tutor system, could be utilised as a vehicle to promote a more *inclusive* player development culture.

3.7.2.1 Action – Paul Harrison

It was agreed that the primary aim was to explore the introduction of an Academy Mentor system (i.e., similar to an academic personal tutor system). This system would engage the coaches and the players. In essence, the mentor system would be utilised to educate and encourage the coaches to understand the impact of welfare and social issues on the boys. This would ultimately be under the strategic guidance of the HoEW. In addition, Paul stressed that he would try to identify *all* of the duties that he had undertaken within his Academy as the HoEW. In this sense, he would be able to prioritise his responsibility, and utilise the identification of his duties to approach his Academy Director and engage in debate concerning a *clearer* (more defined) role remit.

3.7.3 Identifying Action: Participant 3, Billy Drisdale, Participant 4, Derek Traynor and Participant 5, Frank O'Hare.

Participant 3, Billy Drisdale, participant 4, Derek Traynor and participant 5, Frank O'Hare all attended the initial action phase meeting facilitated by the researcher and an experienced colleague on the 8th May 2001. The following section begins with a general summary of the meeting. The specific action and subsequent development of that action is also outlined.

3.7.3.1 Summation of Action Research Meeting - 8th May 2001

The group reflected on the fact that a football background may develop acceptance and credibility of the role of the HoEW to an extent, but suggested that *it [a football background] cannot prepare anyone for the unpredictability of the culture. In*

relation to the process of change, the group members identified a real fear of change within the existing culture. More specifically they identified the coaches' fear of change (e.g., new management, new ideas, new remit, change of personnel). The traditional culture was evidenced with the propensity for change (i.e., personnel, regime) without warning, inclusion or 'logical' rationale.

The general consensus was that education was still perceived as the pursuit of a qualification *if* the player's football development is unsuccessful (i.e., does not result in a professional contract of some sort). They felt that the educational remit was not seen as a vital element of a player's football development. However, the group members alluded to a desire to merge the concepts of education with football development

They identified the existing culture as a real barrier to the synthesis of football and education. Moreover, they cited the limited pursuit, recognition and perception of education within the environment. *More specifically, concern was expressed over the coaches' perceptions that education was in direct conflict (i.e., in terms allocated time) with the more technical and practical requirements of player development.* The allocated time for education was still perceived as a day off (e.g., ...it's only core skills, ...it's only college), 'secondary' and distinct to football. Education was not viewed as a supplement to football knowledge and performance.

The group expressed a need to include and/or encourage the coaches to embrace educational ideals and the associated links to improving player performance. It was suggested that football could be utilised as a vehicle for educational and intellectual purposes (i.e., holistic development - lifestyle, training, nutrition, tactics, reflection, self-awareness and understanding). The group identified that the coach was an extremely influential figure and that the HoEW should encourage the coaches to embrace a more holistic responsibility for player development.

Some concern was expressed over the role of the Academy Director. It was perceived that the majority of Academy Directors limited the inclusion of staff within the strategic direction of the Academy (e.g., shared vision, belonging, ownership). It was

alleged that some lacked *real* managerial skills and/or experience and were predominantly influenced by the traditional football culture.

The participants were frustrated by the limited knowledge that existed within their clubs regarding the role of the HoEW and their associated 'craft' skills (i.e., social skills, communication, counselling [to an extent]). This was compounded by the difficulties experienced when trying to develop and/or implement new procedures. The HoEW has to convince others to 'buy-in' to particular practices. This aggravated the group members as there was a perceived lack of consideration for the role, the importance of the HoEW, and a propensity to implement action on or with the boys without consideration of the HoEW's opinion, or say so. In this sense, it appeared that club personnel tended to ignore the existence of the HoEW. Consequently, the HoEW had limited control over the young players' programme (i.e., football and/or education dictated by coaches agenda).

There was a general sense that the Academy environment lacked a certain amount of professionalism with respect to working practices (i.e., planning, organisation, communication) and a lack of respect, urgency and/or appreciation for their own (i.e., coaches) and/or others' (i.e., HoEW) time. For example, it was suggested that coaches would be more likely to turn up late for external lectures and/or meetings, they would alter training times, extend or reduce their coaching session without informing anyone else within the Academy. It was also mooted that this skill deficiency was reflected in some coaches' inability, or apparent reluctance, to prepare sequential (i.e., short and/or long term) and developmental coaching sessions (e.g., coaching programme, session preparation, session development and progression).

The group participants suggested that new 'skills' and/or ideas were required in order to coerce and/or influence the Academy Director, the coaches, and other associated personnel within the club.

Throughout the meeting the three participants were guided towards identifying their own individual action.

3.7.3.2 Action - Billy Drisdale

Billy's primary concern centred on a perceived lack of communication within the Academy. He was aggravated particularly by his limited inclusion and/or control over the boys educational and football programme. Throughout the action meeting Billy became animated when the issue of communication arose. It was evident that he found some of the coaches' working practices to be unprofessional (e.g., planning, communication and organisational skills). He identified being frequently annoyed by the subsequent impact of coaching session changes or demands on *his* educational timetable (e.g., guest speakers would often be asked to squeeze their talks in between a morning coaching session which overran because the coaches had stipulated that the boys had to be back outside for 2pm sharp). This situation often not only compromised the boys' educational programme but also Billy's arrangements. Billy would then have to apologise and explain the situation to the guest speaker.

It was evident that the group as a whole shared similar experiences. However, they believed that this behaviour was not malicious or deliberate, but was borne out of the traditionally poor perception and delivery of education within football per se. It was apparent that the group envisaged the role of the HoEW as the catalyst of change, in order to establish the value of education. *Billy stressed that a more formal communication between him and the coaches was required.*

3.7.3.3 Action - Derek Traynor

Throughout the action phase meeting, on the 8th May, Derek continually expressed a desire to encourage and facilitate coach development within the Academy. The primary objective being to *encourage the synthesis of the education and training programme of the boys.* It was apparent that Derek believed strongly in empowering players to understand their own personal development (i.e., education and football). *Derek explained that he sought to introduce elements of reflective practice, possibly through the college tutors, with the intention of then linking this to player performance (i.e., technical, tactical, physical and, perhaps more specifically, psychological).*

Although Derek expressed some concerns about the general culture of the Academy, and the 'sometime' limited perceptions of the value of education, *he appeared confident that he would be able to engage coaches in the debate surrounding these issues.*

3.7.3.4 Action - Frank O'Hare

Frank shared the same concerns as Billy and Derek with regards to the perception of the educational remit within his Academy. He expressed no real grievance or real interest in terms of the performance related educational remit. His primary concern was in *the delivery of the educational programme per se. Frank stressed that there was a limited appreciation of education within the Academy that was reminiscent of the traditional values that permeate the football environment.* More specifically, he had concerns with the core skills programme stipulated by the FFE and VTS. Frank recognised that there were inherent difficulties in delivering the required 23 core skills. Although he expressed concern over the nature and content he was predominantly concerned with providing a stimulating programme for the boys. His action phase was designed to promote a more *collective responsibility for the delivery of the core skills programme* by encouraging some of the coaching staff to engage and share their knowledge and experiences with the boys (e.g., media training, role models). It was envisaged that *this collective responsibility would increase the awareness and value of the educational programme to both the boys and the coaches.*

Table3.3 summarises the action identified by each of the five participants.

Table 3.3. Summary of action identified by all five participants.

Participant 1 – John Grayson		Participant 2a – Paul Harrison	
Action: Encourage an increase in access to the under 16s players. Promote more creative approach to educating young people outside school, off-site and in vocational terms. Engage schools, parents and coaches.		Action: Encourage coaches to engage more with players. Primarily through the introduction of a ‘mentor system’. Prioritise responsibilities in relation to job description.	
Participant 3 – Billy Drisdale	Participant 4 – Derek Traynor	Participant 5 – Frank O’Hare	
Action: Establish more formal communication between HoEW and coaches (e.g., weekly – meetings) and introduce weekly player meetings with HoEW. Encourage a football and education agenda. Link to personal goals and (possibly) reflection	Action: Facilitate coach development (i.e., education and training) Identify what they (i.e., the coach) do and encourage the synthesis of practice with others (i.e., players, other coaches) Link to reflective practice	Action: Emphasis on Core skills: Encourage collective appreciation of educational remit of boys (i.e., U17s, U19s coach, sports psych) Encourage flexible delivery	

3.8 Reflection and Development of the Change

The following phase details the process of on-going reflection, and development of the change strategies employed by each participant.

3.8.1 John Grayson

Due to time constraints and commitments, it proved impossible to meet with John in order to monitor, develop and refine his action phase.

3.8.2 Paul Harrison - Reflection and Development 19th March 2002

Paul immediately reiterated his views on the mentor system and also identified that the coaches had already expressed concern over their inclusion within the system. Paul was convinced that all members of staff, especially the coaching staff, should be included in the mentor programme. However, his first stumbling block was the overall perception of the coaches. He explained that they believed they were too close to the players to provide a social and/or welfare support mechanism. This conflict over the role of the coach continued to frustrate Paul’s attempt to develop a mentor system:

“They feel that they shouldn’t be talking to the player’s parents because they deal purely with coaching. My view is utterly different to that. That’s what I said to you last time is that the word ‘welfare’ is the most embracing phrase that you can possibly think of. What is welfare? Who does it begin with and who does it end with? Well, my answer is that I don’t know where it begins and I certainly don’t know where it ends. Therefore, to me everybody is responsible for it [welfare]. Now you can’t have people who want to deal with certain problems because they perceive it to be kudos inspiring for them and then not dealing with other problems because they have no kudos for them.”

The coaches perceived that it was *solely* the role of the HoEW to engage with parents. Although the coaches perceived welfare to be important, Paul believed that they did not fully understand the mentor system, or the existing extent of his role. Paul noted a perceived fear of the welfare role fuelled by a deficient skill base and a general lack of understanding. *He was also sceptical of the coaches’ rationale for non-engagement, as he referred to the perceived lack of kudos that came from dealing with welfare issues.*

He identified a real concern that if this were not presented as part of their role, then ultimately it would form a major part of his role. His frustration was further aggravated by the protracted negotiation he has had to engage in to first of all convince them of the benefits of this process:

“... what I’ve found is I’ve been chipping from a distance and now I’m finding that I’m chipping from the inside. I feel that I’ve got through the exterior wall and now I’m on the interior one. And it is a slow process. I’m big enough and open minded enough to accept that along the way I’ve got a few things to learn, about this job, if you like, about the job that I do. Because that’s the biggest problem that football has at the moment; how do we define the role of this job? Well, I think we have to keep talking about the issues that we’re talking about now.”

Paul thought that the whole process would empower the boys to become more responsible for their own development. *In this sense the coach should not be seen as an untouchable, and unapproachable person. Paul identified this position as a remnant of the traditional football environment.* A culture, which he believes, still exists within his club:

“...when it comes up in the meeting [welfare] and someone says I think that's part of your job, but really doesn't have an answer why it's part of your job, then you know, that comes from years of the fabric being the same to be quite honest with you. Well my answer is, well, why is that my job? It's not me being pedantic. I'd just like to know what's inside their head as to why they perceive it to be my job... So yes, the answer to that is yes the culture has to change, definitely.

Despite this perception Paul was still optimistic about the future. He believed that the coaches were ‘reasonably’ intelligent and that they would eventually adapt to the changing football environment (i.e., a more rounded and inclusive development process):

“It's not just about coaching, it really is not just about coaching. I said to you already that a player might not be doing well on the field not because he can't cope with the football but because he may have a problem off the field. Those that do well on the field are very well prepared off it, there's no secret to that.”

Paul thought that even though, as yet, he may not have achieved an end result, the process of engagement has raised the awareness of his role. *He explained that, to an extent, the process has strengthened his status and credibility within the Academy.* However, he did not pretend that his *battle* was yet won.

3.8.2.1 Developing and Refining the Change

Paul considered his next move was to encourage and influence the coaches. He believed that he might be able to utilise the players in order to engage more informally with the coaches. Encouraging players to reflect on performance and engage the coaches in discussions about their own development would ultimately empower them [the players] to take responsibility for their own development. However, he would still pursue the debate within the more formal Academy meetings and *keep ‘chipping away’ at the coaches in order to convince them of the benefits, and secure their inclusion in the mentor system.*

3.8.3 Billy Drisdale - Reflection and Development 12th February 2002

The following section details Billy's reflections, development and refinement of his action phase. Due to recording difficulties, the first reflection meeting is outlined utilising the researcher's field notes.

Billy began the reflection meeting very positively. He identified that he had managed to persuade the coaches to engage in weekly meetings. *The weekly meetings were now established as formal practice and took place every Monday morning.* Billy expressed some surprise at how receptive the coaches had been to his initial idea. He had approached them all directly with a need to facilitate and improve communication with particular reference to the Academy players' football schedule (i.e., playing and training) and its potential impact on their educational and welfare experiences.

The meetings had become a vehicle to communicate the needs of the boys, the coaches and the HoEW in order to assist the planning of the week's coaching, playing and educational schedule. Billy was extremely positive about the occurrence of the meetings and expressed that the coaches were generally supportive. Nevertheless, he still had some reservations. He identified some concern that the meetings appeared to be rather one-dimensional. More specifically, it was *he* who brought issues and concerns forward for discussion, and he who had to *prize* information regarding the boys, from the coaches. Although somewhat frustrated, he referred to this concern as a 'teething problem'. The coaches were still getting used to *sharing* information and found it difficult to understand Billy's specific requirements (e.g., explicit information regarding a boy's behaviour, performance, or whether they may be released or placed on loan). *Billy was in effect trying to educate the coaches with regard to the subsequent implications of such information on the boys' educational and welfare provision.*

The initial action also referred to Billy encouraging weekly player meetings. These meetings were aimed initially at enabling the boys to understand their personal circumstances, personal performance and potential developments. Ultimately, this process would engage the coaches and the boys in developing and understanding their football (and educational) needs. Although Billy was still keen to introduce such

meetings, he envisaged some limitations due to the impending introduction of the new educational course (i.e., BTec National Diploma in Performance and Excellence).

3.8.3.1 Action Reviewed and Developed

Billy explained that the introduction of weekly player meetings in order to facilitate development and reflection (i.e., incorporating coaches and players) may be introduced at a later date.

The discussion moved on to a more workable change strategy. Billy was keen to, “...keep chipping away” with the formalised coaches meeting. *His intention was to introduce a consistent agenda to guide the coaches and facilitate a more open and informative meeting.*

Throughout this session Billy constantly referred to his onerous and diverse workload preventing him from being effective in all areas (e.g., visits to digs, scouting, child protection, educational remit). The issue here concerned the requirements of the role of the HoEW (i.e., is this part of the remit?). Billy alluded to the fact that this diversity promoted *uncertainty* (i.e., in himself and other Academy staff) as to the nature of the role, and resulted in *blurred* boundaries and misunderstanding.

3.8.3.2 Action

Billy agreed to continue working with the weekly meetings. In addition, it seemed important to establish some clear guidance within the HoEW remit. *Billy explained that he would identify all roles currently undertaken with a view to establishing (in his own mind in the first instance) a clear role remit (i.e., job description).* Implicit within this process was a requirement to prioritise his role with explicit reference to role of HoEW (e.g., visiting digs, scouting, child protection).

Consistent with the previous elements of the research, he was encouraged to include both personal and professional elements (i.e., ideal v reality), both operational and strategic elements of the role and identify potential barriers to the implementation of such procedures.

3.8.3.3 Billy Drisdale - Reflection and Development 12th February 2002

Billy explained that he was still interested in the weekly player meetings. He had subsequently found out that the other HoEWs were introducing or engaging in these reflective meetings. He still 'fancied it' but was unsure as to whether he would be encroaching on the role of the coach.

"...am I stepping on the toes of the coaches if it's reflective practice to do with... the way they play technically, and all the other things? Am I stepping on the coaches who's job it is to do that, or is my job be there to be leaned on by a boy who's got problems outside that?"

Billy suggested that even if he wanted to pursue elements of reflective practice, it would be better left until the beginning of next season. It was too late now, and he needed to clarify how the reflective process would work and whether it would impinge on anyone's practice:

"I'll broach it with them [the coaches] when I have my meetings. I'm actually going away with one of the coaches for a week to America so things like this I would do informally before doing it formally with everybody."

The weekly meeting were still taking place, however, Billy was still conscious of the *limited sharing* of information despite the introduction of his general agenda which included trialist issues, issues about players on loan, and general day-to-day activities:

"They were having their [coaches] meal talking to everybody and Liam [Noble -under 19s coach] said, "Are you wanting us now Billy?" and I gave him a nod and he got up and said right, "Sorry we're going." More of it still seems to be from me. I tend to give out news and problems and everything, they still don't tend to give me any news. I have to say how did the team go on? Even though I was there. What did you think of Saturday's game? I've still got to change their kind of ways. I'd like it to be not a kind of, "Billy there's three or four points from the coaches," when what they're really saying is, "Billy can you organise this, this hasn't happened, that guy did such a thing, if he's gonna do that he's never going to make a player. Can you sort it?"

Although Billy was still frustrated with the information sharing, he recognised that the whole process was getting better over time. He believed his coaches were getting *better*. He explained that, from his own personal experiences, and through discussing similar situations with other HoEWs, he perceived that his coaches were more aware than *most* of those within other football clubs. *However he did not believe that they*

would ever fully understand the purpose of sharing this information (i.e., so that a more informed decision could be made about any boy's educational, technical, academic and social needs).

We moved on to discuss the prioritisation of Billy's role, the diversity of the role and the subsequent dangers that that brought. Billy suggested that he had ideas that he wanted to cement with respect to what he does, what he wants to do, what he thinks he's good at, what is he not good at, what does he like and not like doing. He expressed a desire to get more order to his working environment. However, he continually referred to the fact that because he was working in the *reactionary* 'football industry' it was virtually impossible to do so, "You get some sort of order but you never feel as though you've got order."

3.8.3.4 Barriers to Change

Billy alluded to the fact that affecting and implementing change was extremely difficult considering the present climate within the club. He explained that the club would be undergoing some *changes in personnel* during the summer months. There was an uneasy atmosphere as people were unsure of whether they would be retained as a result of the impending changes in the managerial structure.

It was these pending changes that provoked a slight change of emphasis with regard to the diversity of his role. In a sense, Billy's self-deprecating view of his role possessed an ironic sliver lining:

"...there's strength in the diversity of the job at the moment because the diversity of the job is, I mean nobody's ever safe in football, but the job you do at the moment. nobody knows your job, well I don't either. But they're all saying nobody's safe, but they are saying you're the only one who's safe Billy because nobody knows what your job is anyway and nobody would want to do it."

3.8.3.5 Strategic Positioning

Billy reiterated the notion of 'welfare' within his remit. It was apparent that this was an all-encompassing remit, which necessitated the inclusion of both

accommodation and child protection issues. With regard to both of these areas Billy had secured assistance in order to fulfil their requirements. This strategic license was facilitated by the legislation demands of each area of work. 'Fostering Solutions' were brought in to assist in vetting and monitoring the provision of appropriate accommodation, and Billy had encouraged the club to appoint a part-time child protection officer, Joanne Stuttard. *Billy was still regarded as the designated person responsible for child protection but his role was more of a strategic facilitator rather than the operational delivery of child protection course.*

Billy's concern with being visible and accessible to the boys was evidenced throughout the meeting. More specifically, Billy's role within the educational provision was discussed. He perceived it extremely important to be seen in and around the educational environment (i.e., Acrefield High School) by the boys. *In essence, he perceived this visibility to encourage the boys to appreciate and understand the value of their education. He suggested that the boys do not really want to be at school but recognised that his presence provided a consistent reminder (to the boys) of the importance of education.* He raised concerns over the 'laissez-faire' approach that some of the teachers employed and that his presence also ensured that the boys were well disciplined in the educational environment. It was also evident that Billy enjoyed this part of his role, the interaction with the tutors and a real sense of pride when boys achieve educationally,

"I mean I like that part as well. I like the education. I like the fact that, say he's got in the first team but he's also got... Don Murphy [3rd year scholar], he's in the reserves at the moment, he's got a distinction in advanced business studies, GNVQ, and he will get an E stroke D in 'A' maths. Now I know E stroke D isn't brilliant but it is in the context of a young man at Neddlington City who's just got a new three year contract until he's 22 years old."

The diversity of Billy's role, his passion for the club and his undeniable belief in what the job entails are epitomised when he outlined an operational dilemma:

"For example, I've got one now, how do I get out of this? We've got a boy who won't come to us, he won't sign. He's been with us for five years. He's lived over here for two years. He's decided he doesn't want to sign for the club as a scholar. Fine, we've talked about it, we're disappointed but we'll help you out. Number one, your school is most important so don't let it drop. So what he's

doing is he's going to Aston Villa, he's going to Burnley next week and he's going to Liverpool after Easter. But he wants one single flight home to Belfast from Liverpool. So, I'm organising it, but because it's from Liverpool, it's Easy Jet and our travel firm don't do Easy Jet. So I'm going to have to book it through my flamin' bank account. Now really I should be saying no I'm not, I'm not doing it, find some other way. I'll probably end up doing it this time, but it's one of those things. You think why the hell am I doing that? What am I doing it for? I get no thanks from anybody anyway! What am I doing, and why am I doing it? I'm doing it because I'm a fool, really. I'm also doing it because I want to get on with the job that needs doing, and it's cheaper for the club and all that stuff. I don't know why I'm doing that. I don't know why I'm not just saying well it's nothing to do with me..."

"...You've gone into the job expecting that you'll have days when you're doing everything off the top of your head as it's happening. And you're trying to do everything in the order where you get the important jobs done. I mean you're not organised you're just working off the top of your head. And then you've other days when it picks up on you. Without you knowing it you've suddenly got all these things coming. I don't think that if you don't do it that way then I don't think you're doing your job properly - which maybe answers whether I can cut down on too many things, because I believe that it's the job."

Billy is driven by a desire to be *hands on*, to ensure that things are being done in the best interests of the boys. This is fuelled by his perceived discontent of others' inability to carry out such tasks with the same assurance.

3.8.3.6 Re-evaluate Change

The issue of communication was central to Billy's action phase. He continually alluded to the generally poor discipline of the boys. The poor discipline was aggravated by the coaches' lack of organisation and planning. Billy perceived it difficult to instil a consistent timetable for the boys due to the ad hoc nature of the coaches' planning. Curiously, he explained that the coaches generally believed that it was better to keep the boys on their toes by not letting them know what was happening. Billy described this as a naive remnant of the traditional football culture. He believed that this not only enhanced the boys' anxieties and insecurities within the Academy but, was also detrimental to their general well being;

"...it's getting them [the coaches] better on a timetable scale. I'm slowly gnawing away at the timetable. I'm drip-feeding. [Billy writes down routines, timetable, encourage improvements in the schedule and formalise the meetings a little more]."

It was agreed that he would continue to pursue the notion of planning and organisation, and encourage the communication of such details to the players and the staff. It was evident that this would have to be pursued through predominantly operational means.

3.8.4 Derek Traynor - Reflection and Development 20th February 2002

Derek's over-riding aspiration was to influence coaches and their behaviour towards the boys. He continually alluded to the importance of understanding the boys. Although it appeared that the general welfare of the boys was his prime concern it was evident that *he believed that there was an implicit relationship between welfare and performance*. More specifically he referred to this as the emotional and psychological development of the boys.

3.8.4.1 Operational and Strategic Positioning

Derek's intention was to be involved and/or influence, in one way or another, coaching practice. More implicitly his remit was to encourage good practice and increase the awareness of players' emotional states. As with most of the HoEWs the area of child protection was high on his working-agenda. *Derek utilised this [child protection] as a vehicle to ensure his inclusion in any coaching developments at the Academy and initially assumed the covert mantel of developing coaching practice through child protection*. However, subsequent to his initial action, and unbeknown to Derek, Walter Higgins, the Academy Director, employed a new coach, Des Roberts [new assistant Academy Director at club 4], who was charged with the direct responsibility of coach development for the 9-14 year olds. Ultimately, this would have a significant impact on coach development for the 16-19 year olds (i.e., full-time scholars). This had an immediate impact on Derek's initial action. Nevertheless, he made it his business to influence the new member of staff;

"I've taken more of a back seat here looking at coach development recently. When I say a back seat, what I've done is made it my business to talk to the 9s to 14s Director about these issues. In other words, I'm having an input. It wasn't invited. I've gone to him straight away and said, "I've got ideas in this area, what do you think? I'd like to sit down with you"...he's taken his mark of identifying what the curriculum is and what coaches do, 9s to 14s, with players. But he's solely at the moment concentrated more on the physical, the technical

and the practical, tactical to a point, those three areas. I've gone in with an input to him to say we really need to be looking at the emotional and psychological area of these boys."

From the outset Derek placed his marker to ensure that he would be able to assist in this area of coach development. In effect Derek utilised Des's explicit coach development remit in order to encourage the debate surrounding the players' emotional development.

Derek's involvement in the research process and the identification of his initial action phase had also prompted him to approach Walter in order to explore and clarify his job description. The result of his action prompted a more formal appraisal system within the Academy. Derek appeared encouraged by this development although he expressed that, in the first instance it only included the full-time Academy staff, and although Walter utilised personnel within the process, it was perceived as a fairly loose process. However, it enabled Derek to re-visit his priorities, produce a more comprehensive job description and articulate this to Walter,

"I was able to establish more about issues about being involved in coach development so again, strategically it was about dropping little seeds about am I on the right lines. And I got some favourable feedback about that. It really was about I'm not seen as being responsible for coach development, but I've got a significant part to play in adding to that debate about coach development from the child protection viewpoint."

Derek also realised a further opportunity to encourage coach development through the introduction of the new BTec National Diploma in Performance and Excellence (Perfex). Derek had been instrumental in the development of the course with the Football Association and was engaged in some piloting of the new qualification. Derek articulated that the existing BTec National Applied Science award didn't really take into consideration the players' Academy experience and that there was little football context to the elements of sports injury or sports psychology. *By engaging in the new Perfex course he explained that he had managed to encourage the tutors to push the agenda towards a more 'Academy' and 'football performance' related experience. Derek identified this, almost covert, bottom up approach to coach and player development as the main catalyst of cultural change within the Academy,*

“...it's led to more effective practice in a sense, more specific issues like better goal setting practices, better planning and preparation for what's going on, more reflective practice in players, more individual development plan of work. A greater understanding that the players need more ownership in the process. So what that's done is, it's then from that point, its meant that the coaches have got together to say what are the coach development issues here? Because we need to look at what we're delivering.”

Although this process was beginning to integrate the boys' football experience with the pursuit of a qualification, and impacting on the coach development, he was conscious that it was still only happening in a very informal way. His next phase was to try to introduce the coaches to the more formal setting of the classroom. He achieved this in the first instance by bringing in the club's resident sports scientist (and ally) to deliver part of the anatomy and physiological elements of the course. He followed this with the introduction of club's physiotherapist. This intrigued both Walter and Harry [under 19s coach] that they to became involved in delivering and/or talking to the boys. *A real achievement and cultural shift.*

Derek was aware that all of this interaction was just the beginnings of raising the staff awareness. He recognised that there was a long way to go, but noted that the players had moved on from being:

“...passive receivers of information on the education and coaching side to being much more engaged in the process of what's right and what's wrong for them.”

3.8.4.2 Developing Change

Derek was aware that he sought to engage and develop the psychological characteristics of player development, but was also aware of his limited qualification base. It was agreed that he should pursue some type of qualification and/or experience within this area (e.g., MPhil and/or BASES accreditation) in order to develop his knowledge and credibility. When the time was right (i.e., cultural readiness of the Academy) this would help him to engage more explicitly in the psychological development of coaches and players.

3.8.4.3 Further Action and Potential Barriers to Change

Derek recognised that the whole process of coach and player development was

evolving within the club. He was pleased with the way the coaches had responded to the players' questions concerning their performance, attributes and direction. So much so that individual player development plans were beginning to emerge.

Derek was keen to develop the psychological area of player development. However, he perceived his main barrier was Walter, saying 'no' to any funding for personal development. His *primary objective was to convince Walter that the psychological development of the boys was part of his remit,*

"...all the time I'm living on the edge of getting knocked back. I'm on the edge all the time, with the individuals I work with. Because suddenly, if I tip them one way thinking well you're jobs going that way. A way of describing it is I live in fear of this happening. I mean I don't live in fear of it happening. but you know what I'm saying, because it could suddenly all go pear shaped. Walter could suddenly say, "Derek, I've been thinking about your job, I've been thinking about what you're doing and I want you to do this, this, this and this." Because I've put the job description together, and he's given me the freedom, I've got his confidence, because he can see, generally speaking, his feedback to me is very positive and I'm valued for what I do. But if he wanted to he could suddenly say, well don't go down that route. It will all hinge on how I... It's not as simple as walking in to Walter and saying look I want to do this, and him just saying well lets have a look at that. He could just say, "No, forget all that, I want you to be Head of Education, not Education and Welfare, concentrate on getting these boys through courses." I'm sure that that's much more the remit of the other fellas [HoEWs]."

It was agreed that Derek would continue to utilise the tutors and develop the individual player development plans in an operational sense. Derek stressed that the Academy may not be ready to engage explicitly in an input from sports psychology at the moment. At this point it seemed appropriate for Derek to re-visit and prioritise his role aspiration with Walter. *He explained that he would continue to pursue his personal development with Walter, through the newly formed staff development procedures.* However, he required further clarification of the qualification process, and how this would ultimately impact on his work environment.

3.8.4 Derek Traynor - Reflection and Development 9th April 2002

Derek identified that he had pursued the notion of some sort of sports psychology qualification with his Academy Director [Walter Higgins] through the formal process

of staff appraisal. The staff appraisal system had resulted from Derek's initial approach to Walter regarding his job description earlier in the year. This now gave him a more formal environment with which to pursue his own personal development. Following the initial appraisal Derek then made some general enquiries about the potential qualification that he could pursue. These enquiries included discussions with a research colleague, Dr David Gilbourne and myself. Derek then re-visited the idea of pursuing a part-time MPhil in sports psychology with Walter. The discussion with Walter centred around the fact that this area is one in which Derek could have a significant impact on the development of the Academy. Walter accepted Derek's idea although he reminded him not to lose sight of some of the other issues surrounding the HoEW remit (i.e., educational provision). The notion was agreed in principle but required funding approval from the club's Chief Executive. As the Academy Director fundamentally agreed this, Derek was given the impression that allocation of appropriate funding would be a formality.

Derek articulated his thoughts and aspirations for the future of his role.

"...if I was to pursue this area of work for myself, this staff development area in sports psychology, then I would be able to have not only an immediate positive operational impact on the individual boys but from that staff development I would hope to be able to look at more strategic aims across the Academy with coaches - and thereby start to have an impact on coach development because I'd be bringing in, if you like a new area of expertise to the Academy. The plan in a sense, if there is a difference between an implicit plan and an explicit plan, is first of all I'm looking to get a commitment from my personal staff development to know more about this area of work so that I can work with individual boys. That's the explicit side of what I'm trying to do. But what comes behind that is the implicit understanding if you like or the more, perhaps to use your words, the more covert aim which is that I would be able to use this work that I do on an operational level to then branch into strategic work with coaches and coach development... particularly coach player relationships, sports psychology, emotional issues. I mean not being in charge of sports psychology with the coaches, more about you know what I'm trying to do at the moment is, as we've always said, is to try and promote coach player development on an implicit level. We want to get to the stage where that becomes more on the explicit level so it might be in service training, doing more action research with coaches."

It was evident that Derek perceived this development as a branch of 'the welfare curriculum'. The Academy already possessed technical, tactical, physical and

educational programmes that were all moving forward. He was encouraged as he sensed that the psychological development of players was also moving forward but at a slower pace, and on a predominantly operational level.

3.8.4.5 Barriers to Change

Derek was still wary of the dangers of pushing this area too far, too early. In addition he needed to ensure that he continued to balance his role. He realised that he could not afford to let the issues of child protection, education and welfare slip from his control otherwise his aspirations would be questioned by the Academy Director,

"...my fear of what his [Walter's] potential fear could be is that the other things (i.e., education, child protection) don't get away from us or become sloppy."

Derek's craft awareness and local knowledge are evidenced here. He still believed he must take his time to implement any change. Otherwise the barriers would be raised and any potential developments might be abandoned.

"I think I'm better achieving what I'm achieving by taking my time. Going more slowly, be more patient. As you can see a lot of the time what we are talking about is engaging people in debate, raising awareness and pushing things on slightly so that in the end they may say well we do this don't we. we do it, it's working, continue with that, build on that, rather I need an answer today so here's the proposal, yes or no and risk somebody who's in control of the finance saying no that's not how I see it, forget that now."

Derek believes that, given time, the Academy coaches have the skill and ability to embrace his notions of player development. He recognised that they are already utilising and employing some sound psychological techniques but were unaware, or may have never referred to such concepts under the banner of sports psychology.

Although Derek is striving for an explicit strategic role in the development of young players he still recognised the need to promote the implicit, psychological and emotional techniques at an operational level. He expressed the importance of going on tours with the boys and engaging the coaches in debate whilst away.

"That's the best opportunity because what you're doing is, you're working with boys alongside coaches, coaches are sort of like exhibiting all their skills and

then almost like immediately post game you are engaged in sort of like feedback and reflection whereas what will happen in the normal course of events is people are often rushing away from games, say like Academy games, Academy training. People can't wait to get away to go home so reflection only takes place on an individual level. You don't get a chance to sit round a table and say well what did you think about that game and what do you think about player X, player Y whatever. Whereas in tournaments nobody can go anywhere, you know you're stuck with each other straight away."

3.8.4.6 Development and Refinement of Change

Derek perceived that the operational approach was invaluable in order to enhance the awareness of the coaches and the players, but also to stimulate the debate and promote the value of understanding and developing the emotional (and psychological) characteristics of the boys. He was continually searching for evidence and guidance of how to take this forward. *He stressed that elements of his work were performance related, but still at an operational level. Working with young players or a small group of players. He identified a particular group of under-16 players [two or three] who may benefit from explicit support. In a sense, a kind of 'pre-scholarship'.* He also identified a need to continue working with the tutors and also with individual players within the scholarship group (i.e., 16-19 years). The more work he could engage in, and the more evidence he could collect which could be utilised to enhance, educate and influence the coaches' appreciation. Ultimately, these techniques would enable a more overt, explicit and strategic coach development emphasis to evolve.

3.8.5.3 Frank O'Hare - Reflection and Development 14th February 2002

Frank began the meeting quite brightly. *He explained that he had managed to encourage staff to engage and deliver some of the core skills.* Initially, the part-time sport psychologist was introduced to cover elements of behaviour and some specific core skills as directed by Frank. He also noted that outside speakers had been brought in (e.g., the reverend, a referee, the driving school) in order to relieve the 'boredom' of the core skills programme. Frank had intended to encourage the coaches to deliver some of the core skills. The under 16s coach delivered a first aid course but it proved more difficult to engage the other coaching staff. Initially, Frank identified the Academy Director as a potential speaker but had since realised that this suggestion

may have been slightly optimistic. He also had second thoughts when suggesting the under 19's coach [Andy Johnson]. Frank had lined Andy up to provide a session on role models. As Andy had previously been a professional player it was initially perceived that his experiences would be extremely insightful and interesting for the younger players. However, a poor run of results for the under 19s team proved to undermine his credibility with the boys in general. Frank also alluded to his own doubts about the ability of Andy to deliver a role model session, and also to some reservations about his coaching style. He explained that he had managed to secure the services of Kieron Rose [ex-Academy player, now 1st team player] to deliver the role model session instead of Andy. *Frank appeared relatively happy (and fortunate) to have at least raised the awareness of the core skills with Andy, without the need to engage him in the delivery of a session.*

Whilst Frank appeared reasonably content with his efforts, he then began to detail the demise of the part-time sports psychologist. As with any *newcomer* he was introduced to the boys. Then, after a couple of weeks, the honeymoon period, the boys began to feel restless and alerted their displeasure to Frank. They suggested that the sessions were dull and pointless:

"I don't want to knock Raymond (p-t sports psychologist) because he's relatively young. The other thing is he's from a RugbyLeague background. So he admits he's not into football, and he doesn't know a lot about it. The classic is that, well, we call him the traffic man because the other week he delivered this session, and it was green, it was red, amber green... and then he took them to look at one of the traffic lights, now this is absolutely obscene. You can imagine some of these third year scholars. Looking at a bloody traffic light. I mean, you've got to wonder where he's coming from haven't you."

Frank described the general attitude towards the core skills programme as predominantly supportive. Although he had reservations as to why they were supportive:

"... they think boys are being occupied. 'Its Friday afternoon, we've finished, we don't want them to do anything, we don't want them to go to the cinema, so can you occupy them?' You know what I mean. And if its useful go ahead, but if its not useful it doesn't really matter. I think someone like Sam James [Academy Director], I know he's fairly enlightened, I think he appreciates them, I don't think our coaches are too bad. I think sometimes I get brassed off with

them. They lose sight of the education of the boy, and I can understand why if they say to me we've got to get a boy out of college as we've got a reserve game, but I say you can't do it. 'What'd you mean we can't do it we need him?' 'You don't need him'...and then eventually we come to a compromise. They realise that I'm not just going to say yes. They're going to have to give me a good reason why, and then I can give the college a good reason why. And I say to the boys if you don't perform in college there's no way I'm going to get you out.

Frank referred to the importance of having his Academy Director on his side with regard to stipulating the educational requirements of the boys. He stressed that it would be extremely difficult to remain in the role if he didn't have his full support.

3.8.5.1 Refining the Change

Frank confessed to not having a grand strategy (or desire) to cover all of the core skills stipulated by the FFE and VTS. He was confident of delivering what he perceived to be required but expressed real angst over the nature of the programme:

"What they should say is here's 23 core skills it's up to you to cover what you want, as long as you cover some of them. There are some main things that we think they should look at and leave the rest to you. Not have you covered number 22 and why haven't you covered it. You get someone like Oliver [Robertson, from the FFE and VTS] who will do that. You can imagine the friction that that creates. And why didn't you do it with your 3rd years, well I didn't do it. Well I actually did something similar 2½ years ago, which was the same thing. 'Oh, they've grown up since then,' you know."

Frank's exasperation with the FFE and VTS continued as he articulated certain logistical barriers that had prevented some of the core skills being delivered. *He referred to a lack of communication and organisation on the part of the coaches (e.g., extending training sessions or completely forgetting that the core skills were taking place).* Nevertheless, he did have some sympathy with the coaches and placed a reality check on the requirements of the football environment:

"The FFE/VTS can say well that shouldn't happen but, at the end of the day they're not gonna walk in to the manager's room and say, 'You've got a core skill down there on personal relationships, and he wasn't there?' Well the manager's gonna say, 'Fuck off they're here to be footballers'."

Frank identified that he couldn't do any more with the core skills programme until the FFE and VTS undertook a review of procedures. He was under the impression that this would be undertaken before next season.

The discussion then revolved around the increasing diversity of Frank's role as he had been asked to deal with more administration. More specifically, Frank had been charged with handling the finances of the Academy. Although he expressed some concern with the amount of work involved, he also identified a couple of positives. In the first instance he handles the distribution of the boys' expense claims, which provides him with an informal opportunity to chat with each player. In addition he admitted to quite enjoying the change of emphasis, that the financial side offers. He also readily admitted to feeling uneasy about the assumed responsibility he now has over the financial stability of the Academy and the potential consequences of stepping over the budget (e.g., job losses):

"I feel I resent it[the financial responsibility] in a way because I feel I could be doing something else. It might only take me half an hour a day but its two and a half hours out of the week, but sometime it's longer. But something like the sponsorship this morning [FO was showing potential sponsors of a new Academy minibus around the facilities], I like that cause I get fed up of doing the same thing. I get fed up of, to be honest of education, going to college and going to see how the boys are doing, and if they've not been there. That sort of patrol, highway patrol thing, I don't really like. So I'd rather go and have a chat with a potential sponsor than go to college and chat to the tutors. Although, that's my prime role. And they'll say well you're education and welfare, you shouldn't be doing this, but if I didn't do it, then who would do it. There was no mini bus before I started looking at it..."

3.8.5.2 Developing Change

Frank alluded to the fact that the environment within which he works is one where 'if a job needs doing, you do it', and then it *almost automatically* becomes your job. He suggested that the role of HoEW would become even bigger as more stringent legislation (e.g., health and safety, child protection) was introduced. *He explained that he would like his role to continue without as much education. The sense of being the patrol officer does not appear to sit easily with him. He suggested that he would try to prioritise his role and discuss this with his Academy Director.*

3.8.5.3 Frank O'Hare - Reflection and Development 14th March 2002

Frank continued to express his dissatisfaction with the FFE and VTS over the running of the core skills programme. His exacerbation was further fuelled by fact he had since learned that they may not be undertaking a review of current practice. He was still concerned about the funding mechanisms and the dangers of the introduction of a more thorough auditing process in order to justify future funding. Although we moved on from this as an action phase he still appeared rather frustrated with the whole situation.

The discussion moved onto Frank's re-assessment of his action, which was to explore and prioritise his duties as the Head of Education and Welfare. He identified three major areas namely; education, welfare (including accommodation) and child protection.

Frank was the designated child protection officer within the Academy. He appeared at ease with this although, he expressed concern over the boundaries of his remit. He had organised, and in part delivered, a number of child protection workshops within the Academy. However, his remit was being widened to cover all club staff including auxiliary staff (e.g., finance, commercial, personnel and marketing departments). He considered this to be beyond his role, but he sensed an expectation from within the club that he would cover all staff. He accepted that there was need for the scouting network to go through child protection as they had a direct impact on his role within the Academy.

He identified that he would make some recommendations to the club's Chief Executive. His suggestion would be to employ somebody on (say) a part-time basis to be the designated child protection officer. He could then co-ordinate and facilitate the implementation of child protection accordingly in liaison with this person.

Frank identified some concern over the *ad hoc* employment mechanisms utilised by the recruitment staff (i.e., Head of recruitment and recruitment officer). He recognised that scouting was an important part of recruitment but needed to ensure all new and existing scouts had been through the child protection process. His efforts

thus far had met with limited success. The satellite coaching centres and the unprofessionalism of the Head of Recruitment [Fred Broadhurst] in undermining his authority caused him particular angst:

"So once you get a satellite set up, if you've got five different satellites, everyone is almost run semi-independently, there's a big grey area there where you don't know who the hell you've got working for you. You don't know what, in terms of child protection, what they've actually accomplished, or what they've been taught. And as I said, if you send stuff out to them, by and large, you don't get it back. What I suggested recently to Jim [Donald - recruitment officer] and Fred is that if they don't get the child protection stuff back to me then they're not registered as a scout with club and therefore they don't get paid. That worked for a while, but then what was he [Fred] took some scouts on, the stuff hadn't come back to me, I'd not okay'd it. So they went round the back and straight to the secretary and said these are scouts. It's very difficult because they're not particularly well organised. And Fred talks to his computer all day but he ain't organised."

Frank appeared to have a workable system in place but was hindered by the perceived lack of organisational skills possessed by the recruitment staff. *His frustration was clearly evident as the main barrier to this process was the limited skills and awareness of others within his environment:*

It's one of those you'd like to be able to put to bed. I mean if the system runs smoothly and I don't see why it shouldn't, if they take on a new scout, then all I need is the paper work to arrive on my desk and when I've seen it and filed it away, put them on the computer, you know. I get things like well he's not sent his photographs in, he'll send them in when he gets time to get to the local fuckin' Asda [laughter] and sit in the booth, you know, honestly, it's absolutely ridiculous [frustration here in the inability of others to adhere to process]. So I keep banging my head against a brick wall.

The discussion moved more towards the welfare issue within the Academy. Frank included the accommodation within this area. His main concern was overuse of existing accommodation providers. He stressed the need to increase the number of landladies and landlords at his disposal. *He identified that good accommodation was often the key to a young player's success within the Academy (i.e., both on and off the field). Moreover, he perceived the accommodation was more important, or at least as important, as their education.*

Frank identified that the education package was running fairly smoothly. Although he still had concerns with the 3rd year of the scholarship programme. *He believed that if the boys have achieved a level three qualification, two 'A' levels or equivalent by the end of year two, then they should be allowed to concentrate on their football.* They should continue with some sort of lower level or interest based qualification (e.g., computers or IT) that allows a more flexible delivery. This is their chance to make a career out of football. However, he did admit to being too relaxed last year as some of the boys took advantage of his relaxed attitude (i.e., not turning in, not completing assignments). Frank recognised this and will raise his expectations to ensure appropriate behaviour.

Frank alluded to his administrative burden and his approach to Sam James, his Academy Director. There was some concern from both Frank and Sam that it would be difficult to identify an alternative member of staff to undertake such an important area of work effectively. *He also recognised that this [financial administration role] offered another string to his bow, and an added element of job security if the club were to encounter financial difficulties.* It was this circumstantial barrier that prevented him from pursuing any change in this area at this moment in time.

Frank then reiterated that he would concentrate on utilising the issue of child protection to influence change with regard to the employment of recruitment staff and in particular the working practices of the existing recruitment personnel (i.e., traditional values and working practices).

3.9 Shared Reflection Focus Group 10th April 2002

All five Heads of Education and Welfare in the North West were brought together in order to share their experiences of the action phase. The purpose of the shared reflection was to allow each HoEW an opportunity to explore their experiences with the other HoEWs, in order to facilitate new understandings and appreciations (Gibbs, 1988). The following section identifies the pertinent issues raised during the shared reflection meeting. The session was an open, informal gathering facilitated by the researcher, in the presence of a research colleague who acted as the rapporteur. The process was underpinned by similar focus group protocols exercised in Study 2, part I.

Paul Harrison [club 2] began proceedings by articulating his particular action phase. He recounted the purpose of his mentor system and stressed his desire to encourage a more *inclusive responsibility towards the development of the boys (i.e., inclusive of the coaches)*. He described how his initial intentions met with some resistance from the coaches, as they perceived this area to be *solely* within his remit. John Grayson [club 1] identified a similar exchange with his Academy Director when he recommended the introduction of a mentor system. His idea mirrored the tutor system that he had co-ordinated in his previous guise as a teacher. The response he received alluded to the fact they, the club, didn't need such a system because that was the role of the HoEW. John's Academy Director stressed that, "...they [the players] don't need it, they have you!" Following these early frustrations Paul then sought to gather more explicit support from his Academy Director. *It was decided that rather than introduce a formal mentor system, they [Paul and his Academy Director] would encourage more regular coach/player meetings. Although this was not the ideal mechanism Paul described it as a 'second level' which enabled some headway to be made. The group expressed some sympathy with Paul's situation and espoused the need to provide a more accessible support structure for the players. This support structure required an explicit need for the coaches to appreciate a more 'global sense' of player development.* The mentor system would ultimately provide more constructive feedback and 'individual development plans' for the boys. Frank [club 5] thought that it was imperative for the coaches to engage in this process, as it was becoming increasingly difficult for the HoEW to provide such support for, what he described as, 'an ever increasing number of boys'. Paul then reinforced the need to change the traditional culture and attitude towards player development. He felt that he had 'opened the gate' and, although there was still a long way to go, he was determined to increase the global awareness of the coaches, for the sake of the both the players and the future of the HoEW.

Billy [club 3] alluded to the need to ensure a sense of balance and equity in the provision of such support. He referred to the dangers of such support being perceived as favouritism towards certain boys. Derek [club 4] also believed that the need for specific training (e.g., counselling) and the coaches' concern about time constraints were also potential barriers to the implementation of an appropriate mentor system.

The group recognised that, as the mentor system evolved there would be an inherent need to provide education and training for the coaches. However, the general consensus appeared to suggest that they all needed to continue to encourage and influence change on an operational level (i.e., allow the coaches to witness, and 'buy-in' to these benefits), in order to enable more formal, overt and strategic practices to emerge.

Billy implied that these operational skills must be supplemented by elements of craft and local awareness. He identified the need to recognise and seize appropriate opportunities to engage the coaches in debate. He emphasised the importance of clear lines of communication between the HoEW and the coaches. He alluded to his own personal location within the Academy and the subsequent access difficulties that he encountered (i.e., engaging with the coaches). His club had recently moved to a new academy site, and although this site was a state of the art complex he believed that he was now further removed from the coaching staff. He suspected that this was predominantly due to the fact that he now had his own separate room (i.e., separated from the coaching staff), adjacent to the boys' classroom. He now had to work much harder in order to find appropriate opportunities to engage the coaches in discussions about the boys (e.g., lunchtime, coffee breaks and 'loitering' in the canteen). Billy then continued to explain that this was why he had introduced weekly meetings with the coaches as part of his action phase.

Billy's weekly meetings had provided some positive results. *There was now a formal environment to discuss general issues surrounding the boys' development.* However, he expressed concern that these meetings tended to be guided, and dominated by his need for information rather than operate as a forum to share information. He believed that having a consistent weekly agenda had enhanced the outcomes of the meetings. He believed that, given time, the coaches would eventually begin to understand the general purpose and benefits of *sharing* information with him.

The group addressed the positive and negative features of being isolated from the coaches. Derek explained that because he shared an office with the coaching staff, all of the issues that Billy referred to were raised and discussed on a daily basis. However, he expressed concern over the fact that the office was a fairly intimidating

environment. He suspected that this made it difficult for the boys to approach either the coaches or him. Frank identified a similar experience, when he (suddenly) found himself sharing an office with the head of recruitment. He explained that this resulted in a significant reduction in the number of boys popping in for a chat. To try and address this, Frank had stipulated a requirement for his own office (with glass for people to see), when club 5 relocated their Academy. He had also asked for his own room at the college where the boys were taught. Derek believed that the positives of sharing an office with the coaches (i.e., immediate access and up-to-date issues) outweighed the negatives (i.e., limited access for the boys). He explained that there were alternative avenues and mechanisms that could be utilised to engage the boys in conversation (e.g., corridors, home, team coach, college).

The discussion moved on as Frank identified his action phase. *Frank sympathised with Paul in his endeavour to promote a more inclusive and responsible approach to the development of the boys. More specifically, Frank was concerned with raising the awareness of the educational programme.* He particularly wanted to encourage the coaching staff to engage in the delivery of the core skills programme. He appeared quite content with his efforts, as he explained that he had, 'by and large', accomplished what he set out to achieve. He had secured the services of his Academy Director, an assistant director, a coach, the full-time and part-time sport psychologists, the fitness coach and the nutritionist in the delivery of the core skills. This, he surmised cheerily, had raised the awareness and value of the educational programme within his Academy. Unfortunately, Frank did not allude to any developments in his *new action phase* (i.e., to utilise the child protection issues to influence the employment of new recruitment staff, more specifically, the working practices of the existing recruitment personnel. At this point in the proceedings Frank had to leave due to a personal commitment.

Although John Grayson [club1] had been not been involved in a reflection and development meeting, with the researcher, he provided details of his development. John recognised the operational skills of the rest of the group in influencing change before recounting the development of his role over time. He explained that initially, he had been frustrated by the conflict that existed between himself and the club physiotherapist. He stressed that he had a particular disdain for this particular

individual, and his unprofessional working practices. Subsequently, this had an adverse effect, not only on his position within the club, but also to, what he described as, a negative, 'never say well done' culture within the Academy. He explained that, the club no longer employed this person. Consequently, he was now in a better position to carry out his role. He stressed that he would be able to begin to influence peoples' behaviour within his Academy. *He identified that the change in personnel had acted as a catalyst for increasing communication, particularly about the boys, across the Academy.* He then recounted his action phase to the group. He expressed his desire to increase the number of opportunities for the pre-scholarship boys (i.e., under 16s) to attend the Academy during the *normal* school day. He reported that it was still early days in the process, and that he had not made significant headway. However, he had begun to increase his communication and contact with the appropriate schools. He explained that he was trying to ensure that the schools had confidence in the club to provide the boys with the appropriate educational support, whilst outside of the school environment. He also stressed the need to include the schools and the boys' parents in the development and refinement of the club's ideas.

Unlike the others in the group, John's endeavours had the full support of the coaching staff. John identified that the concept would enable the club to reduce the evening attendance burden of the boys (i.e., from four nights a week down to two nights and two afternoons, or mornings per week). John believed that this would allow the boys to 'have a life' outside of football. He did not envisage any internal barriers, as the coaches were *supportive* of the notion. He alluded to the perceptions of the schools and parents as a potential barrier. However, he identified that the government white paper 'Success in Schools', encouraged schools to adopt a more flexible and creative approach to their teaching.

The general consensus of the group was that by offering more time and experience of the Academy, to the pre-scholarship boys, would enable the club to make a more informed decision about the boy. They would be able to ascertain whether (or not) the boy was a *suitable* candidate for a scholarship. Paul re-iterated that his club had begun to involve the pre-scholarship boys more and more with the 1st year scholars. He explained that this procedure was adopted in an attempt to assess, not only technical ability but also personality, and character. Similarly, the rationale

underpinning the process was to enable a more informed decision to be made about the boy's ability to *cope* with a scholarship.

The discussion continued as Derek articulated his action phase. Similar to John, Paul, Frank and Billy *he sought to promote a more inclusive responsibility for player development*. More specifically, his action was embedded within the emotional, psychological and relationship constructs of player development. He explained that whilst working in the Academy he'd identified a limited awareness of these areas of player development. *He expressed concern over the potential emotional baggage that may hinder a boy's development, or even prevent them from being part of the system (i.e., not offered a scholarship)*. He then recounted the mechanisms that he had utilised to encourage, and enhance the psychological, emotional and welfare awareness of the coaches. He explained how he had utilised the tutors of the new Performance and Excellence National Diploma (i.e., specific modules such as the reflective practitioner and elite sport performance), and the boys, to engage the coaches in dialogue about the boys' football performance. He also expressed a desire to become more knowledgeable in this area of work. He explained that he had, subsequently, engaged in an MPhil in sports psychology. *He empathised with Paul, and stressed that his role had evolved from working primarily with the boys, to working more with the coaches*. He recognised the frustrations within the group, but espoused the need to continue to utilise personal skills in order to try to:

"...find ways of influencing, and dare I say, manipulating situations so that people start to listen to what you've got to say."

Derek also stressed the distinction between implicit opportunities to influence practice (e.g., tournaments, buses, encouraging people to deliver core skills) and his strive to engage in more explicit opportunities to affect practice. He explained that he had approached his Academy Director to support his undertaking of an MPhil in sports psychology. He stressed that this was '*couched*' as part of his staff development within the 'welfare' area of his role. His approach was, subsequently, approved.

Billy stressed that there were no formal qualifications specifically designed to meet the needs of the HoEW. However, Derek reiterated, that his MPhil was specific to his own personal needs and interests, and within the *welfare* umbrella of the role.

As with the rest of the group, there was a realisation (or acceptance) that this type of change would take a long time. Derek stressed the need to continue to influence change for the future. The group agreed that the football environment was evolving (slowly). Derek identified that the strategic aims and aspirations of the group should be to continue to encourage change within their environment. *He stressed a need to encourage people (including coaches) to be multi-skilled, or at least appreciative of the global perspective of player development.* Derek also identified a need for specialists (e.g., sports psychologists, child protection specialists, counsellors) to be brought in on a consultancy basis to assist in the education of all relevant personnel.

The group identified that within all of the elements of change, it was useful to identify potential *allies* (e.g., coaches, medical staff, Academy Directors) within the club. These allies could be utilised and encouraged to assist in influencing change. They recognised that the football environment was changing slowly. They agreed that there was a more 'player centred approach to development'. Nevertheless, they voiced concerns that the football industry was being prevented from moving forward because it still carried the scars of *tradition* and *fear*, which were supplemented by an inherent *scepticism* of anything, or anyone new. Billy concluded the session, explaining that, presently, the main aspect of the role was to *understand* young players, and *enable* their development. He prophesised that a growing appreciation of the HoEW would be established over time.

3.10 Overview – Study 2, Part I and Part II

The present inquiry explored the multi-faceted composition of responsibility within the remit of the HoEW. All of the HoEWs recognised the need to engage in subtle, primarily *operational*, mechanisms in order to promote and develop an understanding and acceptance of their role within the football environment. The group also recounted elements of *strategic* (or overt influential) frustration. This frustration was dominated by a perceived lack of understanding and appreciation of their role within their respective clubs. They identified, what they perceived as, a general naivety and unwillingness to understand their role. They recognised that if the coaches did not *understand* the role of the HoEW, then it was difficult for the coaches to communicate, what the HoEW would perceive as, pertinent issues relating to the boys' social, academic and welfare development. They believed that it was the responsibility of the HoEW to educate, or encourage the coaches to understand the more *global* development of the boy. However, they also reiterated the difficulty of achieving such an end. It appeared that *communication* within their various Academies (and within football per se) was limited.

The group members agreed that there was a need to engage and secure the support of their Academy Directors. The Academy Director was seen as the catalyst to influence *strategic* change. However, they also recognised a need to pursue more operational techniques (e.g., approaching individual coaches or players) to promote and influence a more inclusive working environment.

The group referred to an inherent fear of change, anything or anyone new, within the traditional football environment as a *real barrier* to their acceptance. The frustrations within the traditional football environment were evidenced throughout the focus group. For example, John (Participant 1) stressed that the only way for real change to occur was to, "...*outlive some of the dinosaurs*," that still existed within the football environment. It appeared that although Derek (Participant 4) explained that his position was quite unique (i.e., an open minded environment and an opportunity to access players, coaches and senior staff), he had also realised that people (i.e., coaches) saw him as a threat to their existence.

The group participants identified the educational remit as the easiest, or most

straightforward, part of their role. They agreed that they had the potential to engage in strategic change. They explained that this was because they were the first people in football to have an *explicit educational remit*, and the fact that nobody else wanted to do it! They stressed that the football industry was slowly evolving and that education was part of that evolution. It was important to utilise this development as a potential vehicle for *strategic* change, wherein, education would be viewed as a recruitment tool, and as an opportunity to develop well-rounded, balanced individuals.

The multi-faceted responsibility of the role was acknowledged. However, the group believed that the HoEW should be viewed as a *strategic facilitator* of these responsibilities, rather than being engaged in the operational demands of such activities. There was a clear appreciation that in order to become more strategic they would need to change the existing culture and attitudes inherent within their respective environments. They envisaged a need to influence, educate and, in some instances train, existing staff (i.e., Academy Directors and coaches) in order for them to understand the global developmental perspective of the HoEW. As the group members moved towards their change strategies it was identified that, in order for there to be an acceptance and commitment to change that they needed to *convince* existing staff (i.e., Academy Directors and coaches) that change and/or development was required in the first place.

3.10.1 The Process of Change

Consistent with participatory action research methodology the vehicles for change were identified through a series of interpretivist interviews (i.e., study one), followed by a collaborative focus group that extended the pertinent issues and began to construct and refine the perceptions of their working environment. Consistent with the critical paradigm, the further exploration of these issues encouraged the empowerment of the practitioner (Lather, 1986). This process provided them with further insight necessary to *demystify* and *critique* their own circumstances, and choose actions to improve their working environment (see Lather, 1986). The identification of action allowed each individual to concentrate on their own particular practices, with respect to their own working environment (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

In order to facilitate and stimulate the process of change the researcher kept regular contact with each of the practitioners (i.e., through telephone conversations, attendance at NW HoEW meetings). More formal reflection and development meetings were organised with each HoEW in order to monitor and enhance the process of change (see Gilbourne, 2001). However, Gilbourne (2001) stressed that it was unrealistic to expect all action research within the workplace setting to function smoothly. Moreover, Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) acknowledged that the process of action research may not be as neat as the self-contained cycles of planning, acting and observing, and reflecting suggests. This was evidenced in the present study through the experiences of John Grayson (Participant 1) and Paul Harrison (Participant 2a). As previously mentioned, both John and Paul were unable to attend the original action meeting. Consequently, further 'individual' action meetings occurred. Although both participants managed to identify potential action, it proved impossible to arrange a more formal reflection and development meeting with John.

The formalised reflection and development process allowed the four participants (i.e., Paul, Billy, Derek and Frank) to articulate, reflect and refine (or alter) their action phase.

It was evident that the issues of communication and, raising the awareness and understanding of the role of the HoEW continued to dominate proceedings as the individual action phases progressed. The promotion of a more inclusive responsibility for player development was consistent across all of the HoEWs' action phases. This inclusive remit included the educational, social and welfare development of the boys. Consequently, each action phase affected and/or targeted relationships within the respective Academies. Despite, these overarching themes each individual utilised different mechanisms and/or approaches to affect change peculiar to their environment.

Paul Harrison [club 2] identified the unpredictability of the football environment, and the general lack of respect and/or understanding towards the education and welfare remit as major stumbling block within his change strategy. He referred to a perceived lack of *kudos* associated with the welfare remit as a rationale for the coaches' lack of engagement and/or interest. He stressed, however, that engaging the coaches and his

Academy Director in the welfare debate had raised the profile of his agenda and strengthened his position within the club.

Billy Drisdale [club 3] identified that he had managed to instigate a clearer process of communication between himself and the coaches. He had managed to introduce the weekly meetings that he'd initially identified in his action phase. As the process unfolded he found that the coaches did not seem to fully understand the purpose of such meetings. In essence, the coaches appeared to have a limited understanding of Billy's role (i.e., to facilitate and inform the development of the boys' educational, technical, academic, and social needs). Billy referred to the existing traditional, and reactionary practices of the football environment as a barrier to his change strategy. He also explained that he wanted to promote (and create) a more structured and organised environment for the boys. Nevertheless, he was continually frustrated by the *ad hoc* professional tendencies of the coaches.

Derek Traynor's [club 4] strategic aspirations concerned the mantle of coach development. More specifically, he sought to raise the awareness of the welfare remit of his role. In essence, what he perceived to be, the emotional and psychological development of young players. Derek initially utilised the BTec in Performance and Excellence award. He explained that through the tutors and the 'reflective practitioner' and 'performance and excellence' modules of the course, he *covertly* encouraged the players to approach the coaches, to discuss their individual development. He stressed that this 'raised the awareness' of the players' personal development requirements. It also intrigued the coaches, which eventually encouraged them to engage, and discuss development issues with the boys, in a more formal classroom setting. In addition to this development, Derek still sought to introduce a more explicit psychological remit to the players' development. He was also aware of the traditional environment within which he worked, and the traditional scepticism of *new* ideas, such as sports psychology. Derek continued to engage in predominantly operational techniques (i.e., approaching individual coaches, players, and tutors) to promote the emotional development of the players. Simultaneously, he pursued a more explicit staff development requirement (i.e., MPhil in sports psychology) under the guise of the 'welfare' remit of his role. Derek explained that his covert operational mechanisms had begun to stimulate debate within the Academy

his covert operational mechanisms had begun to stimulate debate within the Academy but he required a more formal qualification and/or expertise to drive a more overt strategic remit.

The more inclusive responsibility for player development continued with Frank O'Hare [club 5], although, Frank was more concerned with the delivery of the core skills package within his educational remit. Fundamentally, Frank achieved this by approaching various members of staff (including his Academy Director and the coaches). On reflection, Frank alluded to having some reservations about the professional capacity of one of the coaches to deliver. He re-assessed his action to include more appropriate individuals (i.e., assistant Academy Director, the reverend, the fitness coach). Frank explained that although not all the coaches had or could engage in the core skills he felt that his efforts had at least raised the profile of the educational remit. During Frank's tenure as the HoEW, he had undertaken the additional responsibility of managing the Academy's financial accounts. He explained that, in some ways, he resented the responsibility yet stressed that this was symptomatic of the football environment. He explained that his Academy Director had identified that he was the most appropriately skilled person for the job. Frank admitted that this role enabled him to move away from some of his educational responsibility. More specifically, the role of the *highway patrol officer* (i.e., monitoring attendance at the college). This was a role he did not particularly enjoy anyway.

3.10.2 Summary

The themes of inclusion, communication, awareness and respect continued through into the shared reflection meeting. Through the formalised reflection process, it is evident that the HoEWs have, to some extent, raised the awareness of their role within their respective Academies. The process has also identified an implicit requirement to engage, predominantly, in operational practices. Each HoEW has had to utilise his craft and local experiences, in association with supplementary knowledge of the traditional football culture and environment, to influence change within their respective Academies. In some instances this craft and local knowledge has enabled them to engage, and influence the key stakeholders in a player's development (i.e., the

Academy Director and the coaches). Throughout the action phases the HoEWs have expressed an implicit desire to do everything in the best interests of the boys. It appears that the operational demands of this desire (i.e., the need to be accessible, approachable and visible) are considerable.

It is evident that the HoEWs appear to have more strategic influence and autonomy within areas such as educational provision and child protection. In some instances the HoEWs have utilised (or manipulated) this position to engage coaches and Academy Directors in more explicit issues surrounding player development. However, the all-encompassing nature of the 'welfare' remit still remains, and continues to stimulate debate and tension within the respective Academies. It appears that the HoEWs believe that the welfare remit is the responsibility of all staff (in particular the coaches) associated with the club. Some coaches have still to be convinced.

It may appear that some of the HoEWs have been more successful than others in influencing change. However, Kemmis and McTaggart (2000; p595) stressed that:

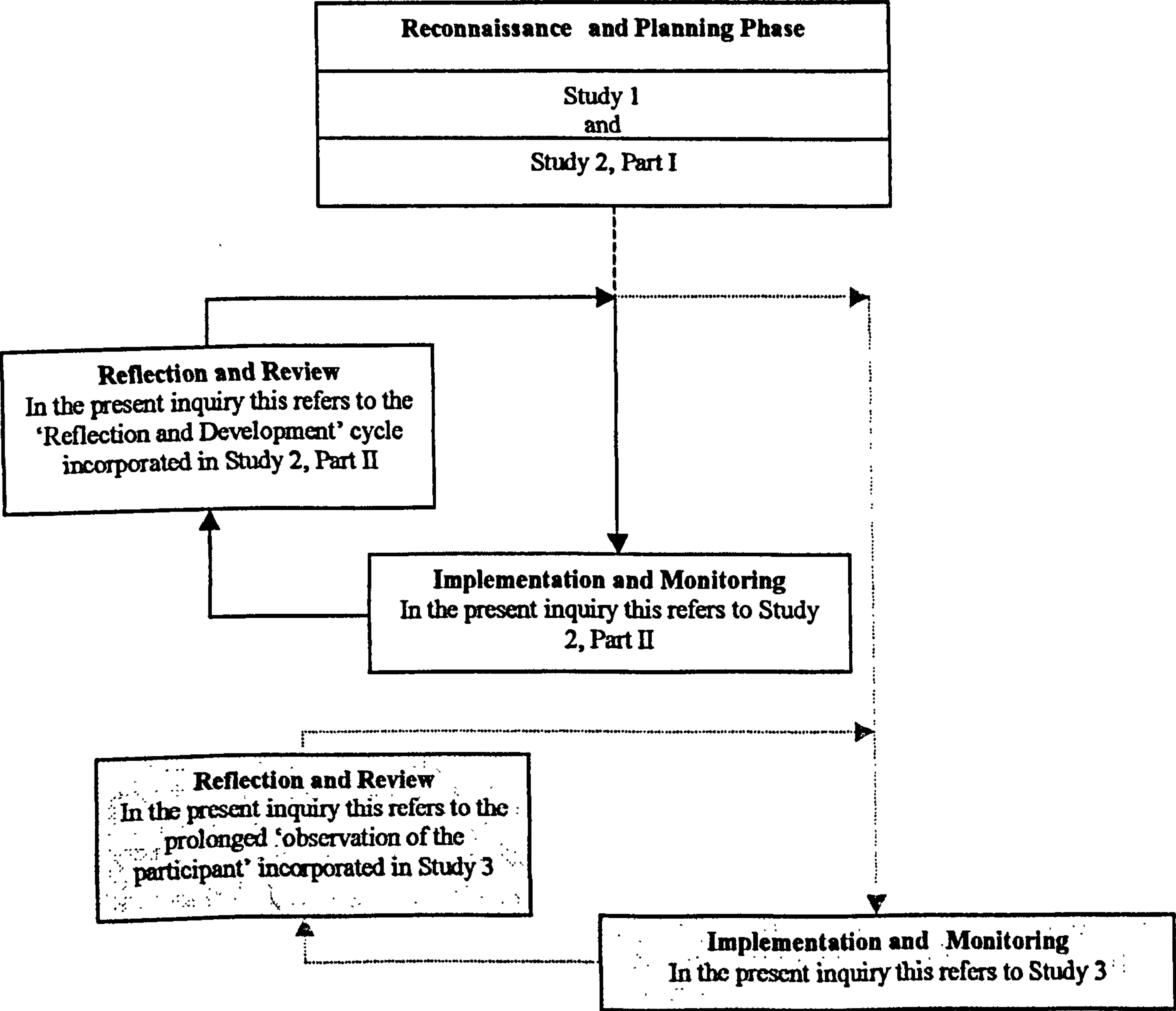
"The criterion of success is not whether participants have followed the steps faithfully, but whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices, their understandings of their practices, and the situations in which they practice."

The HoEWs recognised that the football environment was evolving slowly. They articulated the need to continue to engage with the coaches, and their respective Academy Directors in order to influence change. They agreed that this process of change needed to continue, not only for the sake of a more *global* understanding of player development, but also for the future of their role. At this juncture, it would seem appropriate to follow such enthusiastic, committed and passionate individuals in their quest.

Chapter Four

Study 3:

An Exploration of the Evolving Working Practices of Two Heads of Education and Welfare Utilising Protracted Observations



Author's note: The area highlighted in the above model reflects the location of the material presented in Chapter 4 (i.e., Study 3 - protracted observation of the HoEWs) within the action research cycle.

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this phase of the thesis was to further explore and understand the ongoing experiences of the Heads of Education and Welfare (HoEW). Study 1 and 2 identified that the HoEW has a multi-faceted role, which relied, predominantly, on elements of craft and local experiences. In addition, the HoEWs' *influential working practices* appear to be dominated by operational and/or covert procedures. It appeared that these predominantly covert, operational procedures were necessary in order to establish the credibility, and raise the awareness, of the education and welfare remit within the football club. More specifically, these working practices were utilised to encourage a better appreciation of the HoEWs' remit within the coaches and their respective Academy Directors. In order to further explore these relationships and working practices it seemed appropriate to engage more closely with the HoEWs within their own working environment (i.e., their football Academies).

4.2 Observation of the Participants: a Rationale For Ethnographic Engagement

The process of ethnography enables more meaningful context, appreciation and fuller understanding of specific encounters, events or experiences (Tedlock, 2000). Hammersley (1992) described that engaging in relatively prolonged interaction with people (one's own or other), in their everyday lives, allowed the ethnographer to better understand the beliefs, motivations, and behaviours of their subjects than by using any other approach. Denzin (2002; p485) described, properly conceptualised ethnographic research as, "... a civic, participatory, collaborative project, a project that joins the researcher with the researched in an ongoing moral dialogue." Moreover, the progressional synthesis of the action research established in Study 2, through to the present inquiry can be evidenced. More specifically, Study 3 embraced the principles of prolonged collaborative ethnography, which was recognised by Denzin (2002) as a *form* of participatory action research, characterised by shared ownership, and underpinned by notions of empowerment, emancipation, and dialectical ideals with a commitment to influence change. In this sense, these principles are embedded within Study 3.

Although covert ethnographic research has been (and in some quarters still is) undertaken, there will more often than not, be moral and ethical issues to consider (Tedlock, 2000). Tedlock (2000) suggested that ethnographic researchers should, where appropriate, adopt more overt, humanly involved and politically correct research practices. In addition, she advocated the blending of epistemological and personal understandings within a single text. This moral and ethical standpoint within critical practices allows a shift from, "... 'participant observation' to 'the observation of participation' ... in which ethnographers both experience and observe their own and others' co-participation within the ethnographic scene of encounter." (Tedlock, 2000; p464).

Through consultation with the respective HoEWs and two research colleagues, it seemed appropriate to engage in a period of shadowing (or observation of the participant) with two of the practitioners. This shadowing would include various half-day, and full-day coverage, where appropriate, of the HoEW's working practices over a five-month period. In an effort to avoid an onerous commitment from each practitioner, the potential *nuisance* factors of shadowing (i.e., identified by each HoEW with respect to other members of staff within their Academy) and the inherent difficulties of being accepted as part of the football environment (see Parker, 1998), it was agreed that these observations should be regular (i.e., monthly), and arranged at the convenience of the two practitioners. The primary objective was to observe a range of interactions and events, and monitor the development of these interactions, and subsequent action over a six-month period.

There are inherent procedural implications of observing others in their working environment. It is essential that the researcher (and his or her research tools, such as a tape recorder, or note taking tendencies) do not become an obstacle and/or a liability within their respective environment (Mitchell and Charmaz, 1998). For example, in the present study the author refrained from using a tape recorder whilst in or around the respective football academies. Note taking (even carrying a notepad and pen) was restricted to the confines of the HoEW's *empty* office space, or to more appropriate formal settings, such as meetings. Potentially, incidents of liability, or nuisance (i.e., perceived by the HoEW, the coaches, players or staff) could destroy the existing trust,

create hostility, hinder existing access or future access to others, or even damage professional credibility (see Mitchell and Charmaz, 1998).

4.3 Biographical Positioning

Foley (2002) suggested that if the researcher is to produce a more defensible interpretation of his or her fieldwork then there is a requirement to explore the 'self' and the 'other' relationship. Moreover, he stated that this self-critical awareness allowed the researcher to realise their limitations as an interpreter and helps "...deflate any fantasies we hold about absolute truth and objectivity." (p473). Engaging in this critical self-reflexivity can help to position the author with respect to what they know, and how they know it (Sparkes, 1994). Similarly, Richardson (2000) asked of this postmodern author dilemma, how the author should put themselves in to their own text, and with what consequences? In essence, the dilemma centres on identifying which part of the author's biography is relevant, and how this can be written without engaging in self-absorption or providing narcissistic undertones (Sparkes, 1994). Tierney (2002) explained that those who claim to subscribe to postmodernism suggest that the author, "...ought not to be omniscient as if he or she is merely a recording instrument presenting neutral data." (p388). Rather he suggested that the 'researcher-cum-author' should become actively engaged in the text, and that any notions of objectivity or neutrality were misguided. Consequently, Tierney (2002) suggested that the social science text had seen a reflexive turn.

It appears evident that, within the context of the present inquiry, I should make my own *value* position clear. This position should include the 'so called' facts and ideological assumptions that are attached to such a position (Denzin, 2002). At this juncture, it would seem appropriate to offer the reader some biographical context appropriate to the research process, and subsequent interactions with the participants.

An academic colleague, Dr David Gilbourne, and I were first introduced to the North West Heads of Education and Welfare during the summer of 1998. We were invited by Participant 1, John Grayson, to do a presentation on 'youth player support'. This presentation included both psychological and sociological considerations of player support. As our interactions evolved it appeared evident that the group welcomed our

external support and were supportive of a further, more collaborative relationship. Both John and Derek Traynor, Participant 4, were instrumental in instigating subsequent discussions (and approval of the research) between the HoEWs, the Football Association's Chief Educational Advisor and ourselves.

As previously identified in the present project the collaborative research began with a commitment from the group to engage in the process, followed by an extensive reconnaissance phase which included a series of interviews (Study 1) and a focus group (Study 2, Part I). Subsequently, the participants engaged in a longitudinal process of identifying, implementing and monitoring their appropriate action (Study 2, Part II). The subsequent interactions (i.e., between the author and the HoEWs) up to this point spanned a period of approximately four years.

During this time, both the HoEWs and I became aware of our mutual football backgrounds, and our reciprocal aspirations to enhance the developmental experiences of talented young footballers. During the process of time, each member of the group was made aware of my personal football engagement, experiences and subsequent disillusion with the traditional football environment. In short, how my association with two professional football league clubs, and their apparent dismissal of my educational development, had *allegedly* hindered my football potential. I sensed that the HoEWs initially thought of me as an academic, with an interest in young player development. As our interactions have evolved I believe that they have come to understand my desire to enhance the experiences of young players. This desire, I sense, I share with them all.

4.4 Representation

This ethnographic observation of the participant provides a collaborative and reciprocal quest for understanding (Stacey, 1988). In the present inquiry (i.e., longitudinal interaction) it was essential to utilise an appropriate vehicle to represent both the practitioners' (and the author's) experiences. Tedlock (2000; p471) suggested that one of the most appropriate forms for creating meaning is, "...a narrative that attends to the temporal dimension of human existence and shapes events into a unity." Furthermore, Tedlock (2000) stressed that the author must recognise,

and hence represent, that the human being (i.e., the object and subject of the inquiry), exists in a multiple strata of reality, which may be organized in different ways.

Despite prolonged collaborative interaction, the product is ultimately that of the researcher regardless of how much the final product, or in this instance the narrative, is modified or influenced by the practitioner (Sparkes, 1994). Tedlock (2000; p455) stated that, "Because ethnography is both a process and a product, ethnographers' lives are embedded within their field experiences in such a way that all of their interactions involve moral choices." Moreover, Tedlock continues to espouse that the *experience* is meaningful, and that subsequent behaviour is generated from, and informed by this meaningfulness. Even though the story is the author's tale of the 'self' (i.e., 'I') and the 'other', it is important that the 'self' does not dominate the text unnecessarily. Moreover, Tierney (2002) suggested that although the text ought to be biographically positioned, so that the author's stance is clear, the concern for particular phenomena, people or ideas should not be neglected. Mitchell and Charmaz (1998) recommended that the author should emerge where appropriate to help move the story along. The shift from participant observation to the observation of participation also enables the researcher to present both the *self* and the *other* together within a single narrative frame that concentrates on the process, character and emotions of the ethnographic experience (Tedlock, 2000). In essence, this process enables a legitimate multi-voice dialogue (i.e., of the self and others) to occur within the text. The *inner feelings, and reflections*, of the author (i.e., myself) are represented in the following narratives in an *italic* font (see Tedlock, 2000). However, Tierney (2002) referred to the dangers of assuming that the author can capture (or has the ability to capture) vivid experiences and/or the qualities of an individual just by simply inserting the 'self' in to the text. Moreover, he stated that writing is a craft, and that:

"Experimental social science genres such as the short story or performance pieces need to have a narrative nature that captures the unique voices and lives of the individuals in ways that normal social science texts cannot and that draws connections between the author's voice and those of whom he or she writes. Too often, the social science experiment fails because all the author is trying to do is recreate the static social science narrative in a slightly different voice"

(Tierney, 2002; p396)

For the purpose of the present inquiry, representations of the individual's (and the author's) experiences are presented as two separate stories. Although, reflective of the shared experience, the stories try to offer a representation of the practitioner's understandings as well as my own (see Mitchell, 1993). The source document recounts a variety of scenes, experiences, events and interactions; however, it seemed appropriate for each story to concentrate, predominantly, on the development of the individual's respective action phase (i.e., developed and refined in Study 2). In this sense, I have endeavoured to show the reader what I know, what I saw and how I saw it; not just tell, nor persuade through more assertion (see Mitchell and Charmaz, 1998). Furthermore, the images presented throughout the two narratives endeavour to capture a flavour of the actual experience (Mitchell and Charmaz, 1998). The stories aspire to *inform*, *engage* and *invite* the reader to draw his or her own interpretations (Davis, 2000) or, as Tierney (2002) suggested, perhaps compel the reader to engage in social change.

The narratives presented have been exposed to a series of reworking of observations and experiences (Okely, 1994). The reworking, on-going development of understanding, and peer dissemination (i.e., following a similar rubric as evidenced in Study 1 and 2) enabled further reflexive moments to occur (Davis, 2000). This constant reflexive process (i.e., recounting the interactions between the author, the practitioners and their environment) enabled appropriate narratives to evolve. More specifically, the narratives represent the understandings of the researcher, and the practitioners' subjectivities, beliefs and associated working practices (i.e., their way of looking at the world), (Corker, 1999).

Following the completion of the narratives each one was handed to the respective participants. The purpose of such a procedure served a number of objectives. First, the dissemination of the narrative provided a moral and professional courtesy as both Derek and Billy were intrigued and fascinated by the writing of, what Billy described as, his *life story*. Davis (2002) suggested that offering participants an opportunity to reflect (and comment) on drafts of a final text, could contribute to (further) emancipatory notions. Although, this was not the primary objective of the process it would be viewed as a continuation of the good practice already witnessed and a further commitment to influence change. Moreover, the process did not seek approval

or validation of the text, but allowed the author (and the practitioner) to engage in further reflexive moments (Davis, 2002).

Denzin (2002) suggested that within the seventh moment, the criteria for evaluating critical qualitative work are both moral and ethical. However, Tedlock (2000) explained that the success or valued interpretation of the text is also "...tied to outside social forces, including local, national, and sometimes even international relationships that make the research possible as well as to a readership that accepts the endeavours as meaningful." Furthermore, she stressed that the concerns are not so much objectivity, neutrality, and distance as they are risk, the possibility of failure, and the hope of success. With respect to such comments, the issues surrounding *appropriate legitimisation* within the present inquiry will be discussed later in the thesis.

The following narratives recount the experiences, working relationships and working practices of two Heads of Education and Welfare, Participant 3, Billy Drisdale, Club 3 and Participant 4, Derek Traynor, Club 4. Embedded within the narratives are the author's experiences, reflections and perceptions of their respective environments and working practices (i.e., in *italics*).

4.5 Understanding the Role of the Head of Education and Welfare: Utilising Operational Mechanisms to Develop Lines of Communication and Relationships in a Football Academy

4.5.1 Introducing Billy Drisdale – Head of Education and Welfare, Neddlington City Football Club

I have come to understand that Billy sees himself as a ‘football man’. He spent his formative years as an amateur footballer. Not quite good enough. A failed footballer? Maybe, but only he would know that. Billy’s CV includes a distinguished coaching career scattered with international duties and over 25 years of teaching experience. Football through and through, he’s spent the best part of his life engaged, and in love with the football world. And he’s still here. Married to a club he loves, spending every day immersed in the surroundings of a Premiership football club. Making a difference to young players’ football development. Making it easier for young talented players to make the grade; the one he didn’t achieve. Making it easier for the boys who don’t make the grade to have a life after football.

Billy’s been involved with Club for the past twenty years. Initially helping out with the youth trainees. Voluntary at first, then part-time. A bit of coaching, a bit of scouting. Then he wrote his own job description. Well, not quite. His was for a ‘Youth Development Officer’ not ‘Head of Education and Welfare’ but, I sensed that would have to do.

Billy appears at home in a football club. He seems to understand the culture, the people, the players. He sometimes talks ‘misty eyed’ about the ‘good old’ days before commercialisation. But he also recognises that change is necessary for the sake of the boys. The good old days were only good if you made it. Not if you were left on the scrap heap to fend for yourself. Terms like ‘education and welfare’ weren’t even invented.

Billy lives and breathes this club. He’s a busy man with energy levels and enthusiasm beyond his 56 years. If he could add a couple more hours to the twenty-four he already has, he would use it to speak to a boy, a parent, a teacher, a coach or a

landlady. Make sure everything and everyone was all right. Ensuring everything that can be done, is being done in the best interests of the boys.

So what of me, the one telling Billy's story? How do I match up to these credentials? I too am a football man. Player development is close to my heart. In Billy's language, I too am a failed footballer. I didn't make it to the big time. But unlike Billy I think I was good enough. I was forced to choose between academia and football. When I was a player education and football were seen as separate entities. Time dedicated to one, was perceived as diminished time in pursuit of the other. Never the twain shall meet. The concept of a Head of Education and Welfare didn't exist. There was nobody like Billy to fight my corner, to enable me to develop my education in concert with my football. Nobody to find a solution. Nobody to promote, or view my intelligence as an attribute to my football. Too clever to be a footballer! If someone like Billy had been there for me, then who knows? My story may have been completely different.

Saturday 12th October 2002 – 10:30am

"I've not been able to do this, this morning." Billy moans pointing at a letter he was trying to finish. "I came in early to do this and then Larry Burnell arrived, so I've had a cup of tea with him and now you're here."

Larry Burnell is the former Youth Development Officer at Blackburn Rovers and now an FA Match Observer. From the snippets I picked up I believe that this entails observing Academy games, checking things are in order.

Still carrying his letter, Billy leads me to the canteen, a large expanse of tables with a glass wall that overlooks the pitches at the back. It probably seats about one hundred people. A good wedding venue perhaps? The only problem is that the trees have grown to obscure the view of the pitches. The canteen is empty, apart from Larry and Roger Mitchell [Chief Recruitment Officer] who are sat comfortably over their morning papers. The clapping of the large white plates being stacked by the young canteen girl occasionally disturbs the silence. Billy introduces me from John Moores, and they both stand up to shake my hand and welcome me. "These two are real football people." He announces, they simultaneously look behind each other and chuckle.

By 'real' football people I presume Billy is referring to the fact that they've lived the life, they've been in football for a long time, played a bit, coached a bit and now work in associated posts. Roger's been at the club for years. I remember him as a coach when I was here as a trialist some

18 years ago. He was a 'fixture an fitting' then. He's hardly changed, a little older obviously, a little less hair...

Billy gets his coffee and puts a teacake under the toaster. He pulls out the letter again... "We've got some parent trouble, a bit of 'tittle tattle' and stirring, so I'm putting this together as a reminder."

One of the mothers was 'bad mouthing' a coach, in front of other parents and boys. Billy was unwilling to go into the specifics but it was obviously unhealthy. Another parent had informed a steward... but the rumour spread between the stewards before finally being picked up by a senior coach and passed on to Billy.

Billy was obviously annoyed about this, both with the parents and the stewards, as he grumbled, "The stewards will be told, and I'm trying to send a message to the parents with this." The letter was intended to outline the paramount importance of the boys' well-being within the club and also announced the appointment of Joanne Stuttard the designated Child Protection Officer. It also acted to remind people of Billy's role. The text suggested that if any parents had any concerns or worries they were encouraged to seek him, or a 'relevant' member of the senior staff (i.e., coaches, physiotherapist) out in order to air their concerns. Billy was just refining the 'wording' and then it would be re-typed on Monday and sent to 150 sets of parents. "That's another thing." He grumbled again, "I'll have to do that on Monday. Sign 150 of these buggers! But I've got to sign them because it's personal, and an important message I'm trying to send. I'll still have a 'cup-o-tea' with the woman who started the whole thing off, mind. Try and get to the bottom of it."

Billy has always struck me as a genuine, caring man brimming with ideas and ideals. He's everyone's friend, charming, especially to the ladies, and funny too. It appears that a sense of humour is an essential pre-requisite for survival in the football world.

Tuesday 20th November- 10:20 am

We ventured back towards the admin office where Billy discussed one of the boys travel arrangements with Jenny (the Academy secretary). Jenny passed him a copy of some typing he'd requested. "I'm just finishing this off. Can you tell me what this says?" She says as she points to one of the A4 sheets that Billy had hand written. Billy struggles for a second to recognise his own writing, "I did this at four o'clock in the morning, that's why it's like this," he implores, trying to defend himself. "I had an idea and just wrote it down! Do you think you [Jenny] could get this done whilst Dave's here?" he pleads charmingly, "You know he's from the University. Writes a lot, so he'll be able to help me, maybe mark it for me!" he chuckles.

A few minutes later Jenny finishes off the typing and prints a copy for Billy. It's an article he's been asked to write regarding the role of education in football. "Come on," he says, "We can do this now." We

head out the familiar way down the corridor, through the classroom and into Billy's office.

I place my bag in its usual place by Billy's office window, before we turn and wander simultaneously towards the canteen for coffee. The Academy seems very quiet this morning. Most of the players are out training. The canteen is empty again apart from two gentlemen chatting over a cup of coffee. Billy shares a joke with one of them as we grab our coffee and head back to his office.

He begins reading out his article "Don't let football ruin your life..."

4.5.2 It's about Knowing the Boys

The role of the Head of Education and Welfare is an extremely diverse role. Consequently, I often sensed that a kind of uncertainty existed in a number of areas, between HoEWs themselves, the coaches, and even the Football Association, as to precisely what the role entails. However, one thing that is abundantly clear is that the role centres on the players. To play your part in player development you must know your players.

Saturday 12th October 2002 – 11:20am

We take our weight off the brollies, and meander behind the home team's goal and across to the two hundred or so parents huddling in an orderly form behind the roped perimeter. The conversation continues about the boys as Billy and I twitch between each other, the game and the on-looking parents. Billy reiterates his core characteristics for success by talking about the boys. "You see Jonno, the Centre half? He states firmly, "You'd invite him to a party, you'd have him with you in the trenches. You know he's a goodun'! But Stokesy, the left full back, he'd shoot you in the back. He's just a yob, you can't trust him"...

I felt privileged that Billy was sharing this information with me. But at the same time a little perturbed by his bluntness. His character assassination of Stokesy suggested that the boy would be extremely fortunate to see out the full term of his scholarship.

Billy opens the fold out handle on his brolly as we settle by the bottom corner flag away from the waiting parents. Billy checks and then sets his watch as the second half kicks off. He scours the team and notices that Robbie Liner, the centre forward, has been taken off. He's curious, the lads a good player so he's either injured or having a bad game. We discuss some of the boys, in particular the number 10, Danny Lavender. "He's being pushed here, he's been in the first team for a few friendlies, then he's back with the U-19's, then with the reserves. They all like him, they're just teasing him with it and seeing how he copes". "Rainey, the number five, on the other hand, my view is he's not getting a contract, so

I've got to watch him. He failed his intermediate Leisure and Tourism, so I've got to make sure we get his education right. He won't be here for long".

The decision about whether to offer Rainey a contract or not has not been made. Billy's gut feeling is that he won't get one and he needs to ensure the boy is equipped with something to assist his future. In Billy's view, he may get another club, but he may not.

A loud roar erupts as we watch helplessly as the away team's centre forward rises to glance in a curling free kick.

We begin our second round of the morning. We wander down the line, Billy picking off people at will. A number of short conversations with expectant parents ensue as we meander towards the half way line. A generally uneventful trip, interrupted twice by two loud cheers from the under 17s pitch that signalled two quick goals from the away team. Surprisingly, we reach the bottom corner within the space of 10 minutes. The rain starts to spit again. As I wrestle with my brolly, Billy retreats back to the Danny's dad. He puts his arm around his shoulder and has a few quiet words. He returns and whispers some frustration, "His lad played in some pre-season friendlies for the first team right. He'll probably play in the Worthington cup this season as well. After these friendlies he wanted me to ease off on his education. I said we couldn't. No one's said he's getting a contract. I assured him that his education wouldn't hinder his chances. Anyway, now he wants to know what the dates are for the Christmas break. He wants to take him away on a bloody cruise. Well, it's make you're mind up! First he wants us to ease his education then he wants to take him away. I don't understand them [parents] sometimes. He's got plenty of other times in his life to take him on a bloody cruise..."

Billy's animated with frustration, fuelled by the fact that although the Academy boys get a break over Christmas this boy may be required by the first team or the reserves. He should make himself available. He might miss an opportunity. The under 19s game is a bit flat. Another cheer goes up as the away team make it two nil. They seem resigned to a 2-0 defeat. I begin searching for some characters. Someone to drive the team back into the game, perhaps even save a little pride. I almost wish I could get my boots on, turn back the clock... I sense Billy feels the same.

12:25 pm

Disgruntled we turn on our heels and head back to the under 17s game. Two one down but there's still twenty minutes to go. The rain eases off, Billy unfolds his brolly handle and rests with his arms folded scrutinizing the game. The boys look tired but appear to be having most of the possession.

I ask him about his morning's work, "Apart from the results a thoroughly enjoyable morning, very relaxing. I've done my job, if people want to see

me they can, I'm here and I'm available". Billy's arms flail up into the air and collapse in exasperation as the number 7 hits the post and the ball spins out of play. Minutes later the ball flies over our heads, Billy's off. In danger of pulling his hamstrings, he leaps off his umbrella and sprints to gather the ball and return it quickly into play. The boys get a corner just in front of us. Stokesy comes across to take it. It's a poor corner and is easily headed away. "Wasted" Billy mutters. The ball comes back for another corner. Stokesy again. This time he swings it high, the ball curls out of play and back in. The linesman raises his flag and the referee signals for a goal kick. Stokesy starts effing and blinding at the referee, outraged at the decision. Billy mumbles, "Bloody yob, it was miles out, bloody waster." The final whistle signals the end of his morning rounds.

12:45 pm

We trudge back towards the main glass doors of the Academy. Recounting the positives of the morning. The under 19s were simply outplayed, 'not up for it', but the under 17s had the better of the game. They should have won by a canter in the first half. They should never have lost. They played some good football at times, passed it around nicely but were slack in the second half. Too complacent, lacking a killer instinct perhaps. "These things are sent to test us." is Billy's philosophical resolve.

Billy aspires to know each player inside out. He knows, or at least he thinks he knows, or has a good inclination, of who's going to make it and who isn't. He needs to know how they are performing on the field. He knows how they are performing educationally and he knows how they are coping emotionally. He has to know because he needs to monitor the boy's educational needs, or least ensure that the boy's education is not compromised by his football, or the demands of the club. If the boy isn't going to make it he needs to prepare that boy for the 'exit'. Help him find another club or prepare him for life after football. It's his business to know. His job is to ensure that everything is done in the best interests of the boy's educational, technical, academic and social needs. Yet frustration is abound. Communication, as in most businesses or industry, is a problem. Communication can be sporadic between players, between coaches and players, and between the coaches and Billy. He often blames himself for not knowing something about a boy; if he's gone on loan, or injured. But he can also refer to the lack of understanding of the role by others, "Why does the education guy need to know?"

4.5.3 Billy and the Coaches

If we go back to the early stages of my relationship with Billy and the longitudinal research that we have engaged in. His initial 'action' phase plan revolved around his relationship with the coaches. He wanted to instigate 'weekly meetings' with the coaches in order to share issues and information about the boys' development. Although Billy achieved success initially, by instigating the meetings, he was frustrated by the 'one way' direction of the information. In one of our earlier 'reflection and development' meetings (19th March 2002) he had recounted his despair:

"More of it [information] seems to be from me. I tend to give out news and problems and everything, they don't tend to give me news. I have to say how did the team go on? Even though I was there. What did you think of Saturday's game? I've still got to change their kind of ways. I'd like it to be not a kind of, "Billy there's three or four points from the coaches," when what they're really saying is, "Billy can you organise this? This hasn't happened, that guy did such a thing. If he's gonna do that he's never going to make a player. Can you sort it?"

Billy's frustration's continued and he felt that his hopes for his 'action phase' plan were being undermined. However, all this was set to change. As Billy had predicted, the summer of 2002 brought sweeping changes at the Academy. A completely new set of coaches was brought in.

Pre-shadowing meeting - 13th September 2002

"What has happened is, and quite rightly so, the Manager has brought a new coach in and right from the off we were very lucky because we went to Portugal with him so we had quality time for seven or eight days... myself, Roger Harrison, Paulo, Trevor Nolan the physio. There were four of us there and twenty-one boys. So it was a great week, but what came out of it was he's [the manager] brought in as somebody different. The Manager wanted to try something different. He's [Paulo] got a lot of experience, 29 years... [National School of Excellence]. He's Italian. He's a lot of experience. What I think he's brought in is the experience of Greg McStay, an educated young man, been right to the top, played for the Manager and therefore there's a link. Roger Harrison is our Director of Youth Football, but he's got other links as well and he's going to be a big link and a help between all parties and a good figurehead and a smashing guy."

With new coaches employed, Billy had to revisit his action phase plan to accommodate the new regime. He was still intent on establishing communication processes, but the 'one-way' weekly meetings had vanished. He was back to square

one. Well, not quite. Billy was happy with the new regime. He had a lot of respect for the new coaching structure. Paulo possessed a vast and highly respected coaching CV and Greg was a highly respected ex-player and international with reserve team coaching experience. An educated man. Billy full of life, hope and expectation was looking forward to the future.

4.5.4 The Honeymoon Period

Saturday 12th October 2002 – 11:15 am

Billy speaks fondly of Paulo, the new Italian coach that has been brought in. The language barrier is a little troublesome for the boys but Billy has helped out on a number of occasions to settle the boys down or explain a situation. He talks excitedly about the new and innovative coaching methods that Paulo has brought to the club and how some boys have been transformed, blossomed under his tutelage, “The players don’t get hammered (verbally) like they used to, they play with a lot more freedom and invention, they’re not afraid of making mistakes.”

Monday 14th October – 12:45pm

Billy and I wander into the canteen. Billy walks straight over to the coaches’ table and taps Greg McStay (under 19s coach) on the shoulder, and states assuredly, “Greg, this is David Richardson from John Moores University. I mentioned him the other day. He’ll be with me now and again.” Greg stands to greet me and offer his hand “Yeah, yes nice to meet you”. Billy looks around for Paulo (the under 17s coach) and then ushers me across the canteen through another door and into the main coaches room.

This is a fairly large space with about three sets of double desks neatly positioned over by the wall of windows. The windows look out across the first team practice pitches and Astro-turf. Billy knocks on the door and shouts, “Paulo, are you in here Paulo?” He creeps around the door ushering me in behind him and continues to enter into the coaches’ changing room. “Paulo, there you are.” he bellows. Paulo is just pulling up his trousers after a morning training session and a quick shower. “Someone I’d like you to meet, Paulo. Dave Richardson from Liverpool John Moores University. He’s doing some work with me about my role. He’s working with all of the Heads of Education and Welfare in the North West.” Paulo is an extremely jolly and amiable chap. His English is not the best but he has an unusually warm and welcoming demeanour. One that I’ve not experienced before, especially from the coaches, within the football club environment. Paulo, a small, older but extremely fit, latino looking chap, shrugs off the embarrassment of being interrupted whilst getting changed and shakes my hand. We chat briefly about the role and he breaks into some reassuring words for Billy, “This is an important role. It has to do with everything about the boy. A very big role, important role.” We also discuss Stokesy and his behaviour during the game on Saturday. He speaks softly but with authority, “This boy is no good. His

behaviour is not that of a footballer. I don't think he will make a footballer. Today I warn him and if he is no good after, then he must go." He emphasises his intent with a gesture towards the door with the back of his right hand. The intercom system echoes out a call, "Billy Drisdale to reception, Billy Drisdale to reception." Paulo continues, "But you, it is very nice to meet you. I hope you enjoy your time with Billy." He shakes my hand again and we all head back towards the canteen.

Billy has clearly asserted his presence on the coaches. Throughout my previous visits, primarily under the old coaching regime, we had never, even inadvertently, wandered through in to the 'coaches domain'. This was a new approach from Billy but I sensed an extremely positive demeanour, and an air of belonging. He didn't appear bothered or concerned about disturbing them. But it was more than that. He was engaging them, showing them what he was up to. Showing me that he had a different, more open relationship with the new coaches. He was their friend, he respected them and they respected him. I also sensed that Billy was pleased with Paulo's assured words. One of the coaches had acknowledged that the HoEW was an important role. A realisation that it wasn't just about education. It was about 'everything' to do with the boys' development.

4.5.5 The Seeds of Disenchantment

Monday 14th October 2002 – 1:20 pm

...[our] conversation is interrupted by the bellowing tones of Billy, "Oi! What are you two doing? You're training in a minute!" Billy's been sidetracked from his pudding by two of the schoolboys who have entered the canteen and helped themselves to some juice and snacks from the fridge. The boys cowering in their seats in the now silent canteen, whisper simultaneously, "We're injured." Billy, raging, rosy, and roaring, "What do you mean you're injured? What are you doing here if you're injured? You should be at school." The boys appear a little bemused by this outburst, and I can see Timmy Wharton (the under 12s coach), who's sat behind Billy, trying to catch their attention, making light of Billy's rage, in an effort to defuse their fears.

Billy's despair is heightened by the fact that he [the Club] has arranged to take these boys out of their normal school, and provide them with supervised tuition in the morning, in order for them to train with the under 17s in the afternoon. Timmy's actions appear to undermine Billy's attempts to ensure responsible behaviour by the boys (i.e., not to use the club as an excuse to miss school). I sense, however, that the boys are unaware that they have done anything wrong. Perhaps there needs to be some clarification of the responsibilities of the boys here (i.e., where and when to turn up whilst injured).

Billy, tutts to himself still shaking his head he turns, calms down, and returns to the table in search of the comfort of his hot pudding. He spoons a wedge of chocolate sponge into his mouth. He raises his eyebrows

towards me, gently shaking his now upturned spoon, he splutters, "I can't believe it. They're just getting out of school. If they're injured they should be here on a Tuesday night for treatment, not disrupting their bloody schooling." He demolishes his pudding and then turns jovially to Martin...

Martin [Littlewood] is a research colleague of mine who had arranged to meet Billy today to discuss his future research. I was unaware of the meeting and Billy had inadvertently forgotten. It was only when Martin arrived at the Academy that Billy realised his previous arrangements.

"Right Martin that's your hour. Hope you've got what you needed." He giggles and shuffles his chair backwards, "I'll just see if we can get into the room." On his return he apologises, "We can't get into the classroom. Paulo's still in there 'discussing' Saturday's performance! He may be some time!" Billy quips "We'll have to go elsewhere and I'll have to do it without my notes, if that's alright." Martin agrees and we wander down the corridor. We sneak a peak through the classroom door window at the under 17s and Paulo. Through the dimly lit room the boys' sullen faces, exaggerated by the flicker of the projector, concentrate on the images that force them to re-visit Saturday's 2-1 defeat.

Monday 14th October 2002 – 3:20 pm

[After the meeting with Martin Littlewood] Billy and I wander back towards the classroom, "Let's see if he's (Paulo) finished with them yet." He quips. We get to the classroom door and Billy peers through the glass window, "I don't believe it, they're still in there. Bloody hell what's he doing with them!" Billy's a little exasperated at the length of time the boys have been in there, "It's been nearly two hours!"

The under 17s drag themselves silently out of the classroom, struggling to move under the weight of their damaged egos. Sporadic, wry smiles give the impression of an intense session with Paulo. When most of them have left we enter the room. Paulo is perched solemnly on the table at the front of the room, Jonno at his side. "Have you sorted it with Paulo, Jonno?" Billy says sharply, "Aye, I'm just sorting it now, Billy." His quiet Irish tones belie the strong performance he put in on Saturday. He was one of the few to escape Paulo's displeasure. Jonno tells Paulo that he's on international duty next week and will miss a few days training. Paulo wishes him well and offers him a reassuring tap on the shoulder. Jonno slips out of the room and Paulo turns to me and says softly, "He is one of the good ones. He is mature, strong, sensible and works hard for the team. He has got something". I agreed with Paulo, I reminded him that we'd seen him play on Saturday. I stressed slowly and clearly, "He was one of the few that really impressed me. Throughout the game, not just the first twenty five minutes or so when they passed the ball around." Paulo smiled and nodded in agreement.

This was a nice moment for me. I sensed that Paulo's smile and gentle nod of agreement was an acknowledgement of my own football

knowledge. I sensed that Billy too was reassured, an acceptance of my presence in the Academy.

He turns to Billy, "Stokesy, he still no good. Even after this session. He not understand." He pulls Billy by the arm, "If he not understand, then he must go. We will see." "Aye, Paulo, whatever you say, you're the man." Billy chortles. Paulo comes over again to shake my hand and makes his way out of the classroom. Billy turns to me with a smile, "If that's what he wants, then that's what he'll get. I'm not sure if it would be my way but we'll just have to go with it at the moment."

I sense that Billy's isn't convinced about Paulo's actions, even though he doesn't 'take' to the lad himself. However, he respects the fact that Paulo is in charge, he is the coach, and he has been given the authority to act as he feels appropriate. Billy will just monitor and watch from the wings.

Monday 14th October 2002 – 3:55 pm

Billy's chair swings uneasily from side to side as he holds the phone with his elbows slumped on to his desk. He's trying to explain to a concerned parent why Paulo won't talk to him. The parent is concerned about his boy. He's an under 17s lad who scored a hat-trick the other week but now finds himself on the substitutes bench. Paulo has made it clear that it is too early in the season to talk to parents about football and has asked Billy to deal with it.

I sense Billy feels a little uncomfortable doing this. I think he is aware of the parent's concern, especially as the boy is still only 16, but Paulo is of the mind that the boy is now a 'full-time' player and must behave like one. If the boy has a problem with the coach, he needs to learn how to approach the coach and seek clarification. Billy seems unconvinced by this method, and it appears to put him in the awkward position of explaining the coach's method, which he doesn't agree with, to the irate parent.

4.5.6 The Honeymoon's Over

Tuesday 5th November 2002 – 12:30 pm

Billy's still bouncing around the canteen. He's appears a little agitated as he approaches a couple of the coaches and then moves in to capture a word or two with some of the scholars. He eventually takes a seat next to Bobby [the financial advisor] and begins grumbling apologetically, "The coaches have over run their sessions and, on top of that, they've forgotten to remind the boys about your talk. The session might not start on time because I've got to round the boys up." Bobby was fully aware of the 'usual' predicament and organisational nightmare of the football environment. He reassures Billy over his time schedule and expresses an inevitable sigh denoting his expectance of such an occurrence.

Billy's a little annoyed and agitated with the coaches on two counts. The coaches have allowed the morning sessions to over run, and they have

exacerbated the situation by forgetting to remind the boys about Bobby's talk, probably because they forgot themselves. However, they knew full well about the talk as Billy had reminded them first thing this morning. Although the boys also knew about the talk Billy does not appear to lay any blame in their direction.

Tuesday 5th November 2002 - 1:40 pm

The session [Bobby's pension talk] finishes and Bobby packs his things away. Ronnie enters the classroom, right on queue, as Bobby is departing.

Ronnie [an old friend of mine] has been a goalkeeping coach at the Academy for the past two years. The past ten years have been kind to his long slender frame, but at the expense of his receding hairline. He talks affectionately of Billy in his soft Geordie tones but I sense that he struggles to comprehend the full extent of Billy's existence. "He sorts the boys out." was his basic summary of Billy's role. There's no afternoon coaching today. The boys have been given most afternoons off recently under the new coaching regime. This has upset Billy a little, he feels that the boys should have a set pattern of attendance or at least be kept at the Academy for little longer to prevent them 'messaging' about, or going to the shopping mall. That said the new system obviously has some benefits. Under the old regime, Bobby's session may have been interrupted by a coach demanding the boys for the afternoon session.

"Nothing on this afternoon then?" Billy asks Ronnie, half joking but half accusingly. Ronnie responds readily equipped, "Aye, the sessions have been reduced. A directive from the medical staff apparently. Something like that anyway." Billy moans about the whole issue of communication, "Nobody told me," he says. "Aye, nor me, Billy. I heard it from the lads. If you want to know anything around here just ask the lads, man. No-one else'll tell ya." They nod sympathetically at each other and then to me, in acceptance of the difficulties of living and working in the football environment.

We all chat generally and freely about the needs of the boys and life under the new regime. They both agree that the boys are far more relaxed, if not too relaxed, but feel they are free to express themselves more. However, Billy expresses some concern over the attitude of the coaches to allow the boys 'time off' in the afternoon. "They don't have to do anything physically taxing. They can concentrate on technical ability, low intensity stuff." Ronnie agrees but suggests that the players' are easily bored by the technical sessions. We all agree that technical training is important and identified a need for a more innovative, creative and 'fun' way of encouraging players to work hard on technical ability. Billy's concern is with the coaches belief that if 'they [the boys] want it enough, they will practice'. The onus is being placed on the players, possibly without them knowing it.

Billy obviously has his own ideas about how and when the boys should train. And more specifically, how the coach should implement this. I sense his 'coaching heart' invading his education and welfare role.

Billy talks to Ronnie and I about his need for the coaches to communicate with him and use the educational side more effectively. We discuss the possibilities of bringing the coaches more closely to the educational element of the boys' scholarship. Issues such as lifestyle and behaviour are inevitably suggested but I sense that Billy wants a little more involvement in terms of technical preparation and planning. Ronnie appears quite open to this but is sceptical of the involvement of some of the other coaches.

I'd discussed some of the elements of my work with Billy with Ronnie over lunch. The issues of diet, nutrition, social and psychological elements of sports science that may be integrated, with the help of the coaches, into a more football performance orientated educational programme were discussed. Ronnie appeared genuine in his appreciation of the issues and identified previous knowledge and application of such techniques in his previous environment. The issue of time, co-ordination and lack of willingness from other coaches to get involved appeared to be the main stumbling block.

Ronnie left the room with plenty to think about and I turned to Billy to try and gauge his thoughts. Billy and I were now leaning over the book cabinet, face to face, each resting our chin in the up-turned palm of the right hand. A pondering pose, like a scene from 'Mel Smith and Griff Rhys-Jones' "That's given him something to think about," I hypothesised, "Perhaps he'll discuss that with some of the other coaches?" "We'll see, we'll see." Billy muttered. I sensed Billy had seen it all before but I identified that having Ronnie sat in the classroom for 20 minutes was a good sign and something to work on. Billy was fairly dismissive of my optimism, "No, it was you that brought him in here, not me."

I sensed Billy's reaction was somewhat deflated. His enthusiasm for driving the education and welfare remit and communicating this to the coaches appeared to be waning. Perhaps the endless toil of promoting the education and welfare of the boys coupled with a reluctant acceptance that his coaching ideals may never be implemented was taking its toll. The once experienced and respected coach now possessed a fragile self-esteem as the 'Head of Education and Welfare'.

4.5.7 Back in the Old Routine

Tuesday 20th November 2002 – 10:40 am

Billy wanders out of the main entrance into the car park and offers me an extra rain jacket for warmth. There's a biting wind as we head out across to the far pitches and I'm grateful for the extra layer. We're greeted warmly by Paulo, "Hello, my friends." he shouts rubbing his hands

together. He's running the under 17's session. The boys are in two teams of 5 including a goalkeeper, practicing crossing and finishing in an area approximately 25 metres wide by 30 metres long. Small plastic cones are positioned down both sides indicating the position where the boys have to cross the ball from.

Paulo is shouting sporadic instructions in his pigeon English. I find it difficult to establish what he is saying at times so I can only imagine the difficulties that the boys face. Billy and I try to interpret some of his suggestions and then Billy bellows a repeat of Paulo's instruction to the boys.

Billy's like a kid in a candy store here. He comes alive, beaming from ear to ear, shouting instructions, chatting with Paulo and occasionally hotfooting after a loose ball. I find myself watching the boys and assessing the quality of their delivery.

Pangs of jealousy filter through my head as I am disappointed by the quality of the play. These boys are Academy players, exposed to a quality training programme, a superb environment, everything and everyone at their beck and call; coaches, physiotherapists, doctors and of course Billy. Surely, they should be better than this. I mean they are good, but are they better than I was at the same age? That I don't know? They should be, shouldn't they?

I have to prevent myself from tutting my disgust too much, although similar sighs and groans made by Billy and Paulo make me feel at ease. The boys continue under our watchful eyes. Paulo stretches out his arms in front of him, he gestures a dive and declares, "The winning goal must be a dive." Billy and I look curiously at each other and Billy seeks clarification, "You mean a diving header Paulo?" "Yes, yes my friend. Diving header. You score, you win. Must be dive," he asserts in his broken English. Billy bellows Paulo's instruction to the boys. "The winning goal must be a diving header." The tempo increases and the boys' natural competitive edge is evident. The relationship between Paulo and Billy is extremely friendly. Both are fully engrossed in the boys' football and they exchange general comments about some of the boys' playing ability.

Eventually, a goal is scored and the boys gather together around Paulo. "Now we do two hundred abdominal, yes? Is that right?" He seeks our approval of his English. Billy clarifies, chuckling, "Sit-ups, Paulo, you mean sit-ups or crunches. Two hundred crunches? You're a hard man, Paulo." Billy chuckles. "Yes, two hundred cronches." The Italian pronunciation 'almost' mirroring Billy's northern tones. The boys groan a little but are soon into their stomach exercises.

Billy and I wander across to watch the under 19's. Larry Knowles, an ex-club captain and England international, is doing part of a coaching assessment. We stand and watch for a few moments and then head back

to the club...“They’ll not fail him [Larry], will they.” he spits. “I mean I had to do a few extra things to top mine up but I won’t be doing all that again.”

Billy’s scepticism and disdain towards the coaching awards is evident. I wonder whether this is borne out of some personal scepticism or deep regret that he is not coaching anymore.

11:30 am

We take our boots off with the rest of the boys and head back towards the main foyer. I head outside and change back into my shoes and jacket and join Billy in his office. He’s filing through some more paperwork as I ask him about his relationships with the coaches and the identified action phases of the work. Billy sighs, expectant of my question, “I don’t think we’re going to get there until next year.” He mumbles, “I’ve got to give them time to settle in.” He explains that little things are changing such as the dispersal of the boys. Although they’re leaving early today, at least Billy is dispersing them. One thirty, after his afternoon session. These are little things he stresses but you can’t rush them. “I can see Greg (under 19s coach) starting to plan his work. I can see it in his office. But I want changes to come from them, so that they’re their ideas, not mine.”

Billy is a little frustrated by the procedures he believes he must undertake to achieve results. However, he is convinced that this is the best way to work with the coaching staff in order to achieve long term change. His craft knowledge of the working environment must be respected here.

I suggest that he just keeps chipping away at the coaches as best he can. Seizing opportune moments to address certain issues (e.g., canteen moments, coaching session moments). He stresses that he already seeks out these times and we arrange another date to meet.

12 noon

I head home wondering whether we will ever see the day where the Academy Head of Education and Welfare and the Academy coaches communicate (explicitly) in order co-ordinate and optimise the players behaviour, educational and football development...

4.5.8 Reconciliation

Tuesday 3rd December 2002 – 11 am

The boys are concentrating on set pieces, corners, free kicks etc. We watch quietly for a while and then Billy begins to dissect the action. “You see that there (he points to Davie Blain, one of the under 18s, taking a free kick from the right hand edge of the 18 yard box). If he’s going to just knock it a couple of yards to Jonny Bignall then he’s coming at it from the wrong angle. They’ll never get away with that in a game. I told him last week, to come round the ball the other way and reverse it. I said just try it. Roger Harrison (Youth team coach) wasn’t happy with me. They’ll never get away with it”.

I quizzed Billy a little, intrigued by his comment about Roger Harrison, and a little confused as to Roger's role with the youth set up. It's the only the second time that his name had been mentioned with regard to the boys' development. Billy explained that there was also some internal confusion over his role. "It's like a mentoring role to Greg McStay whilst he settles in to Youth football. Nobody really knows." [McStay was formerly a reserve team coach with no real experience of coaching youngsters]. A corner is swung in and Jonno nods a powerful header onto the crossbar. Billy swings his arms in the air and squeals, "Ooh, unlucky." He whispers to me, "That'll do. You've got to finish after that." Right on cue the players are brought together for a de-brief. The boys are then spilt into two teams and told to gather separately in the centre circle. The youth cup games are decided, after extra-time, on penalties. Each boy, in turn, makes the long walk from the centre circle to the penalty spot. They place the ball, wait for the obligatory attempt from the coaches to put them off, make them replace the ball, or shout something just prior to their run up, and take their turn.

We stand and watch for a while taking in the whole process. Billy (and myself for that matter) seems quite content to just stand and watch the proceedings unfold. There's a calm, relaxed, content yet enthralled air to Billy, as we watch the excitement of the penalty shoot-out unfold. I wonder whether this is really where he would like to be. 'Billy the coach', rather than 'Billy the Head of Education and Welfare'.

Tuesday 3rd December 2002 – 11:45 am

...we begin to discuss his relationship with the coaches. I sense some edge in Billy's reaction but some positive signs accompany this. Billy suggests that the dispersal of the boys is beginning to annoy the coaches. "They're not youth team coaches, they need to adapt. So we've got to give them time." Billy's plans for dispersal are now being considered (i.e., dispersal from the classroom, with the permission of either the HoEW or a designated coach, at a particular time, say 3 pm, unless stipulated otherwise by Greg or Paulo).

"We'll get there, it might not be the time you finish you're thingy [PhD], but we'll get there. I can already see Greg making plans. He's got his board on the wall behind his desk and he's making plans. Give it time."

4.5.9 From Little Acorns...

Thursday 30th January 2003 – 10 am

I arranged to see Billy early in the New Year. We'd dispensed with the shadowing phase so this visit was primarily concerned with ascertaining his current position and reflecting on the development of his action phase. The following section offers an account of our meeting.

We arranged to meet at the school today. I telephoned Billy to alert him of my arrival. A few minutes later he strolls through into the school reception and greets me warmly. We wander through the corridors to the rear of the school. Billy reprimands some noisy kids who seem to have escaped their classes, "Walk" he says firmly without breaking stride. We arrive at his office. It's quiet. Billy explains that the boys have gone for toast. We put our things down and wander back down corridor to the small canteen. We're a bit late as some of the boys are making their way back to their classroom. "Eh up, here's trouble", Billy chuckles as a couple of boys strut past. He pulls a young black boy to one side and begins to talk softly but firmly to him. I sense the boy is in a bit of trouble. His head hangs, drooping from his shoulders, "Look at me, look at me." Billy says sharply. The boy's head becomes animated desperately trying to avoid Billy's glare. The conversation finishes and the boy sulks back down the corridor. "Bloody waste of space he is. He's a tea leaf and a liar. Technically, a great player, but a bloody waste." Billy explains that the boy has stolen another boy's designer underwear. Until recently he'd denied all knowledge. However, several boys' witness accounts and his landlady's discovery of his new acquisition resulted in an admission of guilt. His landlady had since informed Billy that he had handed the garments back. However, when Billy checked with the other boy he was yet to receive them. Billy hoped that this final reprimand would produce a result. Otherwise the boy already on a warning, would be on his way. We turned the corner to be greeted by Tommy Dawson the under 17s goalkeeper, "Morning Billy, morning Dave." Billy turns to me smiling, "See? Different class." We collect our coffee and toast and then join a couple of the tutors at one of the tables. Billy appears relaxed as he discussed the county teams performance the previous night. We finish our toast and slip back towards Billy's office.

We settle in the office adjacent to the classroom. Billy takes his seat behind his desk underneath the window. The office is neat, sparse in fact, not the organised chaos of his Academy office. I sense that Billy doesn't do much paper work here. This is a space to rest his *patrolling* legs.

I set the dictaphone running and explain the purpose of the session. I refer Billy to his earlier action phase and ask him to explore his personal development during this time,

and the development of his relationship with the coaches. He stretches back in his rigid but cushioned chair and ponders for a few moments. He suggests that it's still a settling in period. Paulo was brought in to change things. To do things his way. The manager brought him in, and Billy respects that. He may not always agree with his ways, but he is willing to allow time to decide whether his methods can be realised. Throughout my time with Billy I sensed that he has respect for Paulo as a coach. Paulo is an experienced coach with a CV to match some of the best coaches of the world. Greg, on the other hand, he continually refers to as an intelligent man. I'm curious as to what this means.

"I think he [Greg McStay] knows his football, but I also think he's academically intelligent as well. I mean he started his degree course before he actually took off as a real player. He knew the benefits of things and I'm sure in time when he's... he's coming into school next week and we want him to look round.... But I think he questions things and he questions things in a way that you've got to give answers that are quality answers in terms of there's plenty of body to them. You can't just give flippant answers sometimes, although you can have a joke with him. But in the real world you have to do things. I mean these boys have to get something ... he said the other day, 'Do they get anything out of this college?'"

I sense Billy sees Greg as an educational ally. He understands the importance of education, and the need for the boys to achieve something from college. He refers to him as an ex-player. He's played for the manager, which gives him credibility, but he's not yet a youth coach. His coaching credentials have yet to be authorised by Billy. But Billy still likes him. He likes his ways. He can see him thinking about changes, he's methodical, and makes informed decisions rather than the traditional knee jerk reaction. A refreshing change for Billy. He senses that the coaches are on his and the boys' side. For once he feels they are singing the same tune, although he is not without his reservations.

"They're [the coaches] on my side as well. I mean they're on the boys' side, but they're coming from where I'd be coming from so I'm quite chuffed with that. I think we trust each other, from my side I've got... my feelings are ok. Obviously there's a long way to go yet before you've been in to everybody. But you've only done half a season together haven't you really, and there's this guy who, a few years ago, was knocking the ball in the back of the net and now he's here. I think his general discipline needs to be tighter, I don't know if I'm supposed to say that, but his general discipline needs to be tighter because [he pushes his new

rules and regulation sheet across the empty desk], I think if these rules are going to be adhered to then we're going to have to make sure, and this is where we might let ourselves down."

Billy begins to beam from ear to ear. His discipline plans and dispersal plans have been taken on board. He's bided his time, he's nipped and tucked but he's eventually achieved. He found an ally in Roger Harrison [Director of Youth Development]. He'd suggested extending the day a little to release the pressure on some of the boys. He picked them off one by one, planted his seeds. First Paulo, then Greg and finally Roger. A cup of tea here, a coffee there, and a few scribbles on some scraps of paper. He'd struck gold with Roger as he began to reminisce about the good ol' days, when the boys used to play head tennis in the afternoon, and practiced. They don't practice anymore. Billy saw his chance and threw one of his infamous sheets together. He passed it round before Christmas and gave them time to mull it over. They liked it. They mumbled a bit and tweaked it here and there, but they liked it. And now it's in place (see appendix H). Well, in a sense, it's still early days. This is a football club after all.

"...but now with this timetable, they could do their game, they could go and have some lunch and relax and then do the weights and still have plenty of time for other things to do before 3:30 pm. And I think things were being squashed in to get them out of things, and they're still doing it. They still did it this week, they did it yesterday! So I had a session that was planned for 12:30 pm for the 1st years, they were still eating at 5 past, ten past one. So it ended up, we started at 1:30 pm and we finished at twenty five to three. Now that's fine in a way if you've got a bloke coming in who doesn't mind, and it's fine because it's football, but I just think it would have been nice for them to have had their lunch, come in and done a bit of...then gone and done their weights, then done a bit of 'keepy- up' or something like that, whatever they want to do, play table tennis, have another bite to eat, a piece of toast to finish their afternoon off. And I think that's the next thing. Now we've got the timings and we're saying you're not leaving till then. We've got to now back the one's who want to stay, and then and the one's who say I'm bored, I've nothing to do, we've got to try and educate them... and of course it's taken a few weeks just to get it off the ground because it's football isn't it and coaches, and the time passes and we played in the youth cup and like next week he might not want them to stay till 3:30 pm on Tues because it's the youth cup."

Billy's overall plan (or dream) is for the boys to be educated in how to utilise their time effectively. Enable them to work on specific elements of their game, their

physical condition, catch up on their college work or just relax watch a match video or read a football legend's biography.

"Roger and Greg have given me, and I've asked Rex and he's agreed with me, to get a library of ten books and ten videos. Now I know there's always a chance they might disappear and things like that, but come and sit down and look at some football books. I'll try and get them with pictures in and things like that for them, but come and sit down, just looking at Glen Hoddle's, Bryan Robson's no problem is it, Dalglish, Hansen, Keane, Cantona, Niall Quinn, the Manager's book, that book 'From the Dug-Out' maybe. So I've got to go and buy those and the videos, Pele, Cruyff, one hundred best goals or something like that. Videos for them to watch in the classroom. So the dream, well it's a dream I've had for years anyway. The dream would be somebody's watching the video or two lads reading the paper while two lads are on the computer or three are sat round having a laugh if they want to. I don't mind."

I sensed that Billy still feels that he has a long way to go. But he is enthused and encouraged by the uptake of his weekly schedule. He grumbles that he is still not 'head' of anything. He is still frustrated by the perception of his role, fuelled (to some extent) by his own self-depreciation.

"I think it's sometimes, maybe you're there and you're a necessity maybe an evil, or whatever. I'm not sure how highly people are thought of. I wouldn't know that really. It's only them what they get out of it really would tell me that isn't it."

Billy's angst is reflected in his furrowed brow, as I enquire about the future of the role. He struggles with the job sometimes. Not because he can't do it, but because he wants to make it right, make it better. He stretches back in his chair, runs his hands through his thick, twisted, grey hair and gazes solemnly towards the ceiling. I sensed his legendary 'pooper-scooper' tag returning to the fore as he began to stare across at me.

"...the way sometimes people, not treat you, but think you'll do things for them, you know which you know you do, and you can do but it's just the way they do them sometimes. You know, and there's too many sometimes, but you still end up fitting them in. But to the detriment of maybe other parts of the job I don't know. I don't know really because, I think you have to be reactive as well as proactive in everything. You're more reactive than proactive in some things."

I've always sensed that Billy was a good man, a decent man, a nice man. Perhaps too nice. I have sometimes wondered whether people take advantage of his good nature, or of the fact that they know Billy will do a good job. He's reliable, dependable; he cares about the club, and the boys. He doesn't strive for adulation; he just wants to be appreciated. I sense that Billy believes in the value of education for its own sake, and for the good of the boy. He holds no aspirations to synthesise the two domains of education and football. He believes in meeting the required needs of the boy. If it makes them a better footballer then that's a bonus. He strives to provide a supportive environment for good footballers to flourish. Furthermore, he strives to nurture those players fortunate enough to experience the 'big time', and those perhaps less fortunate, to be respectable, well-rounded human beings. I suspect that their appreciation of Billy will be realised in time.

4.6 Head of Education and Welfare as a Facilitator of Individual Player Development: from Operational Mechanisms to Strategic Realisation

4.6.1 Derek Traynor – Head of Education and Welfare, Woolton Wanderers Football Club

Over the past three years or so I have witnessed the growth of an extremely astute and intelligent man. He may have you believe otherwise. Derek Traynor has taken his time. He's played his chess pieces thoughtfully, methodically, covertly yet explicitly. 'Check-mate!' You should have seen it coming, but you just couldn't see it. Derek's cute, in an operational sense. He has allowed himself time to settle into a new environment. An educator by trade, a strategist by nature. The transition from delivering physical education for nearly 15 years to being Head of Education and Welfare in a football environment has not been an easy journey to undertake.

Derek's lucky though. He has two brains! A football brain, supplemented by a semi-professional football career and a coaching background, and an inquisitive brain, supplemented by intricate social and personable skills. This gives Derek a 'competitive advantage' and sets him apart from 'others' within his working environment. Derek has an empathy with young footballers. He is committed to finding that 'extra something'. Something that makes a difference; that special something that makes 'a player'. This, I sense, is Derek's passion. He recognises the need to provide players with a sound educational grounding; he espouses the benefits of a clear and accessible social and welfare support structure, but most of all he is relentless in his pursuit of the psychological domain of elite player development. He strives to empower players to understand themselves. This has led to the initiation of ideas that enable players to reflect and recognise their own strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. He constantly promotes performance related behaviour, education, social understanding and general well-being. This is the package that Derek provides for the boys.

Derek has been the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) at Woolton Wanderers Football Club for the past 4 years. He is a rare breed. One of the few HoEWs to be appointed through, what most personnel departments would call, a 'normal' application and formal interview process. Derek is at *home* in the club. He respects and believes in the staff and operating mechanisms of the Academy, "We don't do

much wrong here, but we can still improve.” Everything is done in the best interests of the boys. It’s about player development.

So what about me, the one telling Derek’s story? How do I fit into this picture of player development? Like Derek I had a ‘relatively’ distinguished semi-professional football career. I didn’t quite make it as a professional. The why’s and wherefore of which may yet appear in another paper. My experiences of the professional game are filled with happy memories but tinged with a number of less comfortable issues that I still carry with me today. The decisions that forced me to choose between academia and a football career still haunt me. I didn’t have the support or guidance proffered by the Head of Education and Welfare. There was no Derek to worry about me and find solutions. In contrast, today’s young players have the luxury of being guided through their football development by individuals like Derek. Who try to ensure that young players do not have to experience what I had to. To be exposed to the cold, calculated mechanisms of the football environment and hung out to dry without a bye or leave. I too, realise I want to make a difference. In that sense I share the same passion that drives Derek, but in his case, I know he feels really close to making it happen.

4.6.2 Derek’s Radar

Tuesday 12th September 2002 – 10:10 am

Derek ponders for a few moments, swinging his sumptuous black leather office chair gently from side to side, then clarifies the current environment, “There has been a change of personnel recently. Des Roberts has taken over from Harry MacIntosh. Harry has now moved across to the first team, so Des has taken over the U-19’s. He initially came in with a specific responsibility for the U-16s team and a ‘coach development remit’ for the 8-16 year olds.” The chair comes to a halt, as he continues softly, “Harry was a very strict disciplinarian, whereas Des? Des is a little bit more laid back, a bit more relaxed with the players if you like. We’ve got to be careful, watch how they react.”

This is a typical Derek moment. He is concerned about the way the boys are going to adapt and respond to a new, less disciplined environment. Later that morning, whilst Derek and I were draped over the rail surrounding the immaculate training pitches, watching the under 17s and under 19s being put through their paces by Alan and Des, he reiterated his concerns:

Tuesday 12th September 2002 – 11:20 am

...Derek pushes himself back off the rail, and turns towards me, one hand still clasped on the rail he mutters, "It could all kick off at any time. The players are going through a transition. Harry Mac was a disciplinarian but now Des has come in. The lads aren't used to the laid back approach. But they can't become too laid back. Sunnel Town gave the under-19s a bit of a 'shoeing' at the weekend 7-1. That doesn't happen here! Well not often. There's a 'danger' in this transition. We need to watch and monitor. See how the players react. Whether they 'take the piss' or respond positively to having a little bit more responsibility."

I sense that Derek is aware of the overall impact of the change in personnel and coaching philosophy on the boys, and for that matter, the whole Academy. He appears to have taken it upon himself to monitor the situation.

The role of the HoEW seems to come with an implicit desire, and need to understand everything about the Academy. The HoEW is central to everything because everything that goes on ultimately impacts the players' experience. This may include the coaches, auxiliary staff, parents, college tutors and of course the players' behaviour, attitudes and demeanour. The role requires a sixth sense. Derek has this in abundance.

Wednesday 18th September 2002 – 10:45 am

[Our meeting with Oliver Robertson from the Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Society (FFE and VTS) is disturbed as] ...the boys meander in to the empty canteen, some dressed in civilian casuals others in a derivative of the club uniform. It's break time from the classroom, which means toast time! The boys line up in a familiar, orderly fashion, no fuss. The usual quips and banter ensue but this is quite tame and orderly, almost respectful of the environment and their surrounding peers. As they all take their seats, an archipelago of twos, threes and fours emerge on the opposite side of the canteen, the boys side... The tutors mingle as they too line up for their toast. They glance across at our table and eventually form a huddle together on the table to our right.

Our table is 'strategically' positioned, and Derek is in prime 'look-out' spot. He constantly peers over Oliver's shoulder; his eyes and ears are twitching, alive to anything untoward with the boys. He's watching over his flock. Analysing the body language. Who's with who? Who's sitting where, why and what for? Paying attention to Oliver has almost slipped his mind.

11:30 am

As we wander back to Derek's office, he stretches out his neck, peering down to the end of the corridor, through the open doorway, to check on

the three target boys. The three boys are with a tutor doing GCSE English and Maths – all seems fine. We take our usual seats in the office. Derek is behind his desk swivelling his chair, switching his view from car park to corridor, me to his right by the window. The office is empty – a ‘coach free zone’. Derek’s inquisitive nature puts me on the spot. His eyes appear to delve into my mind. He sighs, pauses for a moment, and smiles gently before enquiring quietly, “So what have you picked up from this morning then?” He’s keen to gauge my perception of the education environment. I pause for thought, unsure of compromising my position, before alluding to his earlier body language. The twitching and raised attention levels when the boys were in the canteen. He clasps his hands around the back of his head, leans back gently in his chair and his face breaks into a knowing smile. He looks at the ceiling, sighing softly, “Yeah, it’s something I should work on. Sometimes I even forget who I’m talking to or what we’re talking about.” He pauses again, and sits upright, “Did Ollie notice?” I reassured him, “No, it wasn’t that obvious, it’s only because I’m concentrating more on you and your role that I clocked it.”- “Good, yeah. I need to watch that one.” He rests back in his chair and asserts, “I picked up a few things though. The three target boys weren’t together.” He gazes towards me, “Richie and Trevor came in, chattering away, but Clive? He was lagging behind. So, I’m now wondering what’s happened? Have they fallen out? Did the tutor keep him behind? I’ll have to check it out.” He sighs, pauses for thought and continues, softly but assured, “I’m just looking for general things, you know. Body language, behaviour, who’s sitting with who, why is he sitting with him? He normally sits with so and so. Just seeing what’s going on...”

This radar like observation is instinctive. Derek is aware that he engages in this pre-occupation. His main concern is that he doesn’t upset the person he is supposed to be paying attention to. The radar is in full working order the next time we meet. Again, Derek arranges his meeting to take place in the informal environment of the canteen:

Wednesday 25th September – 10:45 am

10:45 am

Right on cue [the meeting with Bryan Watson from the Soccer Skills Community Coaching Scheme is disturbed by] the boys, followed obediently by the tutors, invade *their* side of the canteen as the smell of freshly made toast fills the air. Derek begins to twitch and peer over Bryan’s shoulder overseeing the dynamics of the boys. Three of the tutors Jackie, Paul Stepney and James, settle in to the table beside us.

The discussion revolves around the coaching NVQ awards that the Soccer Skills Community Coaching Scheme delivers. Derek is pleased with the way the whole programme has started. One of the key elements here is that Geoff, one of the SSCCS tutors, is also a part-time goalkeeping coach

at the Academy. Derek stresses that, "The boys see Geoff as being part of the club. Hence, the education package as part of the club also. They've got a lot of respect for him and he acts as a clear link for me." Derek and Geoff see each other between two and three times a week so this allows Derek time to check on the boys' progress *outside* of the Academy.

11:15 am

The meeting comes to an end and the tutors, the boys, Geoff and Bryan empty the canteen. Derek seems quite pleased as he says smugly, "I thought he was going to steamroller me into the Key Skills. That would cost us another grand apiece. It also means that I keep Geoff in the loop with the course delivery on and off-site."...

Derek confides that he's picked up a couple of things this morning from his observations of the boys and the tutors. He knew I'd clocked him twitching as he articulated his thoughts, "The tutors were having a moan about resource issues. I've picked up a couple of things about some of the boys so I'll chase that up later." He pauses for a second, before exclaiming, "And Kenny. Kenny Doran [a full-time scholar who has recently been sidelined with a spinal injury] was in this morning as well. He seems chipper today, chatting to the rest of the lads, having a laugh and a joke. He'll recover quickly from his set back and be stronger for it. He's a bright lad."

4.6.3 Understanding People and the Working Environment

Derek is an astute and patient man. He longs for the Academy to recognise the importance of the psychological elements of a player's development. From the beginnings of our longitudinal research Derek has consistently espoused the psychological development of the coach and the players. Throughout his action phase he has consistently alluded to the coach and player development agenda:

"At the moment if you were to talk about any kind of psychological or emotional work that goes on, it wouldn't be easy to spot or see, it would be around the edges and a lot of it would probably be by accident rather than by design. Where I want to go on personal level is that becomes more built into the process, more structured, more by design rather than by accident. So we can actually begin to look at, along side the technical, the physical and the practical programme, the psychological development of young players. And that can only start I think from this approach that I'd had, which is I need to know more about that area of work anyway, just for my own personal satisfaction. But once I know more about it coupled with what I know already is to say legitimately we need to engage coaches, the whole of the staff in this debate about where we are going forward. A lot of that work at the moment is still on that kind of implicit, covert level, which is about promoting ideas, promoting awareness, but

it's going on in corridors, it's going on informally..." (Derek Traynor, Reflection and Development meeting, 9th April 2002)

The beginnings of the shadowing phase were a little uncertain. Derek was concerned about whether the explicit nature of my role (i.e., as a researcher exploring the role of the Head of Education and Welfare) would be approved by his Academy Director, Walter Higgins. Our early operations relied on Derek's local knowledge:

Tuesday 12th September 2002 – 10:15 am

We talked generally about how his role was going to develop and his action phase and the implications of me being around. Derek recommended a covert approach, "We need to be a little bit more covert, rather than overt. If you put a question to Walter [Higgins the Academy Director], you know. Is it ok if Dave is around, he's doing some work with me? In all likelihood, the answer would be no! So rather than put a 'yes, no' scenario to him, we'll just work around the edges."

This approach also linked in with the proposed development of Derek's MPhil in collaboration with Dr David Gilbourne and myself. The idea to pursue an MPhil has been borne out of the 'action phase' of Derek's work where David (Director of Studies) and myself (2nd supervisor) will provide support.

Derek stressed that coming in under the auspices of a providing 'academic support and guidance' would be far more attractive to Walter. He could argue that I would need to be in an around the environment in which Derek works to gain an objective understanding of the environment, the coaches, the boys and provide academic and personal support (i.e., staff development) to Derek.

The two of us continue the conversation sat in the office. Derek talks about how important the 'morning time' is in and around the Academy. This comes back to some sort of craft or local knowledge in terms of trying to understand the people that are working there. What they're doing? How they're working? First thing in the morning Derek spends a lot of the time with the community coaches, popping into their changing room where 'information and banter is exchanged'. Derek, James Maddison, the full-time sports scientist, and Shaun Fitts, the senior physio, often get changed in there of a morning. They've now developed this pattern, primarily through Derek's initiative [operational and covert], where they prepare their informal agenda for the day. What are we trying to work on today? How to influence the Academy, the role of the Academy and the coaches? Derek clarifies, "So then, around nine-ish, half past nine, Shaun and James will pop in to see me. You know informal chat. Alan (under 17s coach) and Des (under 19s coach) are usually in mid-prep, or looking to prepare their morning coaching session. So James, Shaun and me will start talking about general issues, boys in particular and gradually Alan and Des have been intrigued enough to join

in the conversation.” Derek paused before recounting some comments that were made by Alan, “He’d say something like, have you noticed that Shaun and James seem to be popping in to the office every morning. You know, almost like a routine. But I’d just play dumb, with something like, ‘not really noticed that to be honest Alan’. And then I’d throw in a comment like, ‘well it’s a bit like the first team isn’t it, they have ‘team’ meetings every morning come rain or shine’.”

Derek’s trying to promote a little more communication between relevant staff and also influence the structure of the coaching programme. These individual’s wouldn’t naturally come together. A visible remnant of the traditional football world.

4.6.4 The Target Boys

Through the latter stages of the reflection and development meetings I’d had with Derek, we’d discussed the potential to develop his psychological, social and welfare remit with three particular boys. Clive Rowlands, Richie Fenton and Trevor Giles were all ‘special cases’. Each boy technically gifted. Each one a special talent. But each one was contaminated with emotional baggage. The boys were only fifteen years of age and technically too young to be offered or to be engaged in the scholarship programme. However, Walter, Derek, Alan and Des feared that if the boys were left to their own devices they may not be around in a year’s time. They’d find trouble or trouble would find them! The appropriate arrangements were put in place so that the boys could be ‘groomed’ by the Academy, under the careful and considerate auspices of the Academy Head of Education and Welfare. Derek to you and me. Derek first mooted the idea and it has since evolved...

Wednesday 18th September 2002 – 11:50 am

Janet [the Academy secretary] knocks and enters [Derek’s office] with a glum looking Trevor Giles at her side. Trevor’s one of Derek’s target boys. Derek swings his chair round towards the door, “Come in Trev, what can I do for you?” Trevor, his head hanging sheepishly studying his white adidas trainers, mumbles, “I’m due to see the Doc at 1 pm, but if I have to wait around I’m not gonna get home.” Derek stares firmly at Trevor, and states, “If you’ve been told to see the Doc then you’ll see the Doc. Don’t worry about getting home son. Just because so and so’s going home. We’ll get you home somehow.” Trevor sighs heavily and drags himself back out into the corridor. “Hang on!” Derek raises his voice slightly, “Is the Doc in today?” “Dunno!” is Trevor’s disgruntled response. Derek stands and rushes off to investigate. Trevor kicks his heels outside the office. A few minutes later Derek strides back in, “The Doc’s not even in today, Trev. Get yourself home lad.” Derek turns

towards me, his head shaking slightly from side to side. He mumbles, "I don't know. I don't know what that boy's on sometimes..." Trevor goes home.

Derek explains his despair, "Trevor's part of the target group but, at this moment he's a bit of a nightmare. Walter made the final decision to bring him in. To take a gamble, if you like. I've agreed to 'look after' him in the same way as the other two. He pauses and calmly stresses, "My recommendation was that the boy shouldn't be here."

Wednesday 25th September 2002 – 10:00 am

I arrive at the Academy on the button, 10 am. The security barriers open as I drive towards the main entrance. The security guard gives me a familiar nod as I acknowledge him. Smart casual as usual [suit, open neck collar] I wander up the steps to the first floor reception. Henry's on reception again and immediately recognises me. He scuttles off to find Derek. As I'm signing the visitor book Janet jollies over, "Morning Dave, how are you?" The flow of familiarity is a good and positive feeling.

I'm ushered towards Derek's office by Henry. Derek's behind his desk, in the 'coach free zone' of a Wednesday morning, education day. Derek seems relaxed as he greets me, but then bursts, "The shit hit the fan yesterday, Dave." He begins to recount his experiences. Trevor, one of the three target boys, had a bit of a 'bust up' with one of the physios. In addition Clive, another target boy, had taken a bit of 'stick' from Alan Shaw during the match the night before [Monday]. He didn't do himself any favours by failing to turn up the following morning. Derek raises his voice slightly, as his chair twitches underneath him, "Clive's landlady rang in. He was a bit tired from the match but his glands had swollen up so she didn't think it right that he should turn in. She'd also said that his illness was compounded by the fact that it was the anniversary of Clive's mum's partners death." Apparently, he died from some sort of motorbike accident whilst they were all on holiday. It sounded pretty horrific and Derek had lots of sympathy for the boy.

He became more animated as he recounted the lunchtime experience with about 15 members of staff (i.e., Walter, the coaches and physios etc.) "We were all sat there, round three tables, when, one of the coaches made a snide comment about Clive not turning in. Walter put in his two-penneth as well! He reckoned he was sulking following his performance the previous night. And of course, this was met with a few nods of general agreement. I mean, it wasn't the right environment to say anything personal about the boy but I had to put things straight. I was in control! I knew what was happening so I explained bits of his situation to them. Not everything, they don't need to know everything. I was a bit annoyed though. You know, we've 'all' agreed to treat them differently, and there they were with their knives out. The first chance they get!"

Wednesday 25th September 2002 – 10:15 am

Derek guides me towards the door and down the corridor, glancing through into the classrooms and into the canteen. As we're walking he muttered that Clive had failed to turn in again, this morning. His landlady had rung in to explain and said that Clive had requested that Derek go out and see him to have a chat. Derek was obviously concerned about the boy, and stressed that he'd be going out to see him as soon as we'd finished the morning session.

We find some privacy in the empty canteen. Derek sorts out the coffee and we assume our customary 'look-out' positions. Derek places his elbows on the table, rests his head in his hands and began to tell Richie's story. Trevor had had a few crossed words with the physio about his injury. He wanted to play, he thought he was fit. So, the physio and Alan agreed to let him play a part in the game, say 20 minutes, that evening (Tuesday). This calmed Trevor down, but it sparked Richie Fenton, another of the target group. He proclaimed that he was ready to play, despite his injury. Alan explained to Richie that it wouldn't be in his best interest, "We need to look at the bigger picture and you might get to play 20 minutes or so at the weekend." The boy apparently exploded, "I fuckin' hate this club, it's fuckin' shit here, no-one fuckin' likes me or rates me here. I'm gonna fuckin' leave." Derek explained that he wasn't around to witness this scene. It happened in the changing room, in front of all the other boys, as Alan was preparing them for the evening game. Seemingly, Alan's response was extremely calm, "Go on then. leave if you want to." The boy got changed and headed out on to the astro-turf. He pounded a ball repeatedly against the perimeter boards and waited for his lift home.

Traditionally this type of behaviour towards a coach would have been reciprocated with an even fiercer verbal rebuttal from the coach. Normally, the boy may never be allowed to step foot in the club again. In this instance though, things are different.

Derek explained that Alan had taken a step back from the situation. He allowed the boy to leave the changing area and immediately reported the incident to Derek, before returning to the other boys in the changing room.

Consequently, Derek took a stroll around the Academy. He clarified his methods, "I made myself visible to the boy but I didn't go over to him. It was up to him to come to me. But I could see him gradually moving over, still pounding the ball against the hoarding. I hung around in the background for a while. Eventually, he came over and I suggested we went back into the main building. Find a quiet room for a chat. I asked the lad what was going on, and he blurted out a load of stuff about Alan. You know, he's a prick, he doesn't like me, that sort of stuff." Derek leans back in his chair, glances out of the window, and continues softly, "So I tried to unpick it; the boy's disdain for Alan. Why is he a prick? Why doesn't he like you? Almost rationalising, if you like, with the boy in terms of his behaviour." After twenty minutes or so the boy calmed

down, returned to the changing room and then went out to do a bit of rehab with the physio. Derek then watched the whole situation unfold, and approached the boy again after the session, "I said we needed to sit down again. Talk things through. But you must do me a favour and make sure you turn up for college tomorrow. And he's here, I've just seen him through the window, so that's a start. We can build again from here." At this point Derek gets pulled away by one of the tutors and he leaves me in the canteen.

In the true sense of participant observation I sense I should really be with him. Three of the older scholars or young pros wander in with one of the community coaches and start chatting on the other side of the canteen. I sense a few glances as we all 'check' each other out. I've not seen these boys before and they've obviously not seen me.

Derek's absence gave me a chance to reflect on the way he handled Richie. I was impressed with his natural personal skills. Like a cowboy training a young colt. Derek the 'youth-player' whisperer. All of his initial foundational work had affected the coach's behaviour. The coach, in turn, informed Derek of the situation. He passed control, acknowledging that this was Derek's forte. Derek then assessed the situation, made himself visible, providing an opportunity for the boy to engage him. He then explored the boy's disdain, allowing him to rationalise, un-pick and make sense of his situation. He provided a sense of understanding and a sense of support. 'We can build from here'. Excellent. The boy has a chance...

Wednesday 25th September 2002 – 10:30 am

Derek wanders back in apologetically and immediately realises that it may have been useful for me to stay with him, "I was just sorting a few issues out with the tutors and the boys, I should have taken you with me, sorry. I suppose it's just getting used to it really." He continues cheerily, "I've just seen Richie again, you know, he's turned in this morning. I made sure he's seen me clocking him, I gave him a nod of approval." Derek gets two more coffees and we sit waiting for Bryan Watson.

Bryan's from a company called Soccer Skills Community Coaching Scheme (SSCCS) which is a provider of NVQ's, CSLA (Community Sports Leaders Award), First Aid, Junior Team Manager's Award.

Derek's beaming now. Richie has learnt a valuable lesson. He continues with the dialogue he'd had with Richie the previous day, "I sense the lad's a little disillusioned about the scholarship. He feels it's been dangled in front of his nose and then lifted a little away. He's being teased. I explained that he's doing well. He's passing the tests that are being set for him. I told him that Alan always sings his praises in the staff meetings. Yeah, he's got a few behavioural issues, which we need to sort out, but he's a player, he's definitely a player. I think maybe it's time to

recommend to Walter to offer him the scholarship. Offer it to him now. It may settle him down a little. We've got nothing to lose really."

I asked Derek how he felt about the whole process of communication and welfare. He pauses for a second, "The system has worked if you like. It wouldn't have happened a few years ago. This is one of the major differences that I've introduced, almost covertly. We have regular meetings [Walter, Alan, Des, James and the physios) to decide what to do. There are some blips but generally we're trying to sing from the same hymn sheet."

To my mind, Richie is a little confused. He's struggling to cope with the split personality of the coaching staff (i.e., almost caring and concerned off the field but a real tyrant of abuse on the training fields and during matches). Derek was a little unsure when I pressed him as to whether Alan had ever told the boy how good he was. He was sure he would have. I'm not so convinced... Perhaps, the coach-player dynamic needs addressing. From my own experiences, I sense that a little more honesty and openness [from the coaches] with the players wouldn't go amiss.

Derek continued assertfully, to clarify that the group of staff also meet to discuss the issues of the target group. They've even discussed how they treat the boys with the boys themselves, both individually and as a group of three. Each has responded with the 'right' answer (i.e., they don't want to be treated differently).

The implications of treating these boys differently to the rest of the boys are immense. In my day, if a boy turned up 10 minutes late the coach may turn around and say, "Not good enough, go home." It is assumed that the 'switched on' boys, or boys with a good attitude, will not do it again. The target boys for that matter are likely never to return. Now, if any boy turns up 10 minutes late they are given a warning and/or a dressing down but not told to go home. The regime has been 'softened' to accommodate the target boys.

Derek emphasises that it's been very difficult for the coaches to respond and embrace this new ethos. Traditionally, they've ruled by fear. He's full of praise and respect for the coaches and their efforts to increase communication but stresses that it's not yet perfect.

I sense that the foundational work, the covert operation that Derek has engaged in, and his continual strive to promote the social, psychological and emotional aspects of young player development are beginning to materialize.

Wednesday 25th September 2002 – 10:40 am

Derek leads as we wander casually around the Academy, down to the ground floor. The corridors are eerily quiet as the both the U-17s and U-19s are out on the field. We discover Tom Nickleson, one of the full-time physiotherapists, puffing and panting to himself, on one of the treadmills

located in the ground floor gym. Derek enquires about the boys, see if they've turned up, if there are any injuries, just touching base really, on an informal process. Tommy reaches out to slow the treadmill down and splutters, "Apart from you're boy Clive not turning in the rest are fine." Derek sighs half expectantly and we explore Clive's situation as we wander in to the small kitchen for a coffee. Clive is part of Derek's intended target group. Derek explains, "Clive is quite apathetic about the football, you know. The football is not the be all and end all for him."

My eyebrows are raised at this point. An opportunity like this and the boy's not fussed about the football! Many lads (and adults) would give their all for a chance to play football at this level. I suppose my reaction is even more defined due to my own experiences as a young player. An Academy scholarship would have paved the way for my football career, instead of having to choose (or be forced) towards more academic pursuits, and then concentrate on the football. This boy's got it all on a plate. Yet he appears apathetic to the football. Derek senses my own disbelief and a bond of agreement forms between us. I can only imagine how the coaches would react to such a notion...The football world is somewhat alien to the notion of 'special cases'. Unlike, say, academia, where you may get extra lessons, or extra time to produce work, and a recognition of the social context such as family difficulties, football is traditionally an unforgiving, competitive world. Special dispensation may be perceived as 'favouritism' towards some boys and treated with disdain by others; inequitable development, and a helping hand towards the 'big time' that others don't get.

Derek explains that it is quite difficult to understand for most people in the club. Clive's an individual that they've brought into the club under Derek's supervision and/or guidance, where Derek has proposed to treat him quite differently. It is, what we have come to know as, the three target boys, in particular which he has offered to 'look after', or deal with. All three are talented individuals, technically gifted, but with some social 'baggage', difficulties, problems, issues etc. Derek put the 'deal' together and suggested that maybe the club should try to bring them through and give them some, "Special dispensation as to how hard we are with them." Derek stressed, "Well, if it doesn't work it doesn't work but if we hadn't taken him [Clive] he'd be locked up by now."

The club are therefore playing a role in that regard, but he is a talented player. If he wasn't 'special' he wouldn't be at the club. The dilemma really is how to deal with 'special cases'. You don't tell him off when he's late turning up, or if he turns up at all. What do you do with him? This is another thing that Derek has to work out. He also feels a little uncertainty or responsibility as to the outcome. Although it's gone through Walter and some of the coaches, it's essentially seen as his proposal.

19th November 2002 – 1 pm

We'd identified that it would be an opportune moment for me to witness a de-brief session with one of Derek's target boys. Initially I'd thought that it would just be Derek, the boy and me. However, to my delight, and surprise, I was invited to sit in on Alan's debrief (i.e., a coaching de-brief) in the presence of Derek. Derek explained that the session, part of the boy's IDP (Individual Development Plan), would be videoed for future use and utilised to develop elements of good practice within the club.

Derek ushered me through the back door of the office and into the main meeting room. I was familiar with the room as this is where we presented the original proposal to all the HoEWs a few years ago. A couple of boys were sitting across the room watching the previous night's schoolboy international between Spain and Holland. Derek started to set up the table, chairs, video and tripod. He explained to Richie that the session would be videoed for future use and feedback purposes, and sought his approval. The approval was quickly forthcoming. A nod of the head and a nervous smile. There appeared little room for objection. "I'll probably get a few quid for it down the market on Saturday." Derek quipped. The two boys looked at each other and giggled. "I want you to stay as well Clive. We'll be doing this with you next week so you can get a feel for what's happening from Richie's session. Ok?" This was greeted by an inevitable, but somewhat begrudging nod of agreement. I wandered back into the office and picked up my note pad. As I slid back in to the room Derek explained, "I've just told the boys about your role, overseeing me if you like, in the whole process." The boys seemed at ease with the situation although Richie was, understandably, slightly pensive. Derek left the room to see where Alan had got to, and I chatted with the boys about the game on the TV. We also talked about their experiences whilst playing over in Holland with the club.

Richie impressed me with his identification and articulation of the complexity of the tactical differences required when playing foreign teams, the greater concentration required and the need to keep the ball. Clive just nodded in agreement.

Alan arrived and Derek directed us to our seats, "You sit there, Richie, Clive there, Alan you're there and Dave there." I was sat directly opposite Alan. Clive was on my left, with Richie sharing the corner of the table to my right. Derek had situated himself as 'The Chair'. Richie to his left and Alan, sharing the other corner of the table, to his right. The video was set up directly opposite Richie and Derek. Clive, much to his delight, just out of camera shot.

I sensed that this was clearly Derek's meeting as he assumed the position of chair and potential mediator between the coach and the player and began proceedings.

1:20 pm

Derek introduced and clarified the purpose of the meeting, (i.e., to offer feedback on Richie's football development). This was the first 'official' IDP meeting that they had undertaken in Richie's three months at the club. Derek identified that the primary function was for the coach to outline Richie's football development including technical, tactical, physical and psychological aspects. The meeting was not a forum for debate but for information. Richie was advised to digest the information, ponder the comments and possibly watch the video at a later stage. Opportunities to develop the issues with the coach and/or Derek would be made available at a later date. The rationale behind this was to facilitate 'informed' communication.

Derek nods to Alan, his forearms resting on the table, hands clasped together over his neatly typed notes, he begins. An array of Richie's positive personal attributes spurts from his mouth. Richie's slightly apprehensive slouch transforms into a positive forward leaning pose, his eyes now transfixed by Alan's enthusiasm for his development, "You've matured. People like you. All the staff, both ancillary and the coaching staff, have praised your general demeanour around the club. People are beginning to notice you, who you are and what you're about. I'm pleased for you and I'm proud of you."

1:30 pm

Derek spots Des Roberts at the door with Trevor Giles, the third target boy. He beckons him into the room and he quietly takes a seat in the stalls.

Alan's overall feedback is littered with positives. He offers gentle words of advice where weaknesses are apparent but reinforces these with assuring words, "We can work 'together' on these things." Derek's face is beaming brighter than Richie's. His head twitches between Alan and Richie, pausing occasionally to write notes on his pad, look across at me, and then Clive. Clive appears unimpressed, almost oblivious to proceedings, as he slouches next to me, sighing softly.

I'm impressed by the intense, thorough and informative feedback that Alan has offered. I'm even more impressed by the enthusiasm and care in his delivery. He brings his points alive by offering examples from experience, identifies 1st team and Premiership players with similar attributes and or weaknesses to clarify his points to Richie. Richie has reverted to a 'nodding dog' mode and I began to think that the video will be extremely valuable for him to refresh his waning attention. Throughout the session there was no explicit mention of Richie's previous indiscretion. However, Alan did praise his growing maturity and alluded to the improvement in his general demeanour. I sense this approach is a result of Derek's 'whispering'.

Derek is focused throughout. At appropriate moments he seeks further clarification from Alan, as to what Richie needs to do. He then turns to Richie again to seek acknowledgement and recognition.

The feedback draws to a close with Alan reinforcing a number of points. His voice becomes clearer, harsher and more definite as he stresses Richie's responsibility, "I need you to buy in to what I've told you." This is swiftly followed by an 'attempt' to offer Richie a chance to further the discussion, "Would that be a fair assessment?" The fairly harsh and defensive tone of Alan's voice is mirrored in his body language as he immediately retreats into the back of his chair and folds his arms across his chest. This is not the time for small talk. Richie nods in approval as Derek clarifies the importance of digesting all the information, and offers Alan's and his services for further clarification and discussion. The meeting finishes and Alan scuttles back to his office.

I sense that the Individual Development Plans for the boys are a welcome addition to their overall development. An explicit vehicle that may enhance the player-coach relationship. An opportunity to provide unequivocal, honest and open feedback coupled with the promise of support and potential action. In Richie's case, I sensed that maybe this was exactly what he required. Although the meetings are identified as a 'one-way' process at this stage, it is clear that Derek's intention is to 'empower' the boys to engage in dialogue with the coaches and take responsibility for their own personal development. Players are encouraged to reflect on the feedback and 'seek' further' clarification. The role of the coach is vital in this process and it appears that Derek has successfully integrated the coach, in this case Alan, into his overall strategic plan.

2:15 pm

Derek and I begin to dissect the session. He's pleased with the way it went and he too was impressed by Alan's enthusiasm and approach. The question left now was whether the, "we can work together", comments will come to fruition. Derek explained that a common complaint from players' was that they don't seem to get the 'detailed attention' to their game that is sometimes outlined, and promised, in their IDP. I questioned whether this would be the next step in the process. He responds swiftly, "No, no. The next step is to get the boys to discuss, communicate and agree their needs and requirements with the coaches. Get the *boy* to understand what is required. Then we'll see if we can get that introduced to the training programme." The slight scepticism in his voice offered a glimpse of the long road ahead.

4.6.5 Strategic Realisation

Tuesday 11th February 2003 – 10 am

Following the shadowing phase and brief respite over the Christmas period I arranged to meet Derek in early February. The purpose of my visit was to ascertain his current position and to allow him to reflect on the development of his role. The following section offers an account of our meeting.

As I gather my suit jacket and briefcase from the boot of my car, I'm distracted by the gentle beep of a car horn. Derek has pulled up alongside me. He appears in good spirits as his six foot three frame uncurls from his family, four door saloon. We greet each other warmly and shake hands before making our way in to the Academy. We both sign in as usual, and Derek guides me towards the canteen for coffee. Derek skips off to his office to put his briefcase down and gather some notes. I share some friendly banter with the canteen lady before Derek rescues me. He shepherds the cleaning lady out of the IT suite, and we settle into two cushioned office chairs, on opposite sides of a rectangular 'school' table. The boys have just gone out on the field so the Academy is quiet, except for the muffled hum of the cleaner's Hoover in the corridor.

I pull out the familiar dictaphone and explain the proceedings to Derek. He appears extremely content and relaxed as I ask him to explore the development of his role since we last met. We backtracked a touch to capture the essence of Derek's last session, the individual player development and how this related to his initial action phase of influencing coach development. Derek was soon into mode. He's very comfortable in this situation. I sense that he really enjoys articulating his thoughts, almost clarifying, revisiting, and sometimes revising his thoughts as we speak.

He's moved on apace since my last visit. He recounts the operational mechanisms that he has engaged in to develop and increase the awareness of this (his) 'psychological and emotional' area of player development. He has used several vehicles to encourage the debate. He's put himself around the table using child protection; he's used the tutors and the boys through the educational package (i.e., the Perfex National Diploma), and he's facilitated and encouraged appropriate research in and around the Academy. In his own words he's also continually worked 'around the

edges'; one to ones with boys, small group work, observing, shadowing and more recently explicit targeting of boys. In essence it's a package deal. He continues to spin a number of plates, but they're all related to this psychological area of player development.

Derek's always been confident of achieving his goals but was time running out? How long could he keep spinning the plates? He stressed that despite all of this foundational work, the work on the ground that there was still tension in his own mind. How long does this covert operation go on before it is allowed to be overt, explicit and strategic? To be able to really affect change and influence practice strategically rather than adopting an ad hoc, piecemeal and covert approach.

Derek sits upright in his chair and stares across the table. He clasps his hands together and declares his time has come.

"It's difficult to put your finger on exactly what it is that's shifted but there's been a culture shift almost from an obsession with the technical and the tactical work with the older players to more of a... well a lot of that foundation work has been done now between let's say between the ages of nine and fourteen, and fifteen, the technical work and introduction to the understanding of the game. Now that this area of work, this psychology, is much more important because it's about preparing boys for a career and they see this as being, I think they're starting to understand now that this is almost like the missing link. This is the bit that we really need to move on with in this area. And the Academy Director himself, I think identifies that he has some important skills and important strategies in this area for working with older boys that he would like to see the other coaches who work with the older boys employ. And then that leads into, well what are we doing at the younger level as well? Are we preparing them at the younger level to be able to move into that area when they become fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, much more smoothly? Because they'll have been certain strategies in place, certain ways that they work with boys that makes that easier..."

A cultural shift! His face beamed as the phrase slipped unsuspectingly off his tongue. He allowed himself a few seconds of self-indulgence and congratulations, before the smile disappeared and the reality dawned. He moved forward in his chair, and gently rested his elbows on the table. He expressed sternly that his work had only just begun.

Derek had become strategic. He has spent three to four years getting there, and he wasn't about to become complacent. He was in the driving seat with his key allies, Des Roberts and, more specifically, Walter Higgins his Academy Director. He knew he had the support of Des. As soon as Des came in to the Academy he realised he had an ally. His ally was also close to the gatekeeper, Walter. He had now secured the support of Walter. So much so, that Walter had begun to recognise the need to develop this area [psychology] of player development alongside the traditional mainstays of technical, tactical and physical development. He suggested that they (i.e., Walter, Des, Alan and Andy – the full-time coaches – and Derek) should spend a few days away from the Academy in order to concentrate on the *strategic* development of this area (i.e., psychological, emotional, welfare) of player development. I sensed that this was an exciting time for Derek.

The days away proved fruitful despite the fact that neither Alan nor Andy could attend. Derek pondered for a few moments before almost dismissing my sceptical notion of an underlying unwillingness, on the part of both Alan and Andy, to buy-in to his strategic aspirations.

"It's going to be harder I think to convince Alan and Andy to take some of the ideas on, but not because I don't think they buy into it. I think they just feel more uncomfortable with the kind of work that that includes. You know, they're what you call probably traditional coaches, so they feel that they do a lot of this work anyway so why does it have to be sort of like up there and with the other work. It's just the other work is the vehicle for this kind of stuff to come out. So I won't say they're not open minded, I think they're open minded enough to listen and take stuff on board but you know when it comes to priorities they may relegate it slightly. They said they do a lot of work in this area and they do, they do a lot of good work. And it maybe just one of the, sort of strategic approaches is to almost, try to audit the work that they do so that they can share it with other people who can benefit from their expertise in that area."

I sensed that Derek appreciates that there is along way go, but he is confident of driving this forward. He now has a collective and influential power base in the form of Des and Walter. Yet, he recognises that strategic influence doesn't guarantee operational implementation. The process must be allowed to evolve, and that evolution must include all staff (i.e., the coaches, the scouts, the caretaker, cleaners and security staff). However, he stressed that the operational work cannot stop. It may be more overt but it mustn't stop. In essence the emotional and welfare domains

of his work will become more explicit. He sees himself now as the facilitator of staff, or more specifically coach development within the psychological area. He recognises that the club need to engage in a programme of staff development. To provide education, support, workshops and opportunities to explore and share practice in order to enable the coaches to understand what is required. He recognises that they (including himself) are still struggling to identify what, exactly, this area is. The context of psychology still reverberates a negative subtext amongst staff and players. Derek is fully aware of this, a remnant of the traditional football culture and an inherent fear of change. He recognises the need to drip feed his beliefs.

"...even the word psychological, you know, that's a problem with it. Technical, tactical physical, almost suggests, yes, we can move forward in those areas, those are the key attributes. Psychological straight away in this building in our language suggests, ooh, here's a kid with problems and you want to try and move away from that word to say this... in this culture there's almost a suspicion with the words like psychological, emotional, mental. I mean even the kids say themselves don't they ... you're mental you are... The words have connotations of problems, whereas the word technical doesn't, it's a positive word."

Derek is still keen to pursue his own personal development. He stressed that this was a necessity. He must continue to establish and reinforce his own credibility in order to facilitate the education of others. I sense that Derek has realised his strategic aspiration. So what now? Where to next? The welfare remit of his role now demands more covert attention and long term nurturing. A further re-evaluation, and perhaps re-positioning, of his role is on the horizon. I sense he already knows this.

4.7 Study Three – Overview

Tierney (2002) stated that within a postmodern narrative one cannot assume that the text has one absolutist interpretation (i.e., as defined by the author). Furthermore, he suggested that to claim otherwise assumes that the author is, "...the textual arbiter of interpretation and definition and to reduce the reader's role to little more than passive observer, a bystander in the author's world." In this sense, the narratives presented in this study aspire to engage the reader and invite them to draw their own interpretations. However, Shakespeare (1997) referred to the issues surrounding the 'death of the author' in the postmodern (and post-structural) text (i.e., the openness of a text to multiple interpretations). More specifically, he referred to concerns over readers applying their own values and beliefs to a text, which may result in misconstrued interpretations, which are contrary to the author's intentions. In this sense, although the narrative text invites interpretation, the following overview outlines the author's own understandings of the practitioners' respective experiences and working practices.

In accordance with Tedlock (2000) the purpose of observing the two HoEWs within their respective environments enabled the author to acquire more meaningful context, further appreciation and gain a fuller understanding of specific encounters, events and/or experiences. Furthermore, she stressed that these experiences are inherently inter-subjective, social, processual and dependent on a multitude of socially constructed locations and positions. In essence, these experiences (i.e., for both the author and the practitioner) are different and reflect their personal experiences, skills, cultures and relationships.

The narratives provide further evidence of both Billy's and Derek's commitment to the development of talented young players. However, it is evident that both evoke different perspectives of what the role of the HoEW entails, and how this should be achieved. From the onset of the action phase, it appears that individual past experiences, skills and respective working environments have influenced their particular aspirations. More specifically, these aspirations were guided by what they felt they could (realistically) achieve within the constraints of the Academy. These constraints included the internal inter-personal relationships (i.e., coaches and Academy Directors), and their own perception of their club's (and associated staff)

expectation of their role. In this sense, the context of their achievements, and their subsequent role in influencing change, were dependent on their internal aspirations (or dreams) and their perceived (and real) external constraints and/or requirements.

Consistent with the findings of Study 2, they have both been able to achieve strategic gains in the areas of educational provision and child protection within their respective environments. However, although these areas were implicit within their change strategies neither Billy nor Derek identified these as explicit areas for change or development. Rather, Derek utilised his *strategic* child protection remit to gain an overt, and influential voice within the domain of player development (and subsequently coach development). He also utilised his educational remit as a covert vehicle to enhance the awareness of the emotional (and psychological) development of talented players. Conversely, Billy's educational remit predominantly concerned the provision of an appropriate educational environment and an attainable educational programme. In this sense, Billy's educational programme can be associated with the intrinsic benefits of education itself, the development of a well-mannered and well-rounded individual, and the attainment of appropriate qualifications for each boy. Billy also sought a more strategic approach to the facilitation and delivery of child protection. This enabled him to spend more time with the operational demands of understanding the individual characteristics of the boys (i.e., technical, physical, social, academic and emotional). It is within the welfare remit, where I sensed a divergence between the two practitioners. Billy's perception of his welfare remit appeared to revolve around understanding the boys, ensuring that those associated with the club (e.g., coaches, Academy Director, college tutors, landladies etc.) had an appreciation of the boys' welfare (emotional, social circumstances and well-being) and that everything is done in the best interests of the boys. Implicit within Billy's welfare remit is the need to understand the boy and *look after* the boy (i.e., internal and external to the club), which in turn, allows the boy to concentrate on his football, with the *added value* that this may enable him to perform to his full potential. In contrast, Derek's welfare remit not only covers the best interests of the boy (i.e., emotionally and socially), but also incorporates an inextricable football performance agenda. More specifically, he believes that he can make a difference to a player's performance by empowering the player to understand their emotional states, and take more responsibility for their own football (and educational) development. He strives

to empower players to understand themselves, and their development needs, places an explicit demand on the coaches to understand the emotional and social characteristics of the boys, in addition to their existing knowledge of the boys' technical, tactical and physical capabilities.

4.7.1 Derek Traynor

Throughout the action phase of the project both participants have sought to develop and refine their identified action. Derek has continually aspired to influence the psychological and emotional domain of player development. However, in order to sustain this overarching aspiration, he engaged in a number of sub-plots (of action), and covert operational mechanisms to continue raising the awareness of the Academy staff. For example, as previously identified in Study 2, he continued to utilise the tutors and players to engage the coaches in issues surrounding *explicit* player development, and subsequently, *implicit* coach development. He continued to explicitly engage the coaches in debate surrounding emotional and development issues. More specifically, he encouraged his Academy Director and the coaches, to assist him in the nurturing and developing the three target boys (i.e., technically gifted but socially tainted). In addition, under the auspices of the *new* staff development process, he secured funding for his own personal development within sports psychology. Moreover, all of these practices were couched, broached and secured under the umbrella of a welfare remit (i.e., legitimately within his job description).

My observation of Derek has provided some clear examples of how he continually moves the emotional (and welfare) debate forward. He continually encouraged people to engage, and often manipulated circumstances to provide a forum for exchange and debate. For example, he instigated the informal, covert agenda for the physiotherapist and the sports scientist to discuss player issues in his office, whilst the coaches were preparing their coaching sessions. The narrative is beset with incidents of Derek's raised awareness and attention levels (e.g., his radar-like demeanour in the canteen), which evidences his constant awareness of anything, or anyone that may impact the nature of the environment, and consequently, the nature and/or behaviour of the boys.

Derek appeared to have an inherent understanding and empathy with young players. More specifically, Derek instigated the inclusion of the three target boys within the Academy environment, prior to them being eligible for a scholarship. This, I sensed, was Derek's trump card. The narrative suggests that the boys are troublesome, yet Derek was (and still is) devoted to them. Furthermore, he convinced the Academy Director and the full-time coaches to 'soften' (slightly) the inherently disciplinarian and traditional regime in order to accommodate the three boys. These boys were (and still are) troublesome but their presence has provided Derek with an explicit and overt emotional agenda inextricably linked to player performance. The more sceptical reader may view this opportunity afforded to Derek, as the proverbial rope with which to hang himself, and hence dispel any notional links between welfare and player performance. I sense that Derek has utilised any slack in this rope to further bind these links together.

Derek's role has evolved over time. He has not only earned respect but has demanded respect, not only for himself but for the role the HoEW plays in ensuring that players have an opportunity to maximise their potential. This is evidenced specifically by Alan Shaw's (under 17s coach) calm response to Richie's changing room outburst, and his subsequent *hand over* of responsibility to Derek (the youth player whisperer) to manage the situation. Derek's inherent personal, social and psychological skills provided the boy with an opportunity to 'unpick' his disdain, re-evaluate his situation and continue his football development. In addition, Derek provided further approval, reinforcement and support for the player's subsequent behaviour:

"I've just seen Richie again, you know, he's turned in this morning. I made sure he's seen me clocking him, I gave him a nod of approval."

It appears that both the coaches and the Academy Director have witnessed the value of Derek's role. It would appear that, regardless of whether any of these boys are offered a scholarship, or even graduate to a professional contract and first team appearance, they will be better players (and individuals) because of their Academy experience, and more specifically, the tutelage of both Derek and, increasingly, the Academy staff. Derek perceives the role of the HoEW to be inextricably linked to player performance. His achievements to date coupled with his personal, craft and

local experiences appear to have ensured that the Academy is starting to believe that too.

4.7.2 Billy Drisdale

Throughout Billy's action phase he has continually aspired to increase the communication between himself, the coaches and boys. Implicit within this remit was a desire to encourage a more regulated, organised (even disciplined) and informed environment for the players. It appeared that he saw himself as an integral component within each player's academic, social and personal development. It appeared that he had no explicit aspirations to synthesise the player's education and welfare with their football performance. However, his underlying belief espoused that a player's performance on the field was symptomatic of his off-field demeanour (implicated by his social environment, educational experiences and relationships). More specifically, a player content with himself and his environment would be more able, and better equipped, to maximise their football performance.

As with Derek, Billy consistently displayed an empathy with, and an understanding of, the football world in which he worked. He appeared to sense the impending changes in club personnel before any one else within the Academy. His certainty in this regard resulted in a refinement and re-evaluation of his action phase until such changes were realised. However, despite Billy's respect and faith in the new coaches, he was still committed to ensuring that he was informed, included or (at least) consulted in any decisions made about the boys. In this sense, he was still intent on establishing clear and consistent lines of communication despite the disappearance of his weekly meetings. However, Billy believed that his position had changed for the better. It appeared that he had found new allies in his quest for the coaches to understand the educational and welfare remit of the boys. This was evidenced by the mutual respect witnessed between Paulo (the new under 17s coach) and Billy, as Paulo stressed his perception of the role of the Head of Education and Welfare:

"This [Billy's role] is an important role. It has to do with everything about the boy. A very big role, important role."

Billy also continually referred to Greg McStay (the new under 19s coach) as an educated young man and, I sense, perceived him as an educational ally. It appeared that although Billy had some reservations about Greg's lack of youth coaching experience, and both Greg and Paulo's seemingly limited disciplinary approach, he was content to offer them time to settle in. It was evident that Billy had taken a step back in his action phase. His respect for the two new coaches was apparent. Despite feeling frustrated and uncomfortable with some of their methods, he seemed to think it inappropriate, and beyond his current remit, to offer them explicit advice on how to manage the boys. Consequently, he reverted to more operational pursuits in order to re-establish his position, and the value of education and welfare (i.e., including communication) within the Academy. Although Billy had identified both Greg and Paulo as his allies, there were times when it appeared that the value of education, and more specifically Billy's role, was not viewed in such high regard. For example, Timmy Wharton's apparently undermining gestures, as Billy was reprimanding the two young schoolboys in the canteen (see page 204-205), could suggest a lack of regard for Billy's educational and disciplinary practices. In addition, although Ronnie, the goalkeeping coach, appeared to be fond of Billy he had little awareness or understanding of his overall remit. A vague appreciation of Billy's welfare remit was apparent as he described Billy's role as simply sorting the boys out.

Billy's frustrations appeared to increase during the shadowing phase. He continued to pursue the communication issues with the coaches but his angst appeared to be dominated by the relaxed and ad hoc nature of the new regime. However, he was determined to instigate a more coherent programme of activity (i.e., education and football) for the boys. Without his weekly meetings he had to resort to operational practices. Over the years Billy has proved extremely skilful, utilising his craft and local knowledge to seek out opportune moments (i.e., canteen and corridor moments), to engage certain individuals with his ideas. He slowly gathered individual support from the individual coaches before offering a more formalised timetable for their perusal and further discussion. The fruits of his labour were evidenced as the timetable was approved and implemented after the Christmas period. He believed that the coaches were on his side; coming from where he would come from (if he were still a coach). He was willing to accept that it wouldn't be perfect, because he had come to accept that this was the football world in which he worked.

4.7.3 Summary

It is evident that both Billy and Derek have engaged in procedural change. In this sense, both moved forward with their original action identified in Study 2. However, as previously identified by Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) the gauge of achievement should be inextricably associated with the practitioners' strong and authentic sense of development, coupled with an evolution of working practices, an enhanced awareness of such practices, and the environment within which they practice. The observation of the two HoEWs enabled the author to better understand the nature of their personal skills and experiences, and a fuller appreciation of their working environment. It appears that both practitioners are skilled and competent in the delivery of an appropriate (and in some instances flexible) educational programme for each individual boy. In addition, both have assumed strategic responsibility for the instigation and implementation of the necessary child protection procedures within their respective Academy. Both Billy and Derek have an undeniable empathy and commitment to ensuring that the best interests of the boys are considered at all times. However, both have encountered, endured, and in some instances continue to endure, elements of hostility and ignorance with regard to the nature and perception of their role within their respective Academies. More specifically, they have exposed (and differentially tackled) some ignorance towards the welfare remit of their role.

It appears that the welfare remit of their role is *dependent* on their own personal skills, past experiences and subsequent aspirations (i.e., what they believe the role should entail) *in concert* with the perceptions, constraints and expectations of their respective Academies. In this sense, Derek has pursued and engaged in the emotional and psychological elements of player development (i.e., under the banner of welfare) due to his inherent belief in this area of work. Throughout, his involvement as the HoEW he has attributed (a semblance of) this success to being fortunate enough to work in an open-minded environment, with open-minded coaches. Whilst the nature of this open-mindedness may be open for discussion, it is clear that Derek has engaged in numerous operational mechanisms, which have *forced* the coaches to engage in this debate and subsequently raise the profile of his work. It is evident that he perceives the role of the HoEW to be a provider of appropriate educational opportunities and

appropriate social support. In addition, he sees both the educational provision and the welfare remit as an integral component of a player's football performance. Subsequently, the boys' football performance is intertwined within both their educational programme and welfare provision. In this sense, Derek is continually encouraging the boys to understand themselves and, ultimately empower them to accept responsibility for their own development (i.e., both educational and football). Consequently, he appears to be raising the profile, value and worth of both the educational and welfare (i.e., emotional and psychological) remits within his Academy (i.e., Academy Director and coaches), and their potentially positive impacts on player development.

Conversely, Billy appears to have no explicit aspirations to synthesise education, welfare and football. Yet, he appreciates the implicit requirement to look after the boys off the field. Consequently, he has continually encouraged the Academy staff (i.e., Academy Director and coaches) to recognise the need for him to be included, and/or informed of anything to do with the boy. His education and welfare remit appears to consist, predominantly, of more operational demands. For example, he is committed to making himself visible, accessible and approachable for players, coaches, parents, teachers and landlords. However, despite efforts to prioritise his role he espoused that these, often overwhelming, operational practices provided him with extremely valuable information regarding the boys' social, academic and football needs and developments. In addition he readily admitted to enjoying this, more socially orientated, part of his work. In this sense, Billy's role appears to bear some resemblance to the education and welfare officers (EWO) within the social services. For example, his visibility within the school environment is reminiscent of the 'patrolling' EWO identified by MacMillan (1977). However, I sense that this resemblance offers a disservice to the importance of Billy's demanding and diverse role. Billy's role incorporates everything to do with the boys. In this sense, he is an integral component of the development of these young boys as both footballers and well-rounded young men. It is to his credit that he continues to encourage the Academy Director and the coaches to believe in his ideals.

It is evident that both Billy and Derek are committed to the development of talented young footballers. Both are highly skilled and personable characters that can

instigate, influence, organise and deliver a multitude of responsibilities. It appears that both individuals have the capacity and knowledge to deliver the core educational programme and the assumed responsibility of child protection. However, it is apparent that both have different aspirations and ideals with regard to the wider context of education and welfare. In addition, these aspirations and ideals appear to be dependent on the expectations and perceptions of the HoEW within their respective environment. However, I sense that, regardless of whether these young players graduate to become professional players or not, they will undoubtedly be better equipped (i.e., as footballers and as young men) as a result of their experiences under the tutelage of either Billy or Derek.

Reflexive Moments

The commitment to ensuring that everything is done in the best interests of the boys was further evidenced in the reflexive interactions between Billy, Derek and myself. Although, I did not seek approval of the narrative, I was further inspired by their responses and explicit commitment to continue to encourage and influence change. Both Billy and Derek appeared to appreciate the context of the narrative and understood that the narrative provided a further opportunity to reflect on their working practices (see Davis, 2002). In that sense, Billy alluded to the benefits of our interactions and the opportunity to reflect:

“And like you [researcher] give me ideas all the way through because you’ll go away, because I reflect on what I’ve talked about and that and by talking about it you remember. So, reflection is always good for you and by you [researcher] being here I’ve had to reflect.”

(Billy Drisdale – reflexive moments, 8th April 2003)

Whilst, Derek expressed some concerns over the *graphic* and *emotive* utilisation of the terms covert and overt, I sensed that he understood the rationale behind their inclusion. In that sense, he expressed that his actions could be perceived as covert as no formal mechanism existed within the club to raise such issues. Furthermore, Derek alluded to the benefits of engaging in the narrative and the importance of reflecting on his past experiences and his existing working practices:

"I mean it was great to reflect, because immediately I started to take notes to expand areas in it. So I might read something, what would be an example of that ... I mean I was interested straight away see, when you got quite personal yourself about your own situation, that made me go back to reflect on my own situation again and about where I'm coming from and what is it that drives me in this area."

(Derek Traynor – reflexive moments, 27th March 2003)

I sensed that both Billy and Derek were committed to affecting change. Billy was still committed to the well-roundedness of the boy, even expressing the potential inclusion of activities such as cooking and car mechanics within the boys' educational programme. He was still committed to a more disciplined timetable. Above all I sensed that the boys were the most important people within the club. I sensed that Derek's changes were becoming more overt, as his emotional and/or psychological curriculum was now more readily accepted by his Academy Director. I also sensed, that he believed the rest of the Academy was also ready for such developments, but he required additional support (e.g., educational personnel) to enable him to move the emotional/psychological player development (and hence coach development) agenda forwards.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Discussion

The following section explores the salient points highlighted within the thesis. This exercise aims to offer both generic and specific interpretations of the findings. Throughout this section I revisit and explore the procedural tenets of action research in addition to my own development and location as a researcher. Moreover, I attempt to outline how the context and nature of the research, and the subsequent findings and experiences (i.e., of both the ‘self’ and the ‘others’) that have evolved through the employment of various research methodologies.

5.1.1 Study 1

Study 1 formed the initial stages of the *planning and reconnaissance phase* of the research. In this sense, Study 1 explored the existing (and evolving) profession of the Head of Education and Welfare within 5 FA Premier League football Academies. This study gained an understanding of the individual HoEWs, their role and their respective working environment. In-depth, semi structured, flexible phenomenological interviews (Dale, 1996; Scanlan, 1989a) were utilised to promote an open and exploratory dialogue. Subsequently, through the traditional rubric of content analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Scanlan, 1989b; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), generic themes concerning the role, responsibility, working practices, skills and influences emerged.

The emergent themes highlighted the multi-faceted and demanding nature of the role of the HoEW. It was apparent that each HoEW possessed elements of strategic influence and autonomy within *core* areas of responsibility. These core areas were predominantly concerned with educational provision, and child protection. It was apparent that, although the HoEWs expressed some concerns over the funding mechanisms (i.e., the FFE and VTS) and inflexibility of the educational programme, they seemed to be at ease with the strategic implementation of the educational programmes. It was also apparent that although the area of child protection was not identified as an explicit component of the remit (i.e., within the FA Technical Department’s Charter for Quality), each HoEW had assumed this responsibility within their respective Academies. The identification of a designated individual with responsibility for child protection issues, as part of the promotion of the welfare of children attending a football Academy (FA Technical Department, 1997), appears to

have been subsumed within the role of the HoEW. Furthermore, the role of the designated child protection officer embraces a diverse remit of responsibility:

“Each person [designated child protection officer] shall be required to be trained in child protection issues at least to include satisfactory completion of The Football Association/English Sports Council Child Protection Awareness Programme or equivalent scheme designated by The Football Association. It shall be the responsibility of the designated person to liaise with children, staff and volunteers and the police, social services and FA Premier League/Football League (as appropriate) in relation to any child protection issues that may arise; to promote awareness of child protection issues generally and specifically best practice amongst staff and volunteers, and to monitor compliance.”

(FA Technical Department, 1997; section 3.4.16.4)

In addition to the organisation and delivery of an appropriate educational programme and the diversity of the child protection remit, it was evident that the HoEW embraced a number of additional responsibilities. These included the provision of pastoral care and counselling, preparation for release, provision, allocation and monitoring of appropriate accommodation, and elements of recruitment and marketing. All of these responsibilities, across most age ranges (i.e., 8-19 years), were considered to be components of each HoEW's remit.

Although each HoEW recognised a responsibility and engaged in all of the elements identified above, it was evident that each individual's level of engagement within each area was different. For example, the provision of education ranged from a franchised off-site, school and college delivery with occasional in-house educational delivery (e.g., Ron Burley (P2), Billy Drisdale (P3), Frank O'Hare (P5)) to a franchised, and in-house, on-site educational delivery (e.g., John Grayson (P1) and Derek Traynor (P4)). Similarly, the provision of accommodation ranged from an assortment of family accommodation to a mixture of family accommodation and hostel arrangements. It was apparent that Ron, Billy and Frank were immersed in the attraction, provision and vetting of appropriate providers, with regular contact with landladies and landlords, whereas John and Derek appeared to have a more peripheral overview of this exercise.

Content analysis also revealed that each individual possessed a range of experiences, skills and influences that they brought to their respective roles. It appeared that the

nature of these experiences, skills and influences (i.e., associated with 'craft' and 'professional' knowledge) and the perception of their role within their Academy (i.e., the coaches and the Academy Director) determined their level of engagement (and interest) within each area of responsibility. All of the HoEWs appeared more able to assume a strategic influence over educational provision and child protection issues due to the *centrality* of this element of the HoEW remit. Although all HoEWs recognised the strategic potential, and the personal capacity, to deliver child protection, there appeared to be some confusion and concern as to whether this should be operationalized by the HoEW. In this sense, they stressed a requirement for clearer guidance and direction from The FA.

In some instances the educational provision was perceived (by the wider Academy) as a *nuisance* that hindered the players' participation in football. Derek attempted to redress this institutional perception by advocating a more 'football performance based' educational agenda, where the players' were encouraged to reflect on their performance as a feature of their education. Other HoEWs appeared to express a more *traditional* approach to their educational remit. In this sense, they espoused the need to provide an educational package that was appropriate to the boys' needs. However, all the participants expressed a desire for a more 'flexible' approach to education, and an inherent need to raise the profile of education (for the general good of the boys) within their respective environment. This (traditionally) poor perception of the notions of 'education' and 'academia' within football mirrors Parker's (1998) ethnographic experiences of youth trainees. If education continues to be thought of as a separate entity to football (i.e., with no perceived football performance or lifestyle benefits) by the football community (including coaches and Academy Directors), then it may prove difficult to enhance its perceived importance. In contrast to this, both Ron and Derek alluded to the open-mindedness of their Academy staff as an integral component with regard to raising the awareness and value of education. However, Ron also alluded to his previous involvement, status and position within the club (i.e., with an existing relationship with the Board of Directors) as a contributory factor to raising the awareness of education, whereas Derek had initiated a more *football performance based educational perspective* which had acted to bring the coaches 'on-side'.

The elements and strength of the strategic influence of each HoEW within the Academy may also be attributed the perception and nature of the role ascribed by each HoEW. In this sense, John, Billy and Frank described themselves as fringe or peripheral components of the boys' overall development. Consequently, they (in the first instance) engaged predominantly in more operational mechanisms (e.g., corridor conversations and canteen moments) in order to influence practice within their Academies, rather than engage in strategic debate or (perceived) conflict.

As previously noted, Study 1 was designed and implemented utilising the procedures of an established qualitative (interview) research protocol (i.e., Dale, 1996; Scanlan, 1989a) and content analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Scanlan, 1989b; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Subsequently, the research was dominated by the maintenance of technical rigour and trustworthiness of the research process (and the researcher) consistent with the interpretivist paradigm. Consequently, elements of investigator triangulation (n=3) (Patton, 1990; McFee, 1992; Janesick, 1994) and peer debriefing were utilised in an attempt to enhance the credibility of the research process and the researcher's inferences (Greene, 1994). Study one attempted to explore and reveal the value dimensions of the practitioners' lived experience yet, consistent with Schwandt's (1994) interpretation of the interpretivist paradigm, it sought to objectify these values. Furthermore, Schwant (1994) suggested that the paradox of how to develop an objective interpretive science of subjective human experiences thus arises. In this sense, objectivity and the interpretivist notions of a value free research (Bain, 1989) were encouraged. However, some authors have continued to question the notions of an objective and/or neutral research stance, particularly within the interpretivist paradigm (Edelsky, 1990; Lather, 1986). In line with elements of the *neutrality* debate, I offer the reader a glimpse of my own personal experiences of the football environment within the methods section of Study 1. This identification of personal experience signals my acceptance of methods critiques that have questioned the limitations of espousing purely inductive research (Krane et al., 1997). I recognise that personal experience houses the potential to introduce an element of researcher bias into the research venture. On the other hand, prior 'insider' knowledge allows easier access and encourages a more trusting relationship to emerge (Sparkes, 2002). These tensions are reconciled by the rigour of the construction of the interview guide and research process (including triangulation) (see Sparkes, 2002).

As I composed this concluding section I arrived at the view that I was wrestling with the challenge of capturing the subjectivity of the real world of others, revisiting my own personal experiences, whilst also trying to remain objective (and value free), (Lather, 1986). Krane and colleagues' (1997) suggested that requisite 'academic' and/or 'theoretical' knowledge challenges the notion of purely inductive research. Further to this, it would appear that 'first hand' knowledge and/or experience of the research environment (in this instance my own experiences of playing football and being involved in football at a high level) also provided myself with requisite knowledge. In this sense, 'knowing the game' (i.e., the working environment), as well as harbouring supplementary conceptual knowledge, acted to challenge the 'inductiveness' of the research and thus extends the critique outlined by Krane et al. (1997). Consequently, in line with the thinking of Krane et al. (1997) researchers need to be aware of, and acknowledge, conceptual bias and *also* the personal experiential bias within their research.

5.1.2 Study 2

Study 2 Part I was designed as an extension of the planning and reconnaissance phase and allowed an exploration of the dominant themes that emerged from Study 1. It was evident that different levels of engagement in elements of working practice existed. More specifically, Study 2 sought to explore the operational mechanisms employed by the HoEWs, elements of strategic frustration and the nature of interpersonal relationships within their respective Academies. Furthermore, Study 2, Part I promoted a more collective understanding of the role through the sharing of experiences (i.e., the focus group) and encouraged each participant to identify explicit change strategies for the action phase of the research (i.e., Study 2, Part II). Consequently, Study 2 offered a clearer indication of each HoEW's perception of their role. It also identified that, issues of communication between the HoEW and the coaching staff and a perceived (general) lack of respect for both the educational remit, acted to mediate the influence of the HoEW. Furthermore, each HoEW aspired to promote a more inclusive and informed environment. This aim required them to be informed of everything that impacted on a boy's development within the Academy. The group also stressed that *ideally* the HoEW should be seen as a strategic facilitator (or at least included in strategic decision-making) of the multi-faceted components

identified in Study 1 (i.e., educational provision, pastoral care, child protection, release, accommodation, recruitment/marketing). However, it was evident that the potential to become a strategic facilitator of these areas was dependent on the skills, experiences and aspirations (i.e., what they wanted to achieve) of each HoEW, the nature of their inter-personal Academy relationships, and more specifically, the perception of their role with their respective Academies (i.e., what the Academy, and the culture, expected them to do). Furthermore, the aspirations for change (developed later) appear to have been influenced by what each practitioner believed that they could, *realistically*, achieve within their respective environments.

Across all HoEWs there appeared to be a desire to enhance the role of the HoEW and increase the lines of communication *within* their respective Academies. However, each participant engaged in different mechanisms and/or approaches to achieve these aims. For example, John Grayson aspired to create a more creative approach to educational provision that necessitated an inclusive process of communication and negotiation with schools, parents and coaches. In this instance, it was apparent that the coaches were amenable to the change as it would be beneficial to their coaching practice (i.e., more coaching time with the boys). Billy and Frank also aspired to raise the profile of the HoEW and promote an inclusive approach to player development. Moreover, these two participants recognised that potential conflict was associated with their aspirations (i.e., with the coaches). In this sense, both engaged in predominantly operational approaches (e.g., individual corridor or canteen conversations) to coerce and influence change. The action of Billy was concerned with the overall social, educational and welfare of the boys, whereas Frank was predominantly concerned with including the coaches (and other personnel) in the delivery of the core skills programme. Implicit within these action phases was a need to promote the general awareness and value of the education and welfare remit. Paul Harrison (P2a) and Derek also recognised the potential conflict of interest (i.e., between the coaches and the HoEW) associated with their action phases. Although their action phases targeted an inclusive approach to player development, it appeared that their action required a much more strategic and overarching remit. Paul believed that the welfare of the boys was the responsibility of *everyone* within the Academy (i.e., including the coaches), and stressed the need to introduce an 'Academy Mentor System' (or tutor system, similar to academia). He proposed that player development

was not just about coaching, but about looking after players (helping them cope) off the field, so that they perform on the field. In this sense, it appeared that he was 'challenging' the coaches to understand, and appreciate, the role of welfare and its impact on player performance. Throughout Paul's action the coaches in his club were reluctant to accept his philosophy, which undermined his strategic aspirations. Consequently, the change strategy was 'down-graded' to a more HoEW led operational approach. In this case, although the coaches recognised the importance of welfare, it appeared that they held the view that a welfare remit was *solely* the responsibility of the HoEW (i.e., beyond their remit).

Derek also aspired to promote welfare as an element of player performance. However, he utilised a range of covert, implicit and overt operational practices to increase the awareness of welfare (i.e., emotional and psychological) and encourage associated debate within his Academy. Although he recognised elements of good practice within the Academy, he believed that the coaches in his Academy were not ready to embrace a direct, explicit emotional, psychological and/or welfare agenda in relation to player performance.

It was evident that each HoEW that engaged in the reflection and development (n=4) of the respective action phases influenced change (to some extent) within his Academy. It is important to note that each HoEW was able to determine not only the direction of the change strategy, but also the pace and degree of innovation, or change (see Greenwood, 1994). In this sense, intrusions of self-presentation and self-esteem, which may be evidenced in politically inequitable situations (or relatively powerless situations), should be minimised (Greenwood, 1994).

The HoEWs' changes were dominated by aspirations to raise the level of awareness and value of education and welfare (and consequently the role of the HoEW) with the coaches and the Academy Directors. All participants espoused that the provision of an appropriate (and flexible) educational package, working in tandem with an appropriate social support (i.e., welfare) structure enabled talented boys to maximise their performance on the field. In addition to this implicit relationship between education, welfare and performance, Derek aspired to encourage both players and coaches to embrace more emotional and psychological elements of player

development. More specifically, he sought to promote a more explicit relationship between education, welfare and performance. In this sense, he encouraged the boys to take more responsibility for their own development (i.e., education and football). Consequently, he aimed to empower the players to reflect and understand their own performance, which necessitated a more engaged (and inclusive) role for the coach.

Throughout the action phase it was evident that each HoEW possessed an ability to draw on their craft, local, professional and personal skills to guide their level of engagement within their respective change strategies. Study 2 acted to reinforce the perception that the elements of educational provision and child protection were the core responsibilities for each HoEW. The level of engagement in the other, predominantly perceived as welfare, responsibilities (i.e., identified in Study 1) were dependent on individual personal skills, experiences and influences. In this sense, the 'welfare' remit appeared to be void of explicit constraints. It appeared that the welfare remit was 'up for grabs'. Ultimately, welfare appeared to be dependent on the perception and aspiration of each HoEW (i.e., what they perceived welfare to be and what they could achieve), and the subsequent expectation of their respective Academy (i.e., what they expected welfare to be). The HoEWs felt that their Academy colleagues (i.e., coaches and Academy Directors) tended to recognise the importance of the boys' welfare but viewed it as a separate entity, and hence the *sole* responsibility of the HoEW. The research conducted in Study 2 suggests that the HoEWs felt it was *their responsibility* to change that perception.

Study 2 explored the dominant themes emerging from Study 1 by engaging the participants in elements of collective understanding of their, and each other's respective working environment. Furthermore, the underpinning premise of Study 2 was to encourage the participants to reflect on their existing working practices, construct knowledge through reflection and shared understanding, identify an appropriate phase of action and, implement and monitor this action. In this sense, there was an inextricable relationship between myself (the researcher), and the participants consistent with assumptions of both the constructivist and critical paradigms. In that context, relationships evolved and the findings were created as I continually interacted with the practitioners (see Guba and Lincoln, 1998). Consequently, the inextricable link between the participants and myself implies a

more value based and value mediated set of findings (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Lather, 1986). At this point the synthesis between the assumptions held within constructivism, critical theory and action research warrant further attention.

Consistent with the procedural tenets of action research Study 2, Part I sought collective understanding through shared experiences, and encouraged the participants to *consider* possible solutions to any issues concerning their existing working environment. Tinning (1992) described action research as a group process that necessitated interaction and collaboration between the researcher and researched. The 'extensive' planning and reconnaissance phase enabled the participants to share and explore salient experiences (identified in Study 1) with a view to identifying potential change. The research therefore appeared consistent with assumptions located within the constructivist paradigm, where *understanding and reconstruction* of the initial beliefs and experiences of the participants (and the researcher) were open to new interpretation. Information and individual constructions were elicited and refined through interaction between, and amongst, the researcher and the participants (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Similarly, the tenets of trustworthiness and authenticity (i.e., peer triangulation through construction of the focus group schedule and interpretation of the context of the discussion), consistent with the processes of constructivist inquiry, were applied. The results were then presented through contextual multi-voice reconstruction with elements of the participants' voices evidenced throughout the text. Consequently, the function of Study 2, Part I appeared to be driven predominantly by, what Lincoln (2001; p129) described as, "...the illumination of the different constructions as the primary aim, with a reconstructive process sometimes being secondary."

Following the reconnaissance and planning phase, Study 2, Part II encouraged the HoEWs to identify explicit change strategies. The aim of this Study was to encourage the HoEWs to focus on solving their own *workplace* problems that emerged from the interviews, focus group and action meetings. Action towards change was now local and specific in nature (see Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). Study 2, Part II allowed the HoEWs to draw on the shared understandings and experiences (or theorising) and move towards a more specific action strategy (see Greenwood, 1994). Furthermore, changes were then monitored through further reflection and development meetings

with the researcher. This explicit change is consistent with the critical paradigm as the goal of the research was to provide the participants with an opportunity (and insight) to demystify and critique their own working experiences and choose appropriate actions to improve their lives (Lather, 1986).

Study 2, Part II succumbed to the realities of working with practitioners in the *real* world, as John Grayson was unable to engage in the process of change and subsequent reflection and development meetings with the author. However, despite not engaging in action, he was a consistent member of the overall research process (i.e., initial interview, focus group, action meeting and shared reflection). Furthermore, he appeared to be passionate throughout the research and readily voiced his concerns and opinions within research gatherings. John may have been *illuminated* by the research process but may not have been compelled to engage in explicit change, or necessarily feel empowered or emancipated as a result of participating in the research. John's level of engagement could be interpreted to be more consistent with the constructivist paradigm rather than the critical paradigm.

The procedural tenets of action research espouse an inclusive, interactional and evolving process, a process that identifies practical knowledge and is subsequently evidenced in and through action (McFee, 1993; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2001; Reason and Bradbury, 2001). Applying the criteria (rigidly) to John's experiences appears to question whether he has engaged in the action research process, or if action research has taken place at all. However, it is clear that John was a committed and passionate member of the group who encountered various environmental, situational (and perhaps personal) obstacles when tasked with implementing his change strategy. Greenwood (1994; p17) suggested that,

“Action theories are manipulated in the practical reasoning of human agents to allow them to argue from intention to action. Action research aims to surface and describe the logic of this reasoning and allow practitioners to scrutinize and replace maladaptive action theories. The practical reasoning skills of practitioners are, therefore, potentially enhanced through action research processes.”

By *engaging* in the processes of action research (i.e., both in an individual and group context) John has (potentially) enhanced his understanding of his (and others)

working environment without *evidencing* (actual) action. On a more cautious note, John's inability to engage in action may (hypothetically) reflect his own lack of power within his Academy structure. John appeared unable to 'act' despite his clear demonstration of a 'commitment to act' evidenced during the group sessions. The process of action research offered John a *glimpse* of what he could achieve (i.e., the group sessions) yet his environmental and personal circumstances (i.e., Academy structure, staff relations, aspirations and expectations of the role) ensured that change was difficult, if not unlikely. Although it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from these observations, it seems reasonable to reflect on the potential of action research to both excite and frustrate practitioners in equal measure.

The critical paradigm espouses that elements of confrontation, empowerment and even conflict should occur (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Study 2, Part II witnessed elements of conflict and notions of oppression with regard to their working practices. Throughout this phase of the research the HoEWs expressed a desire for a more inclusive responsibility for player development. Such aspirations included changing the poor perceptions of the coaching staff with regard to the notions of education, welfare and, more specifically, to their role. However, the different approaches adopted by each HoEW may be ascribed to varying degrees and/or perceptions of resistant, acceptance or even conflict. For example, Paul Harrison appeared to initially engage in strategic conflict with some of the coaches over the introduction of a player mentor system. However, it was apparent that he was forced to revisit this approach and revert to more subtle, operational mechanisms (i.e., similar to Billy, Derek and Frank) in order to influence change. It is unclear whether the adoption of these more covert operational approaches (in order to influence change) reflects in some way the elements of power, domination and conflict identified within the critical paradigm (see Guba and Lincoln, 1994). However, Lather (1986) described the need to re-conceptualise the notions of validity within the critical paradigm. More specifically, three exemplars of validity for value based emancipatory research, notably; construct validity, face validity and catalytic validity. In this instance, it appeared unnecessary to engage in face validity (or member checking or respondent validation) (see Davis, 2000; Sparkes, 1998). Construct validity may be assumed through the rubric of reflection (and confrontation with the experiences of the participants' everyday lives) (Lather, 1986) and triangulation, shared reflection

throughout Study 2, Part II. The concept of catalytic validity is evidenced through the reorientation, focus, and commitment of the participants. Moreover, it appears that the participants have gained self-education (Kemmis, 2001), self-understanding and (ideally), self-determination through participation in the research (Lather, 1986). For example, Derek Traynor alluded to the benefits of the individual reflection and development meetings during his action phase:

“I find these situations, reflecting with you, really useful because what it does is that it gives me an opportunity to articulate what is always floating round in my head. Because I can’t get an opportunity to articulate it like this. Your questions clarify issues for me as to where I’m going with this. As you can imagine, I can’t talk like this to the coaches. So a lot of the time your reflective thinking is going round in your own mind and you’re thinking, “Well, am I getting there or am I not.” So it is, you might think, blimey where’s that going, but it is useful for me anyway.”

(Derek Traynor, Individual Reflection and Development meeting, 20th February 2000)

Applying the validity notions espoused by Lather (1986) suggests that Study 2, Part II is (predominantly) consistent with the critical paradigm. The conceptual tenets of action research appear to be more readily applied to this phase of the research than the location of the research within the constructivist and/or critical paradigm. In this sense, however, it appears appropriate to note Lincoln’s (2001) observations concerning the sympathies of constructivism, critical theory and action research. Lincoln (2001) stressed that, although not committed to do so, constructivists are generally concerned with the influences of social class, gender, race and other historical oppressive systems upon the functioning of a given context, which resembles the concerns of critical theorists when examined from different perspectives. Furthermore, she states that:

There are several instances where action research and constructivism might be considered indistinguishable, either in theory or in practice...critical theory, action research and constructivism begin to appear in the same paradigm.

(Lincoln, 2001; p126)

Action research processes may align with a number of different paradigmatic assumptions. More specifically, Kemmis (2001) identified empirical-analytic (*positivist*), hermeneutic (*interpretive*) and emancipatory (*critical*) approaches to

action research. In this sense, Study 2, Part II is located within *critical* action research methodology consistent with notions of empowering (and emancipating) participants from the determinants of habit, custom (culture), illusion and coercion that often frame and constrain their social practices (Kemmis, 2001). In addition, action research is described as a group process that requires explicit (or co-generative) collaboration between the researcher and the researched (Greenwood and Levin, 2000; Tinning, 1992). Furthermore, action research concerns effecting socially and democratically (egalitarian) constructed social change (Lincoln, 2001), and demands longitudinal engagement and commitment on behalf of the participants and the researcher (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000; Lincoln, 2001). This phase of the action research provided evidence of criticalist engagement, which embraced the aspirations of effecting social change by engaging in epistemological (i.e., inextricable and co-generative relationship between the researcher and the participants) and ontological (i.e., multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature) sympathies of both the constructivist (Part I) and critical (Part II) paradigms. Consequently, the research process provided an opportunity for participants to illuminate, demystify and critique their own experiences during a period of protracted engagement in order to influence change within their respective environments. The success of which should be determined by the participants' authentic sense of development, an understanding of their practices, a commitment to evolving their practices, and the situations in which they practice (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

It appears that action research is an evolving process of critical reflection (i.e., self and/or shared), committed, longitudinal interaction, self-education, self-understanding and self-determination. Moreover, action research encourages strategic and/or operational (intent) to change existing working practices, but such actions (or intentions) are dependent on the nature of each individual's circumstances, aspirations, ability and/or readiness (see Kemmis 2001) to implement any such change. However, it must be recognised that personal aspirations and/or readiness to change may not be shared by *others* within the working environment. As noted earlier action may be rendered unworkable and, subsequently, may reinforce a sense of powerlessness. Such a scenario could portray action research processes as ones that promote the antithesis of emancipation. On balance, it may be helpful for action

researchers to be aware of the potential *negative* consequences (as well as the assumed positive impact) of engaging in action research.

5.1.3 Study 3

Utilising the context of ‘observation of the participant’ and the associated theoretical principles of ethnographic research (Tedlock, 2000), Study 3 was designed to better understand the working environment and experiences of two of the participants. In this context, the protracted engagement of the action phase (i.e., initiated in Study 2, Part II) was prolonged by drawing on the principles of ethnographic research. In Study 3, the extended the opportunity for the author and the participants to engage in ongoing dialogue, acted to further influence change within their respective environments (Denzin, 2002). In this sense, Study 3 provided a better understanding of the skills (i.e., intellectual and inter-personal), experiences and aspirations of the practitioners (i.e., Billy Drisdale and Derek Traynor). In addition, a further understanding of the perceptions and constraints within which they both work was captured. The inherent cultural constraints surrounding the poor perception of education, similar to those experienced by Parker (1998; 2000) were evidenced (to some extent) within each environment. However, it is evident that both Billy and Derek had raised the awareness and profile of the educational remit within their respective Academies. Billy and Derek engaged in different approaches to the provision of education. Billy’s educational package is predominantly provided and delivered by external agents and takes place (mostly) outside of the Academy. In contrast, Derek utilises in-house and external agents to deliver the education, predominantly, within the Academy environment. However, it is apparent that each has been able to engage in strategic planning in order to ensure that each boy is exposed to an appropriate, and (in some instances) flexible, educational environment. Despite the raised awareness of the educational remit, frustrations are still apparent. Moreover, these frustrations appeared to concern the extent of the ‘buy-in’ and/or commitment offered by the coaches and the respective Academy Directors to the education package. For example, whilst Paulo (under 17s coach) and Greg McStay (under 19s coach) appeared to recognise the importance of Billy’s role, Billy was often frustrated by the ad hoc coaching timetable (e.g., inconsistent timing of training and limited communication of such instance). In this sense, he perceived a lack of

awareness (and unprofessionalism) with regard to the consequent impact that this practice had on *other* personnel (and their practices) within the Academy. In essence, despite paying 'lip-service' to the educational remit, the coaches appeared to have little regard for its location and delivery within the day-to-day practices of the Academy. Moreover, there was an understanding that the boys were there, first and foremost, to develop their football. Although this general sentiment was consistent with Billy's philosophical notions of player development (i.e., the Academy aims to develop better football players), he also espoused the benefits of a *good* education and the subsequent, but implicit, relationship in the production of well-mannered, well-rounded (and intelligent) young boys. In contrast, Derek identified that he worked in an open-minded environment, with open-minded coaches. However, he appeared frustrated by the somewhat piece-meal approach that he had to adopt in order to educate (and convince) the coaches of the value of the emotional elements player development. He occasionally alluded to elements of good practice (in this area) employed by the coaches. However, it appeared that these elements of good practice (i.e., emotional and psychological awareness) were a by-product of the coaching process. Moreover, there appeared to be different, and sporadic, levels of engagement and understanding across the coaching staff. Consequently, the understanding, awareness and (perceived) application of the emotional and psychological characteristics of player development, was more by *accident* rather than by *design*. Derek was not only committed to increasing the awareness of the emotional and psychological remit, but he was intent on embedding a more constructive and structured emotional and psychological element within the player (and hence coach) development package.

It appears that both Billy and Derek are dedicated to providing an appropriate (and flexible) educational and social support structure for the boys. I sense that the working practices are predominantly dependent on past experiences and skills, and that consequently, these impact the aspirations for those in the role of the HoEW. As a former coach Billy appears to understand and empathise with the pressures and responsibilities experienced by the coaching staff. He believes that they are coming from where he would be coming from, if he were still a coach. Consequently, he is willing to give them (and himself) time to adopt a more communicative and inclusive responsibility for player development. Despite elements of angst and frustration

concerning the role, and its often overwhelming operational demands, I sense that Billy loves being at the club. More specifically, I sense that he thrives on the relationships that he has with the players, the opportunities he has to watch them play and train, the banter he has with the players, the coaches, the landladies and the tutors. He is after all a football man.

Derek too is a football man, but I sense that he believes that *his* role (not necessarily the role of the HoEW) should be an integral component of player (and hence coach) development. In this sense, his aspirations are different to those of Billy. He aspires to drive, guide and implement an explicit emotional and psychological performance based agenda for player development. I have come to understand that he views this as the missing (yet most important) component of the player development package. More specifically, an essential supplement to the existing technical, tactical and physical curriculum that dominates coaching practice. It appears that Derek has *extended* the boundaries of the welfare remit beyond the provision of an appropriate social support structure and into the realms of player performance. However, this extension of the welfare boundary, and its subsequent synthesis with player performance, may be beyond the capabilities, aspirations and remit of most HoEWs.

Study 3 was designed to facilitate further prolonged engagement between the author and two of the practitioners. Moreover, this prolonged engagement sought a better understanding of the specific working practices, relationships, events and interactions of the practitioners within their respective working environment (Hammersley, 1992; Tedlock, 2000). Furthermore, due to the nature of the prolonged engagement (i.e., observation of the participant) it was imperative to explore the experiences, interpretations and interactions of both the self (i.e., the author) and the other (i.e., the practitioner) in order to provide, what Foley (2002) described as, a more *defensible* interpretation of such experiences and interpretations. In this sense, engaging in self-critical awareness (Foley, 2002) enabled a collaborative and reciprocal pursuit for understanding (Stacey, 1988). In the present inquiry it was deemed appropriate to utilise the narrative in order to capture the lived experiences and multiple dimensions of the practitioners (and the author's) existence. However, Tierney (2002) suggests that just by simply inserting the self into the text does not transform the writing into another genre, or resolve the crisis of representation. More specifically, he states that

writing is a craft. In this sense, the author must ensure that by injecting themselves into the text, they do not detract from the experiences of the other.

The narratives offered in Study 3 demanded a particular biographical positioning. In establishing this position I began to better understand my own passion and aspirations for engaging in youth player development research. This awareness of my personal biography was further developed through the constant reworking of the narrative and subsequent elements of peer dissemination, which allowed further reflexive moments to occur (Davis, 2000). As a 'neophyte' to creative writing, I quickly came to appreciate Tierney's (2002) assertion that writing was a *craft*. Early drafts of my own narratives appeared to merely describe the scene and the relevant action. I sensed that they failed to evoke the *actual* feelings and emotions that I had witnessed and experienced in the field. Further drafts drew on a range of creative writing techniques (see Mitchell and Charmaz, 1998; Sparkes, 2002) and literary styles of popular contemporary creative fiction authors such as Iain Banks and Arthur Golden. Subsequently, my field visits and attempts to *capture the scene* were exposed to constant stylistic drafting, reworking and peer dissemination. This constant scrutiny of the participant's, and my own, experiences enabled me to develop a narrative that illuminated (more effectively) the lived experience (Van Maanen, 1998) and provided a better understanding and appreciation of the practitioners' respective aspirations, and associated working practices. Foley (2002) associates this constant mirroring of the self, with an ability to become "...reflexive about the situated, socially constructed nature of the self and by extension, the other." (p473). Furthermore, he states that the ethnographer (in this instance the observer of the participant) is more willing to utilise introspection, intuition and personal memories. Consequently, I (the researcher) could draw on common sense understandings of life, as much as the abstract theoretical constructs of my discipline (youth development) (see Foley, 2002). Similarly, Richardson (2000) suggested that the writing of the text is not just a matter of transcribing the reality; more that writing is a process of discovery (i.e., discovery of the participants, discovery of the research issue itself, and discovery of the self). In this instance, I am conscious of my own personal, and academic, experiences and influences emerging in the narrative as subjective criticisms or interpretations of particular situations or initiatives. For example, my pangs of jealousy when watching the boys training with Billy, and my subsequent questioning of their ability (i.e.,

despite the high level of support they receive), suggests that maybe I have yet come to terms with the *shortfall* of my own football career. In addition, I share Derek's desire to encourage the incorporation of a more emotional, social and psychological (or holistic) approach to youth player development (see Richardson, 1999; Richardson and Reilly, 2001; Reilly, Williams and Richardson, 2003) and readily espouse his devotion to, and handling off, the three target boys. For example, I describe his handling of Richie, as the 'youth player whisperer', as an exemplar of good practice. However, I am conscious that *my story* should not dominate the narrative. In the first instance I offer the reader a clear biographical positioning of my own personal (and cultural) history and experiences. I offer the reader a perspective of my own sympathies with the concepts of youth player development, as well as an indication of my relationship (and hence responsibility) towards the other (i.e., the practitioner) (Foley, 2002). Furthermore, I emerge (occasionally) throughout the narrative, where appropriate, to help move the story along (Mitchell and Charmaz, 1998). This occasional emergence allows the narrative to concentrate, and hence capture, the *real* world experiences and interactions of the practitioners.

The narrative offers a better understanding of the working practices, skills, aspirations, perceived and actual constraints of the HoEWs' working environment. In this sense, Billy's strategic aspirations appeared to be dominated by the pragmatic and logistical constraints and resistance of his environment. Whilst he encouraged a more inclusive responsibility towards player development and promotes his inclusion within anything to do with the boy, it is evident that he seeks a more organised (or professional) and informed Academy curriculum. In this case, Billy's experiences are dominated by his relationships with the coaches, which are in turn affected by his perception of them (i.e., respectful and patient, yet at times sceptical of their practices), their vague perception of his role and subsequent expectations of him (i.e., *he sorts the boys out*), and his own self-depreciating perception of himself (and his role) (i.e., not 'head' of anything). Despite the apparent lack of understanding of Billy's role, he has endeavoured to raise the awareness of the education and welfare remit in an attempt to ensure its (and his) prominence, and hence value, within the young player's development package. In contrast, Derek believes that education and, to some extent welfare, is valued by (most of) the coaches in club 4. However, Derek's aspirations concern an explicit desire to not only raise the awareness of the

education and welfare remit, but to ensure that the notions of education and welfare are embedded as explicit vehicles (and components) to enhance player performance. It became evident that the majority of Derek's working practices (i.e., operational and strategic) are inextricably linked to his wider aspiration of ensuring that the education, and more specifically the welfare (i.e., emotional and psychological) remits are viewed as an explicit component of player (and hence coach) development.

The narratives have further highlighted elements of the practitioners' skills, influences, aspirations and constraints that impact their working practices. The extension of the action phase of the research and the prolonged observation of the participants enabled a more graphic account of the workplace, whilst both participants moving forward with their respective action. It would appear that Billy has managed to secure a more disciplined approach to the player's daily schedule. It would appear that, at least for now, the prominence of the educational and welfare remit has been secured. However, Billy still recognises that there is a long way to go before he realises an inclusive responsibility for player development. More specifically, he recognises that there are remnants of the traditional football culture within his Academy, which he has to endure. Similarly, Derek appears to have influenced (or achieved) a cultural shift towards a player performance package, which is inclusive of the emotional and psychological (i.e., welfare) elements of player development. However, as with Billy, he also believes that he has a long way to go before he embeds his ideals within the culture.

It would appear that both Billy and Derek have experienced, and will continue to experience, resistance with regard to their respective roles and aspirations. These notions of suppression, oppression, resistance and power are consistent with themes located within the criticalist paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Study 3 has expressed notions consistent with this paradigm and these issues have been explored through a creative approach to representation. Such alternative writing styles are associated with postmodernism (Tierney, 2000). Richardson (1994) suggested that the postmodern approach allowed us to know 'something' without claiming to know everything and recognises the situational limitations of the knower (researcher or author). In this sense I do not claim to be the omniscient author (see Tierney, 2000). Conversely, the images presented throughout the two narratives tried to capture and

inform the reader of the real interactions, events and experiences of the HoEWs and invited the reader to draw their own interpretations (Davis, 2000). However, Tedlock (2000) proffered that the success or valued interpretation of the text is inextricably linked to external social influences and relationships that make the research possible, as well as to a readership that accepts the research as meaningful. Furthermore, she stressed that the concerns are not so much objectivity, neutrality, and distance as they are risk, the possibility of failure, and the hope of success. In this case, appropriate legitimisation of the research could be demonstrated by the engagement and possible empowerment of the participants, and their ongoing commitment to engage in elements of confrontation in order to influence change within their working environment. In this sense, the prolonged dialogic, consciousness-raising action phase of the research has witnessed elements of emancipation, notions of empowerment and intent to influence change, which are consistent with the critical paradigm and the notions of catalytic validity and conscientization (i.e., knowing reality in order to better transform it) (see Lather, 1986; Foley, 2002). Moreover, both practitioners referred to the benefits of reflexive moments and reflexive interactions (i.e., between the researcher and the practitioners) and espoused a continual commitment to encourage and influence change within the Academy within their responses to the narrative. Furthermore, it appears evident that the action research process has encouraged (and evidenced) wise action from the inside (i.e., the practitioner) (see Dadds, 1998). Moreover, the case of legitimisation is often reliant on the subjective interpretations of the reader, where the reader is actively encouraged (and perhaps compelled) to interpret the narrative text, understand the author's and the practitioners' subjectivities, beliefs and ways of looking at the world (Corker, 1999).

5.2 Conclusions

The following section draws on the emerging issues highlighted within the three studies. In this sense, the section offers an overview of the thesis and seeks to capture what I believe to be, the dominant findings concerning the experiences and working practices of the HoEWs. Furthermore, this section draws on the findings, subsequent actions and/or change strategies and offers some suggestions that may lead towards enhanced working practice, value and status of the HoEW, or at least encourage further debate surrounding these issues. In addition, the conclusion also draws on my own personal experiences as a researcher and includes reflections on the nature and form of the research process.

The initial aim of the research was to explore the evolvement of the role of the HoEW in the North West of England. More specifically, the research aimed to explore the working environment and working practices of the HoEW through various interactions in order to stimulate appropriate change (i.e., local and specific), and explore the subsequent impact of change through appropriate support mechanisms. In this sense, the tenets of action research were utilised as a research vehicle across various paradigmatic landscapes in order to explore, engage, implement and monitor change within the HoEWs respective Academies. In the first instance, the research began with an extensive reconnaissance and planning phase, which included semi-structured interviews (n=5) consistent with interpretivist paradigm. The reconnaissance and planning phase continued with a focus group (Study 2, Part I), which explored the shared, generic issues of the HoEWs highlighted in Study 1, and promoted dialogue and collective understanding. The procedural mechanisms and aims of Study 2, Part I were consistent with the constructivist paradigm. Both Study 1 and Study 2, Part I were constructed and guided by the procedural notions of technical rigour and trustworthiness consistent with both the interpretivist and constructivist paradigms.

Utilising the procedural tenets of action research (see Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000) more explicit emphasis was directed towards the identification of specific (intended) action following the reconnaissance and planning phase. The reconnaissance and planning phase allowed a number of issues pertaining to the role of the HoEW to emerge and be subjected to shared reflection and collective understanding. In this

sense, the reconnaissance and planning phase had instigated and stimulated debate concerning a number of issues. At this point the aim was to illuminate the different experiences and constructions within the HoEWs respective (and mutual) working environment (see Lincoln, 2001). These illuminatory experiences, and subsequent results, of the reconnaissance phase were then utilised to stimulate individual action. More specifically, the HoEWs were encouraged to identify (and solve) *real* problems specific to their respective working environment (i.e., local and specific) (see Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). This explicit aim to encourage notions of emancipation, empowerment, egalitarianism and critical enlightenment through change within the practitioners' respective working environment was consistent with the critical paradigm (Lather, 1986; Greene, 2000). Similarly, the notions of critical reflection (self and/or shared) and the exploration of strategic and/or operational intent to change working practices reflect the notions of critical (emancipatory) action research. It would appear that although the process of action research encourages strategic and/or operational (intent to) change, *evidence* of such actions (or intentions) is dependent on the nature of the individual's environment, their own aspirations and abilities, and their readiness to implement change. Furthermore, subsequent commitment to change may also be dependent on the practitioner's ability or power to implement change and this may be associated with the willingness of the organisation to commission change.

Study 3 extended the action phase of the research with two of the participants through prolonged engagement, which sought a better understanding of their working practices, relationships, events and interactions (Hammersley, 1992; Tedlock, 2000). Furthermore, the nature of the prolonged engagement (i.e., observation of the participant) demanded the exploration of the experiences, interpretations and interactions of both the self (i.e., the author) and the other (i.e., the practitioner). In this sense, engaging in self-critical awareness (Foley, 2002) was consistent with the notions of postmodernism (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Furthermore, the experiences of the self and the other were represented as an interlocked narrative that captured the interactions, character and emotions of the experience (Tedlock, 2000). Alongside these epistemological developments the thesis also continued to capture assumptions associated with the criticalist paradigm. For example, in Study 3 both Billy Drisdale

and Derek Traynor experienced elements of institutional resistance (and even conflict) to their notions of change.

It is apparent that the vehicle of action research has been utilised effectively across a range of paradigmatic landscapes. In this sense, Reason and Bradbury (2001) suggested that the *refusal* of action research to adopt one theoretical perspective is sympathetic to a postmodern landscape. Furthermore, they suggested that there was a need to acknowledge the lessons of the linguistic turn (see Tierney, 2002) whilst not ignoring the deeper structures of reality, and proposed that a more creative and constructive worldview should be based on the metaphor of *participation*.

It is evident throughout the three studies that the role of the HoEW is a multifaceted and demanding position. The role of HoEWs has certainly established a more prominent position for the notions of both education and welfare. In this sense, the HoEWs appear to have established a more coherent and appropriate (and in some instances flexible) educational programme for the young players. Furthermore, some of the group have a strategic influence with regard to the prominence of the educational package within the Academy curriculum. Despite some occasional funding issues (i.e., with regard to the limited flexibility of the FFE and VTS funding mechanism) it appeared that all of the HoEWs were content with their ability and capability to co-ordinate and deliver an appropriate educational package. Similarly, all of the HoEWs had assumed strategic responsibility for the co-ordination and implementation of child protection procedures within their respective Academies. However, it appeared that the level of engagement within this area was dependent on the perceived importance of child protection within the clubs and the subsequent resources (i.e., financial and administrative) afforded to the HoEW. For example, Billy was able to secure the services of a part-time child protection officer whilst assuming the mantle of designated child protection officer, whereas Frank was engaged in the co-ordination *and delivery* of the child protection courses across his Academy. Furthermore, it was intimated that he could be charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating and delivering child protection courses for all staff associated with the club.

Study 1 and 2 highlighted that educational provision and child protection were the core responsibilities for each HoEW. However, the level of engagement in the other (predominantly perceived as welfare) responsibilities appeared to be dependent on individual personal skills, experiences and influences. In this sense, the 'welfare' remit appeared to be void of explicit constraints and subsequently open to interpretation. The delivery of the welfare agenda appeared to be dependent on the perception and aspiration of each HoEW (i.e., what they perceived welfare to be and what they could achieve), and the subsequent expectation of their respective Academy (i.e., what they expected welfare to be). The HoEWs felt that their Academies (i.e., coaches and Academy Directors) tended to recognise the importance of the boys' welfare but viewed it as a separate entity, and hence the *sole* responsibility of the HoEW. This perception was reinforced in Study 3, as it was apparent that Billy Drisdale's welfare agenda differed to that of Derek Traynor. In this sense, each HoEW was committed to the welfare of the boys. However, Billy saw welfare as an all-encompassing benefit to the boys' general well-being, which *implicitly* impacted on their football performance. In contrast, Derek saw welfare as a vehicle to promote the emotional and psychological development of player performance. In addition, Derek also utilised elements of the educational programme to stimulate debate (i.e., with players and coaches), and reinforce the welfare (i.e., emotional and psychological) in an effort to empower the players to reflect and understand their own performance that necessitated a more inclusive role for the coach.

The personal skills, influences and aspirations of both Billy and Derek help to determine the boundaries of their role. More specifically, Billy engaged in predominantly (and often overwhelming) operational procedures, which he enjoyed. Furthermore, he perceived these practices to be the most appropriate vehicle for him to understand, and hence, look after the boys. Derek's aspirations and subsequent working practices were dominated by a desire to enhance the players' self-awareness and ability to cope with the environment. In addition he aimed to promote a cultural shift within his environment that embraced the psychological and emotional components of player development (i.e., under the banner of welfare). The multiple sub-plots of action which Derek engaged in throughout the action phase of the research suggest that almost everything that he did in was related to his overarching aspiration to embed the emotional and psychological components of player

development within the players' (and hence coaches') development package. These personal aspirations, skills and (perceived or actual) constraints may also translate across the working practices of the other participants. It appeared that Paul Harrison held a similar aspiration to Derek (i.e., to encourage the coaches to accept more responsibility for the welfare and personal development of the boys). In this sense, Paul believed that by ensuring that the boys were well prepared off the field, they were subsequently better equipped to perform on the field. More specifically, he expressed a desire for the coaches to recognise welfare as an explicit component of player performance. However, at the time Paul appeared unable to convince the coaching staff to buy-in to his ideals. In this instance, he appeared to fall short of providing operational practices (and hence evidence) to support his philosophy. In contrast to Derek, Paul's background included a masters award physiology, an inherent interest in physical conditioning in addition to extensive coaching experience and a period as the Director of Youth Development at a lower league club. Furthermore, he enjoyed delivering physical conditioning sessions to the boys within the Academy. He stressed that these sessions were utilised as a vehicle, which enabled him to form better relationships with, and a better understanding of, the boys. In this sense, it appears that Paul's day-to-day activities may not be compatible with his perceived aspirations for a more inclusive responsibility towards player development. Moreover, these activities may indicate a further aspiration to become more involved in the fitness, conditioning and coaching of the Academy players.

Both John Grayson and Frank O'Hare shared the groups desire for a more inclusive responsibility for player development. Furthermore, both appeared to provide an appropriate educational package for the boys. Their perceptions of the educational provision were consistent to those of Billy Drisdale. Similarly, both John and Frank recognised the importance of understanding the boys in order to look after them off the field, which they believed had a subsequently positive impact on their ability to perform on the field. It was evident that neither John nor Frank possessed any aspirations to provide, or promote, an explicit link between either the educational programme, or the welfare remit, with regards to player performance.

Although John was an active voice throughout the research it appeared that he was predominantly concerned with gaining acceptance and credibility within his working

environment. Consequently, he appeared to concentrate on developing interpersonal relationships (i.e., including the coaches). In this sense, although he was unable to engage in a reflection and development meeting, his action phase focused on a concept that he shared with the coaches (i.e., increasing the coaching time of the pre-scholarship boys). In contrast, Frank targeted certain individuals (i.e., including the coaches) for inclusion within his core skills programme. However, it appeared that his overarching aim was to raise the profile and prominence of the educational remit within the Academy timetable. Frank was also engaged in the financial aspects of the Academy. He appeared to resent this additional responsibility, yet he accepted that he was the most appropriately skilled person for the job. Furthermore, it enabled him to move away from the highway patrol (i.e., monitoring attendance at the college) element of his role. Frank may have viewed this as a more appropriate utilisation of his skills and experience.

It appears that each individual HoEW's working practices (i.e., beyond the co-ordination and delivery of the basic requirements of education and child protection) are guided and or influenced (to some extent) by the skills, past experiences, influences and aspirations that they bring (or carry) into their everyday role. These notions of overarching aspirations, or dreams, appear to represent how each individual wants to be viewed within their daily pursuits. In this sense, it appears that each HoEW differs (slightly) in the way in which they perceive themselves and their role, and how they perceive (internal) others' expectations of them (and their role) within their respective environments. Such perceptions of the self, the environment and individual aspirations ultimately impact each individual's level of, and/or ability to engage in, (effective) longitudinal change. Billy and Derek were also the recipients of further sustained and more frequent reflexive opportunities and researcher interaction as the research progressed. Perhaps this extension of collaborative support, in addition to a range of feedback strategies (see Greenwood, 1994), may have enabled more (effective) lasting change. Furthermore, the adoption of the creative narrative, which sought to capture and illuminate the process of change within the working environment, acted to supplement my feedback processes and prompted further reflection in Billy and Derek. Moreover, the construction of the creative non-fictional text was helpful in extending my own understanding of what I was observing and experiencing. The success of this venture suggests to me that action researchers could

begin to explore how a range of contemporary and progressive writing conventions could be utilised to enhance effective change.

5.2.1 The Future

At this point it is appropriate to draw on some recent contemporary literature, which may offer further understanding of the apparent relationship between the HoEWs' working practices and their personal skills, experiences and aspirations highlighted by the present inquiry. The notion of achieving performance excellence within any life arena (i.e., working and/or sporting arena) has been associated with the concepts of resonance (Newburg et al., 2002). More specifically, those individuals who engage in activities which enable them to pursue, and subsequently live their dream are consistent with the contemporary notion that expert performers seek resonance in their every day lives. It is appropriate to draw on the contemporary notion of resonance at this point due to its inextricable relationship with the concept of performance excellence within the working environment. Furthermore, the concept of resonance also shares some procedural sympathies with action research. In this sense, the process of resonance is a cycle of development, similar in context to that of critical action research (Kemmis and McTaggart) and, as action generally demands reflection, the cyclical notions of reflective practice (McFee, 1993). In essence, the process of resonance involves the recognition of a dream and preparing to experience the dream (i.e., planning and identifying action), dealing with the obstacles and barriers along the way (i.e., monitoring reflection and development), revisiting the dream as a way to deal with the obstacles and make subsequent preparation more engaging (i.e., refinement) (see Newburg et al., 2002; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

“Resonance is about empowering individuals to design and gain control of the process that allows them to perform with the utmost quality and satisfaction not only in their specific domain but also in their lives in general. This process is very individual and often must be teased out of them because, generally, they are not taught or encouraged to spend considerable time reflecting on how they feel. Once the process is identified, it needs to be protected and nurtured by the individuals themselves.”

(Newburg et al., 2002; p262)

In this sense, the research appears to suggest that most of the HoEWs are content to pursue a more inclusive responsibility for player development and promote the prominence of the educational and welfare remit for the general well-being (and implicit football performance) benefits of the boy. Conversely, it appears that Derek has identified a dream (i.e., to embed an emotional and psychological component within the context of player development) and he seeks resonance in his everyday life. In this instance, a daily life in which he seeks a seamless fit between how he feels (internally) each day, and the environment (external) in which he works (see Newburg et al., 2002). Derek's hours of devotion (and multiple sub-plots of concentrated action) to the emotional and psychological elements of player development (i.e., within the educational and welfare remit) suggests that he is preparing to live his dream on a daily basis. In contrast, Billy appears to concentrate on his personal goals (i.e., promoting a more inclusive responsibility for player development through increasing lines of communication) without paying particular attention to his own feelings and experiences. Newburg et al. (2002) referred to this as an acceptance that working hard to achieve a goal is simply a reality, and that how they feel is not particularly important. This may also offer an explanation for Billy's self-depreciation of his role (and himself). Billy (and for that matter John and Frank) cares for the boys, understand the boys and provide for the boys, but at what personal cost? Newburg et al. (2002) referred to the fact that Doctors are being forced to listen to their patients and make connections with them in order to treat them. He recounts an old medical saying where, "...people will not let you care for them until they know you care about them." In this instance, Billy obviously connects, cares and understands the boys, but I am left to wonder if anyone connects, cares and understands Billy, the educational and welfare remit, or any of the other HoEWs. In this sense, the notions of both education and welfare (i.e., divorced of any synthesis with elements of football performance) still appear to be viewed as secondary components of the young player's development package.

Within the present inquiry the HoEW has dominated the focus. In this sense, the working practices, skills, experiences, aspirations, and (perceived and actual) constraints of the HoEW have been highlighted. Subsequently, elements of resistance and even conflict have emerged with respect to the value, perception and location of the notions of education and welfare (and the HoEW) within the respective

Academies. However, it appears appropriate to note that the findings of this inquiry reflect the interactions, expressions and experiences of the HoEWs and the researcher. Moreover, it appears appropriate to recognise that the various personnel working both internally (e.g., coaches, Academy Director) and externally (e.g., FFE and VTS representatives) to the respective Academies may hold conflicting (or supporting) interpretations of the same experiences or phenomena. Davis (2000) suggests that there may be, "...multiple competing versions of what constitutes 'the real or the truth'." (Davis, 2000; p196). The present inquiry has identified that the role of the HoEW appears to be an extremely overwhelming, expansive and (in some cases) an undervalued element of youth player development. In this sense, it would seem appropriate to explore the 'real' values and perceptions of both the coaches and Academy Directors concerning the notions of education and welfare and, more specifically, their expectations and value perceptions of the role of the HoEW. In order to explore these potentially conflicting (or supporting) interpretations future research could adopt a multi-level post-structural approach in order to learn more about the social practices and perceptions of the individuals and groups that directly affect, and possibly inhibit, the self-emancipation and/or empowerment of the HoEW on a daily basis (see Davis, 2000). In the case of the present inquiry this approach would enable a better understanding of the interactions, power dynamics and hierarchical structures that exist within the respective Academy environments. Davis (2000) suggests that dialogue, mutual recognition and co-understanding can enable different people, those perceived as the oppressors (or resisters to change) (i.e., the coaches and the Academy Directors) and the oppressed (i.e., the HoEWs), to evolve through the exchange of viewpoints. It must be recognised that, as evidenced by the differing working practices and aspirations of the HoEWs highlighted within the present inquiry, neither the coaches nor the Academy Directors should be viewed as homogenous groups. In this sense, the working practices of the coaches and the Academy Directors may also be influenced by their individual experiences and aspirations (see Davis, 2000). Furthermore, adopting such a polyphonic ethnographic multi-level post-structuralist approach may enable the researcher to better understand and explain the cultural and structural contexts within which the HoEWs work (see Davis, 2000) and ultimately identify a range of mechanisms which may instigate a cultural change. More specifically, a more collective understanding that may encourage a culture that embraces the notions of education and welfare as integral

(and potentially performance enhancing) components of the player development package.

5.3 Recommendations

The present inquiry provides an in-depth understanding of the overwhelming and expansive nature of the role of the HoEW. It is evident that each HoEW is exposed to an array of operational demands, in addition to, what appear to have been identified as, the central tenets of the role (i.e., educational provision and child protection). In this sense, the operational demands appear to be dominated by the welfare remit of the role. The diversity of the welfare remit is further fuelled by an apparently open interpretation of what this part of the role should involve. Critically, the level of engagement within the welfare remit appears to be dependent more on the personal experiences, skills and aspirations of each HoEW (i.e., what they perceived welfare to be and what they could achieve), and the subsequent expectation (and constraints) of their respective Academy (i.e., what they expected welfare to be) rather than any consistent guiding principles.

It is evident that all of the HoEWs involved within the present inquiry are committed to try and ensure that everything is done in the best interests of the boys. However, it would appear that each individual is also trying to raise the profile and prominence of the education and welfare remit within their respective Academies. Their achievements, in this sense, are relative to their own perceptions of what the role constitutes and the expectations and/or constraints of their respective environment. It would appear that the notions of education and welfare (and hence the HoEW) have been more readily accepted (and embraced) within the Academy culture where they have been promoted as explicit and integral components of player development. In this sense, the coaches and the Academy Director appear to be more receptive to the notion of a performance enhancing education and welfare remit. In this instance education (and welfare) appears to be seen as an additional component of player development rather than a nuisance that hindered the player's training (coaching) and playing time. However, it is beyond the scope of the present inquiry to suggest that the HoEW should be capable of instigating, co-ordinating and/or delivering such an agenda. It would appear more appropriate to suggest that in order to even envisage

such a remit the HoEW would require more strategic influence (and hence cultural influence) within their respective Academies. All the HoEWs appear confident and capable of delivering an appropriate (and flexible) education package for the Academy boys. In addition, and despite the overwhelming operational consequences, they appear to have assumed the responsibility of the designated child protection officer within their respective Academies. It would appear that the HoEWs readily accept this responsibility, however, it would be more appropriate for the HoEW to assume a more strategic facilitator role, rather than endure the operational burden of co-ordinating, monitoring and delivering child protection. As with the Education Welfare Services of today's local governments (Atkinson et al., 2002; Allen, 2003) the HoEWs appear to have similar difficulties in establishing a clear and consistent concept for their respective welfare remits. In this sense, welfare may be seen as the general well-being of the boy with an implicit impact on player performance, or as an explicit and integral component of player performance (i.e., emotional and psychological). However, it appears clear that in order to establish either of these welfare contexts the role of the HoEW demands a more influential and strategic position within the Academy structure. Ultimately, a position from which the HoEW can encourage welfare to be viewed as the responsibility of *all* whether it is perceived as implicit or explicit to football performance.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Pilot Work and Development of Research Proposal

Background Work:

Friday 27th August 1999 10:15am – 12:15pm

Informal meeting with Participant 1, Education and Welfare Officer, Club 1 @ LJMU.

Re: Feasibility of study, plus clarification of role for future interview schedule.

Responsible for players on registration with club (i.e., from 9yrs – 16yrs – 19yrs – 21yrs) (numbers not as high as FA Charter limits).

The last/first 12 months (i.e., since appointment), Key Issues;

Community relationship – school, parents etc. => required acceptance difficult to achieve with 'bad press' of academies.

Academic profile of players – development of homework clubs

Educational perspective – EWO seen as mediator between club and school (i.e., coaches and teachers). Mechanisms for the prevention of social exclusion of player within school environment.

Prioritisation of academic profile (?) (Academy player v young professional – criteria?)

Academic programme v training & playing schedule

Injuries and support (counselling, academic)

Child Protection

Counselling skills (realisation of no formal qualification but informal knowledge base developed through previous occupation i.e., teacher/head of year)

Freedom of role – club acknowledged involvement and expertise required through role of EWO.

Informal involvement in player's future contracts (i.e., personal perception of ability academic, social etc.)

Parent interaction (i.e., 2 formal parents' evenings per year). Involving coach evaluation, development officer and EWO evaluation.

Funding – major burden on time (i.e., academic funding from FFE, VTS)

Appendix A: Pilot Work and Development of Research Proposal (cont'd)

Tuesday 7th September 1999 3:00pm – 5:00pm

Informal meeting with Participant 4, Education and Welfare Officer, Club 1 Academy

Re: Feasibility of study, plus clarification of role for future interview schedule.

Background Work

Process of application for post (i.e., application, interview, appointment)

Recruitment Consultants (i.e., New College, Telford)

Job description

Change over 12 months

Title of post – Education and Welfare Officer v Welfare Officer

Responsibility for players Under 7's up to and including under 20's

Concept of Academy itself (e.g., separate site, vision, complete change or continuation of existing practice plus a 'couple of extra bodies')

The education package available for the players – when does education really matter (if at all!!!!)

Type of Courses/opportunities offered – grouping of players to achieve a 'level' of education for potential progression plus, group cohesion.

Development of Academy Certificate in partnership with local school

Funding (minor issue due to nature of opportunities offered)

Counselling skills

Child protection

Player development – informal interaction with other members (i.e., Academy

Director, Physiotherapist, coach etc) – desire, commitment, personal attributes etc., no formal mechanism for feedback.

Parent interaction (3 per year)

Teacher interaction

Player's game profile

Club policy for involvement in School activity (teams – football, cricket, basketball)

The role itself – activity (e.g., involved in playing, trips)

Respect over time?

Support mechanism for parent, player and teacher – to facilitate process

Agent for change

Appendix A: Background Work and Development of Research Proposal (cont'd)

Research Proposal:

The Exploration and Evolvment of the Football Academy Heads of Education and Welfare

Mr David Richardson, Dr David Gilbourne, Professor Tom Reilly in conjunction with
the Football Association Premier League's Chief Education Advisor

Research Proposal

Exploration, Evaluation and Evolvment of the Football Academy Head of Education

by Dave Richardson

with Dave Gilbourne

and John Minten

and Tom Reilly

0 Introduction

The following document outlines initial research concepts with respect to the exploration and involvement of the Football Academy Head of Education (HoE) role, in order to facilitate and enhance good practice.

1.0 Purpose of study:

to rationalise HoE domain (i.e., since inception).

to identify different variables that could affect performance in the work environment (i.e., background, knowledge, support, co-operation, and clarity of objective).

to develop concepts and theories that account for the behaviour of the individuals under study.

Post-analysis of the role - (i.e., evolution of the HoE role with associated personnel and structures);

Club

Development Officer

Academy Director

Management

Coaches (range of coaches i.e., p/t f/t)

Players (range of players i.e., young, academy, young pro's, experienced pro's)

Parents

Scouts

implies understanding of communication network, facilitation of information, responsibility and activity including:

- Perception and Expectation of Role (i.e., Football Association and club)
- Background – knowledge base, skills, progression
- Mission statement
- Position within the club (i.e., respect, responsibility, power, control)
- Perception of role of education (primary, secondary goal)
- Role of FA

1.0 Support Rationale

Football Academy Head of Education domain perceived as an 'evolving profession'.

“Whenever a domain is rationalised (structured) it becomes easier to measure performance in it and therefore easier to recognise promising talent” (Rathune and Whalen, 1993; p3).

Promising talent may include the development of skills (e.g., management, organisation, counselling) in order to aid the facilitation of the role.

“Generally, the objective of researchers interested in human expertise is to identify the content, structures and processes responsible for skilled performance” (Rathune and Whalen, 1993; p3).

=> Dependent on performance based criteria, evaluation of success?

In an ill-defined domain (such as the Football Academy Head of Education), in which many uncertainties exist concerning the given information, the operations that can be used, and the individual constraints that might be present, a great deal of time should be spent forming a mental model of the situation. Therefore, an assessment of the knowledge that expert HoEs use to construct their working environment could provide useful guidelines for improving and developing the effectiveness of the role, and consequently the young player's education and football experience.

This implies a need to understand current and past processes in order to enhance existing practice.

“To better understand expert and exceptional performance, we must require that the account specify the different environmental factors that could selectively promote and facilitate the achievement of such performance” (Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Römer, 1993, cited in Côté, J., et al., 1995; p3-4).

4.0 Methodological Design

Utilisation of an ‘expert system approach – advocated by Buchanan et al. (1983).

Qualitative research approach – information gathered and distributed at future reflection meetings

Formal reflection/Informal reflection .

- In-depth unstructured interviews conducted - process undertaken to achieve ‘theoretical saturation’ (i.e., when data from subsequent interviews of new subjects do not contribute any new information, but fit adequately into the existing organising system). The interview schedule will be designed to identify the issues most relevant to the HoE and to focus on these issues in detail.
- Open ended format – to ‘unveil, explore and prove important information’
- Interviews transcribed verbatim (i.e., word for word)
- Unstructured qualitative data inductively analysed using procedures and techniques.

Inductive analysis => categories, properties and components formed from transcripts.

Focus group interaction incorporated, feedback and discussion.

The role of the HoE may also be supplemented by ‘shadowing’ and observing selected, ‘willing’ HoEs through typical daily routines.

4.1 Rationale for Unstructured interview

Elite performers or experts respond well to broad areas of content and open-ended questions that allow them to use their knowledge. The in-depth interview has been suggested as the ideal vehicle for eliciting expertise from elites (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

4.2 Interview Design

- i. Introduction - Purpose of process/project etc.
- ii. Background of subject and demographic details.
- iii. Elicitation:

Descriptive questions – to learn about the informant's activities

Structural questions – to discover how the informant organises his/her knowledge

Contrast questions – to find out what the informant meant by the various terms used

(Spradley, 1979; p60)

4.2.1 Question Typology

Concerning personal characteristics, training, contextual factors.

Concerning the quality of a given structures, procedures, curriculum, innovation or programme.

Social interaction and facilitation of procedures.

Regarding meaning or interpretation about some component of the role.

Related to the whole system – club, coaches, parents, teachers, classroom, school.

Political, economic, sociological and psychological aspects of system.

Social context of education (and welfare) process (i.e., individual interpretation), pertaining to each HoE's club's implicit theories concerning player welfare, education and development.

4.2.2 Potential Questions

Could you tell me what you do during a parent evening?

Could you describe the tasks you performed in the last match/game you attended?

Could you describe how you would assess a player's academic ability?

These *descriptive* questions are used to identify topics and situations that the HoE perceives as important (some topics already identified through preliminary meetings with HoEs, see Appendix A).

Followed by *structural* questions;

You mentioned before that dealing with a player's financial problems and family life is an important part of your job. What do you do when a player has financial difficulties?

What do you do when a player has some family problems?

How do you decide a player's educational programme?

Followed, finally, by *contrast* questions (i.e., to clarify and distinguish between issues and situations)
What are the differences between the academic guidance given to a 16-year-old player and that offered to a 19-year-old player who has just signed professional forms?

What are the differences arise when dealing with the personal concerns of a new 'academy' player and a national team player (e.g., England under 21)?

5.0 Validity

(Questionable concept - but more of a reassurance of meaning and interpretation of meaning)

⇒ ongoing process utilised.

⇒ continual questioning of the interpretation of the HoE; each HoE's interpretation verified and communicated during the interview.

⇒ None of the interviews will be rushed, and the HoEs will be afforded time and opportunity to clarify and reformulate their thinking.

⇒ Before the end of each interview a 'general probe' will be conducted in order ensure that each HoE has discussed every issue that they perceive as important for developing players.

⇒ Interviews will last between 1½ - 3½ hours – transcribed verbatim

Theory evolves through research process – continuous interplay between analysis and data collection.

⇒ “..... interpretive work and interpretations must include the perspectives and voices of the people whom we study. Interpretations are sought for understanding the actions of individual or collective actors being studied” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; p160).

This research is designed to be multi-method in focus involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the subject matter. A qualitative approach allows for the study to take place in a natural, evolving environment. Attempts are made to make sense of, and to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Appendix A

Preliminary Issues Identified for Interview Schedule:

The last/first 18 months (i.e., since appointment), Key Issues;

- Responsible for players on registration with club (i.e., from 9yrs – 16yrs – 19yrs – 21yrs) (numbers)
- Development of community relationship – school, parents etc. => required acceptance difficult to achieve with ‘bad press’ of academies.
- Academic profile of players – development of homework clubs.
- Educational perspective – HoE seen as mediator between club and school (i.e., coaches and teachers).
- Mechanisms for the prevention of social exclusion of player within school environment.
- Prioritisation of academic profile? (e.g., academy player v young professional – criteria?)
- Academic programme v training & playing schedule
- Injuries and support (counselling, academic)
- Child Protection
- Counselling skills (realisation of no formal qualification but informal knowledge base developed through previous occupation i.e., teacher/head of year)
- Freedom of role – club acknowledged involvement and expertise required through role of HoE.
- Informal involvement in player’s future contracts (i.e., personal perception of ability academic, social etc.). Extent of influence.
- Parent interaction (e.g., 2 formal parents’ evenings per year). Involving coach evaluation, development officer, Academy Director and HoE evaluation.
- Funding – major burden on time (i.e., academic funding from FFE, VTS)

Appendix Ai: Development of the Interview Schedule

Purpose: [*Previously identified during pre-research meeting (11/1/00)*]

Re-iterate concept, their role and ownership etc.

Background and Demographic details:

Age

Born and raised

Football team supported/followed(?) (relevance?)

Academic and employment background:

Qualifications (University, when and where?)

Previous employment – (i.e., CV – copy could be requested prior to interview stage)

=> perception of experience for the role.

=> e.g., What main qualities of your previous employment experience do you feel are particularly pertinent to the role of Academy Head of Education?

Sports Background:

Type of sport played

Nature of participation (e.g., competitive, enjoyment, winner)

Playing level, achievements

Particular relevance to current role?

Application process

Interview process

Date of appointment as Academy Head of Education (formerly Education and Welfare Officer)

Job description, mission statement

Location with respect to other club employees (i.e., first team, physiotherapist, Academy Director, Management)

Contract – P/T, F/T, permanent, fixed term?

Salary

Salary in relation to 'other' club employees and in relation to other HoEs?

Concept of the Academy itself (e.g., separate site, vision, complete change of practice/emphasis or continuation of existing practice plus a 'couple of extra bodies')

Areas of Interview Schedule (i.e., relevant topics to address)

Personal Development

Application process and acceptance of role – relevant process and relevant characteristics?

Perception of self within the post (development of perspective i.e., initial feelings since inception of post and more recent feelings towards personal capability)

Responsibility

Respect

Relationship with others;

FA administrators

Academy Director, Coaches, Physiotherapists

Scouts (including chief scout)

Schools (i.e., Heads and PE Heads/teachers)

Further Education College & Funding criteria (the education package i.e., school & Academy)

Parents

Players – under 7s through to Academy players (16-19yrs) through to professionals under 20 [responsible] and over 20 [no direct responsibility]

HoEWs - Change in title of role (i.e., Education and Welfare Officer to Academy Head of Education and Welfare)?

=> Interaction, direction, policies

Apply Descriptive, structural and contrast to each area, e.g., coaches;

Describe the type of relationship you have with the club's coaching staff. (Including meetings, regular, irregular, mutual respect, and interaction).

Structural

e.g., What do you do when a young player's educational performance is being hampered by too much football time (i.e., coaching, playing etc.)?

Contrast

e.g., Would this be different for a younger player (say) 11 years old than for an Academy player or even a young professional?

Responsibility to Players (Duty of Care)

Counselling skills

Child protection – types of child protection (i.e., physical, emotional, sexual, neglect) (e.g., Player's game profile – club criteria for games, training, school work ratio)

Player development – informal interaction with other members (i.e., Academy

Director, Physiotherapist, coach etc) – desire, commitment, personal attributes etc., no formal mechanism for feedback.

Education of the Player

Type of Courses/opportunities offered – grouping of players to achieve a 'level' of education for potential progression plus, group cohesion.

Club policy for involvement in School activity (teams – football, cricket, basketball)

The HoE role itself – activity (e.g., involved in playing, trips)

Respect over time?

Support mechanism for parent, player and teacher – to facilitate process

Agent for change

Interview schedule designed to identify the issues most relevant to the Academy Head of Education and Welfare and to focus on these issues in detail.

Could you describe the tasks you performed in the last competition you attended?

Appendix Ai: Development of the Interview Schedule (cont'd)

Pilot Interview:

Interviewer: Dave Richardson

Interviewee: Academy Director, Club 1

Date: 31 March 2000 – 9am

DR: I'd like to go through the introduction and familiarisation of the project background, academic and demographic details. Initially, with respect to your position as Academy Director, what was your perception of the qualities and experience required for the role?

AD: Knowledge of the curriculum, interest in all youngsters but in particular gifted youngsters.

DR: What personal qualities do you consider important for the role
[AD picks up details of interview process carried out]

AD: Qualities within the job description are a good communication, good organiser, a doer

DR: A doer?

AD: A doer rather than... more of a hands on, someone that likes to get their hands dirty...

DR: What role did the FA have within the appointment of your head of education?

AD: I took advice from Peter Cates (Chief Education Advisor to the Premier League)

DR: Did he give you any specific criteria?

AD: Guidelines, salary structures and things like that. It was a new post and nobody knew in terms of actual criteria required. I actually asked the applicants to write down what they thought the requirements of the post were. There were two in the frame for the job.

DR: So you reversed the process.

AD: I'll read you the successful one - Set up and maintain education and welfare arrangements for all academy players...A lot of the criteria mentioned are to do with school whereas my perception was wider than that. Any school time lost by the players is adequately made up. As the head of youth, a long term strategy to be developed. Increase links with schools and universities in order to explore education and higher education possibilities. To become involved in any Academy matters deemed relevant by the Academy Director. A lot of those are school based. They are actually quite defined.

DR: Education comes out at all ranges there. Is that a main criteria for the Academy itself? You mentioned that there was a wider scope?

AD: No. [Participant 1] actually wrote those down... But if you were looking at who he's responsible to, it's me. Responsible for, and I've taken a number of things off that [list], the job has taken on wider issues, being perceived at that time so a simple e.g. of that would have been the wider issues involved in tours and tournaments. On every tour he plays an important role. [Participant 1] has become a father figure to the boys.

DR: In terms of that respect how do you feel that the Head of Education and Welfare is perceived within the Club?

AD: In different ways. His role differs depending on the view of the personnel because he is seen as taking the players out of the activity that they are here for, that is to play football.

DR: How is this emphasis on academic development perceived within the Club?

AD: In the 2 years that [Participant 1] has been in post the barriers have been broken down. Initially it was taking players away from practice. I think, again, it's a mis-conception that they are taken away for lets say their educational studies. The group that are moving into year three will carry this education through. We are looking at the next stage now in terms of education environment.

DR: How is the perception of the academic development filtered through the Club?

AD: An example of this is that Thursday has always been a traditional day off for footballers. You know, "We'll take you for a x-ray because it's Thursday and it's only college day!"

(Information regarding phase 2 is discussed i.e. organisational chart. AD suggests admin staff, marketing and PR to be added to personnel list)

DR: We've touched upon the role of the FA before. How much influence does the FA have on the role of the Head of Education and Welfare within your Club?

AD: It's a difficult one for me to answer...

(Discussion took place about the procedures in order to deal with young player dilemmas)

AD: [Participant 1] discloses information that he feels is necessary with regard to player dilemmas.

DR: Are there any other issues that you may feel relevant within this phase [phase 3]?

AD: One specific area would be the release of players.

DR: The relationship that the Head of Education and Welfare has with the players, how do you see this relationship developing?

AD: [Participant 1] is quite fortunate because young players relate a lot to somebody who's not involved in making decisions about their future. And going back to one of the qualities necessary that is the father figure, confidant, which he would hope to foster all the way through. He wouldn't be involved in the selection process.

DR: So following that line through then do you think that the Head of Education and Welfare would have any future responsibility in the decision making process?

AD: At any one time we would have lets say 120 boys within the Academy and [Participant 1] would become more and more involved.

DR: Phase 5 concerns the contrasts that may occur across the academies. Do you see any differences in procedures adopted by these different academies?

AD: You never hear any animosity, so when they (HoEW's) have their meetings they have a laugh and a joke about the meals, whereas when the Academy Directors get together they're afraid of each other. The HoEW's share ideas so its kind of a relationship they all have with each other, whereas them over there [reference to other local Premiership clubs] they hate me.

DR: How do you think the role has developed over time?

AD: Education is totally different. The release of players is easier because if they wish to they can get a club. 9/10 years ago when I was the Development Officer I never really got to know the youngsters the way I would want to. I know that there are more and more young players...

DR: To you have any concerns regarding the future of the role of the Head of Education and Welfare?

AD: Because football clubs are traditional and the one thing that...and I don't mean that in a nasty way. The season, the timetable is first and foremost football biased and some youngsters at this stage don't know if they'll be able to sit their exams. It depends on lad's international duties. The HoEW's job has to be flexible and of course looking after education is a job in itself.

Phases of Interview Schedule

Phase 1 – Introduction and Familiarisation

Purpose:

[Previously identified during pre-research meeting (11/1/00)]

Re-iterate concept, their role in the interview process and ownership => familiarisation

Background and Demographic details:

Age

Born and raised

Football team supported/followed.

Academic and employment background:

Qualifications (University, when and where?)

Previous employment – (i.e., CV – copy could be requested prior to interview stage)

Education Background:

Knowledge of education system

Knowledge of youth and/or child development procedures

Sports Background:

Type of sport played

Nature of participation (e.g., competitive, enjoyment, recreational, winner)

Playing level, achievements

Particular relevance to current role?

Reasons for Application and Process Itself:

=> Initial perception of qualities and experience required for the role (i.e., not what you feel now but feelings at the time)

(e.g., What main qualities of your previous employment experience do you feel are particularly pertinent to the role of Academy Head of Education?)

Rationale for application (personal, approached)

Interview process - and acceptance of role – relevant process and relevant characteristics?

Date of appointment as Academy Head of Education and Welfare (formerly Education and Welfare Officer)

Job description, mission statement

Location with respect to other club employees (i.e., first team, physiotherapist, Academy Director, Management)

Contract – P/T, F/T, permanent, fixed term?

Salary (willing to disclose)

Salary in relation to 'other' club employees and in relation to other HoEWs?

Concept of the Academy itself (e.g., separate site, vision, complete change of practice/emphasis or continuation of existing practice plus a 'couple of extra bodies')?

Phase 2 – The following phase of questions concern the Academy Head of Education and Welfare’s general role and position within the club (i.e., general activities, responsibility, working environment, relationship with significant others)

Perception of self within the post (development of perspective i.e., initial feelings since inception of post and more recent feelings towards personal capability)

Responsibility (e.g., Who are you responsible for? and, To whom are you responsible? (i.e., holistic – parents, kids, management)

Do you feel respected within the club environment?
By whom? Hierarchy of respect...

Do you feel empowered within your role?
Could you give any examples where you have initiated and implemented new ideas or structures?
How does this process work?

How do you feel about your current working environment (i.e., with respect to location, facilities, and support mechanisms).
Is this environment conducive to being efficient and effective within your role?
Could your working environment be enhanced?
If so, what mechanisms, structures would you put in place?

The following questions concern the relationship you have with ‘significant others’ within the Club.

How would you describe you relationship with the following personnel?

- Club Directors
- Club Manager
- Academy Director
- Coaches
- Physiotherapists
- Scouts (including chief scout)
- Players – under 7s through to Academy players (16-19yrs) through to professionals under 20 [responsible] and over 20 [no direct responsibility])

The following questions concern the relationship you have with ‘significant others’ outside of the Club

How would you describe you relationship with the following personnel?

- FA administrators
- Other HoEWs
- Schools (i.e., Heads and PE Heads/teachers)
- Further Education College & Funding criteria (the education package i.e., school & Academy)

Phase 3 – The following phase of questions concerns the structure, source and procedures for development of the Academy Head of Education and Welfare's knowledge base.

[say] You mentioned before the amount of responsibility you have towards the players within the Club. Could you tell me what you would do if a young player had:

Financial problems

Social problems

Parents

Friends, peers

Emotional problems (e.g., home-sickness)

Educational difficulties/concerns

Social exclusion within the school environment

Behavioural problems (e.g., disruptive tendencies)

Motivational concerns

A severe (possibly) career threatening injury?

Suffered abuse within or outside of the club environment (i.e., physical, sexual, emotional, neglect).

Within the club or football environment can you think of any examples where young players are more susceptible to situations of abuse?

Do you feel comfortable (and/or qualified) when dealing with, some or all, of the issues previously mentioned?

What qualities (or qualifications) do you possess or would like to possess that would aid this interaction?

Do situations (i.e., previously mentioned) occur within your Club?

Do players talk openly and freely to you?

How do you feel when young players talk openly to you?

Would you like to have a stronger or closer relationship with the young players?

How do you think you could achieve this?

Phase 4 – The following questions refer to the contrasts that may occur between relationships with significant others and situations (e.g., across age ranges of young players, across academies).

[say] You mentioned before about the responsibility towards young players. Does your approach differ depending on the age of the players concerned?

Academic profile
Social exclusion
Behavioural problems
Child protection

Do you feel that practices differ across the Academies within the NorthWest? (i.e., management, housekeeping and relationships)?

If so, in what way do they differ?

Do these differences, in any way, aid or hinder your/the role?

Phase 5 – Reflection (i.e., inception, development and now)

Since the start of your tenure how do you feel your role has developed?

How do you feel that you have developed both personally and professionally?

Phase 6 – Reflection – (i.e., lead in to focus group, response to interview and clarification)

During your time as an Academy Head of Education could you give me an example of your most pleasurable 'positive' experience?

What major concerns do have regarding the future of both your role and that of the other Academy Head's of Education and Welfare?

What concern, regarding your role, is at the top of your 'to do' agenda?

Do you feel that we have covered all the relevant areas within the interview?

Would you like to re-iterate of clarify any of the issues raised?

Would you like to add anything further to the interview?

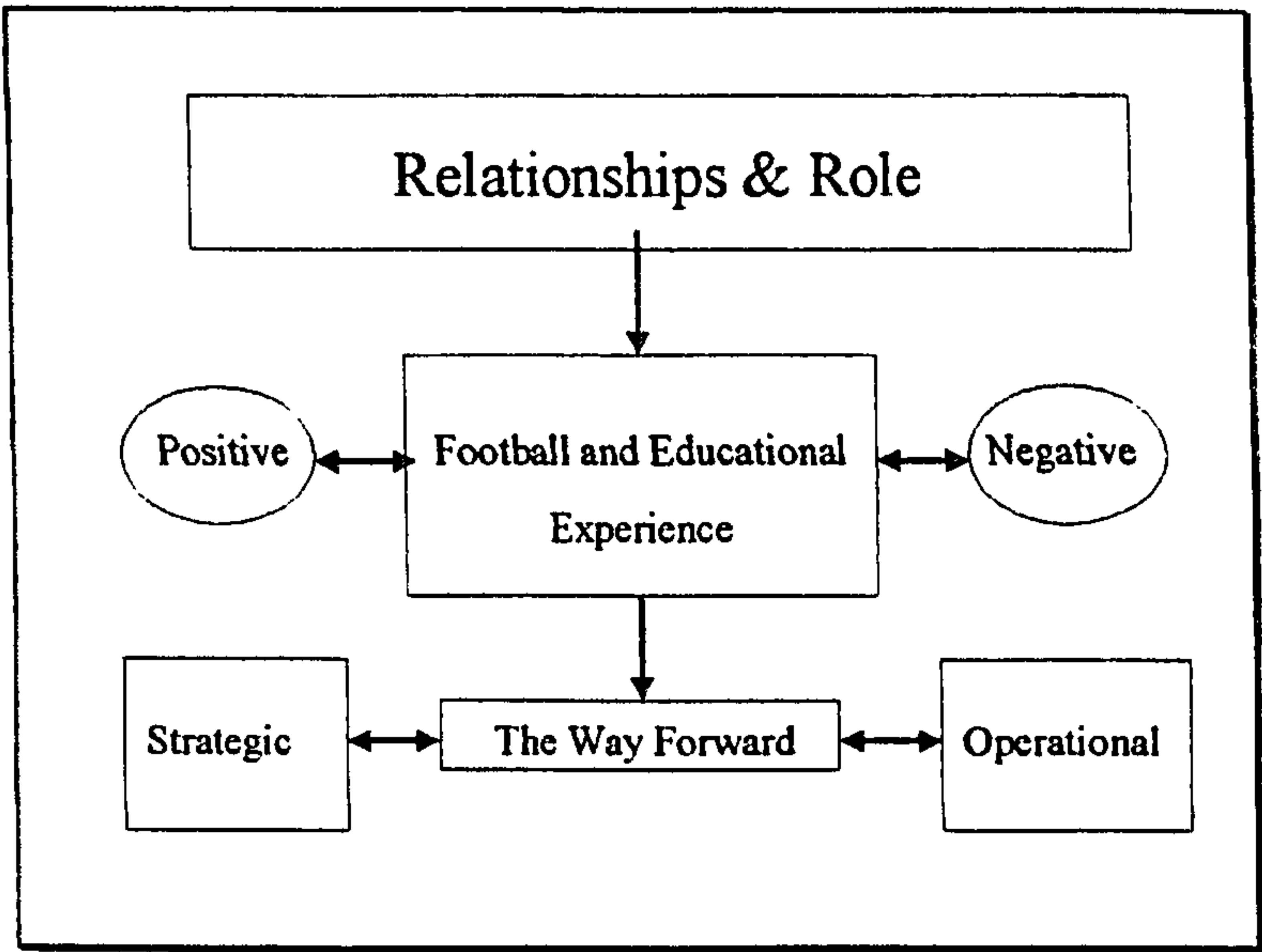
Appendix B
Study 1 - Results
Participant Background Details

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
Age/gender	50 years old/ Male	Late 50's/ Male	53 years old/ Male	42 years old/ Male	52 years old/ Male
Educational Background	Over 20 years teaching experience Deputy head (5 years) and head of PE dept. (3 years) Head of year (15 years)	35 years working in education. Involved in DfEE publications. 10 years experience as a school inspector for OFSTED. Several Head-ships. Member of the National Steering Group for training co-ordinators in high schools in the 23 core city areas - 'gifted and talented pupils'.	Over 25 years of teaching experience (comprehensive and private)	5-6 years as a secondary school teacher - personal & social education, PE, English, humanities. Plus special needs work with kids with behavioural problems. Traditional PE courses - 'A' level PE, 'A' level sports studies, BTEC, vocational education. 8-9 years in FE co-ordinating business & leisure courses.	28 years teaching at a Grammar School and 6 th Form College. Head of Year & Head of Biology. Senior tutor, Assistant vice principal at 6 th Form College. Responsible for curriculum development, adult education, student registration & attendance. In charge of the course for FE applications and University plus a pastoral role.
Educational Qualifications	1969 - 1972 Certificate of Education	Qualified teacher	1966-1969 Teacher's certificate with a credit in physical education. Junior and secondary trained.	1977-80 BA joint honours Human Movement Studies and English. 1981-82 PGCE in PE and English.	No formal teaching qualification. BSc(Hons) in Animal Science, PhD at Med School.
Sport qualifications	FA Diploma - Treatment & management of sports injuries Coaching FA Preliminary Badge FA Full Badge - 1996 Converted to UEFA A License.	None	FA Preliminary Badge Coerver coaching badge	FA Preliminary Badge	None

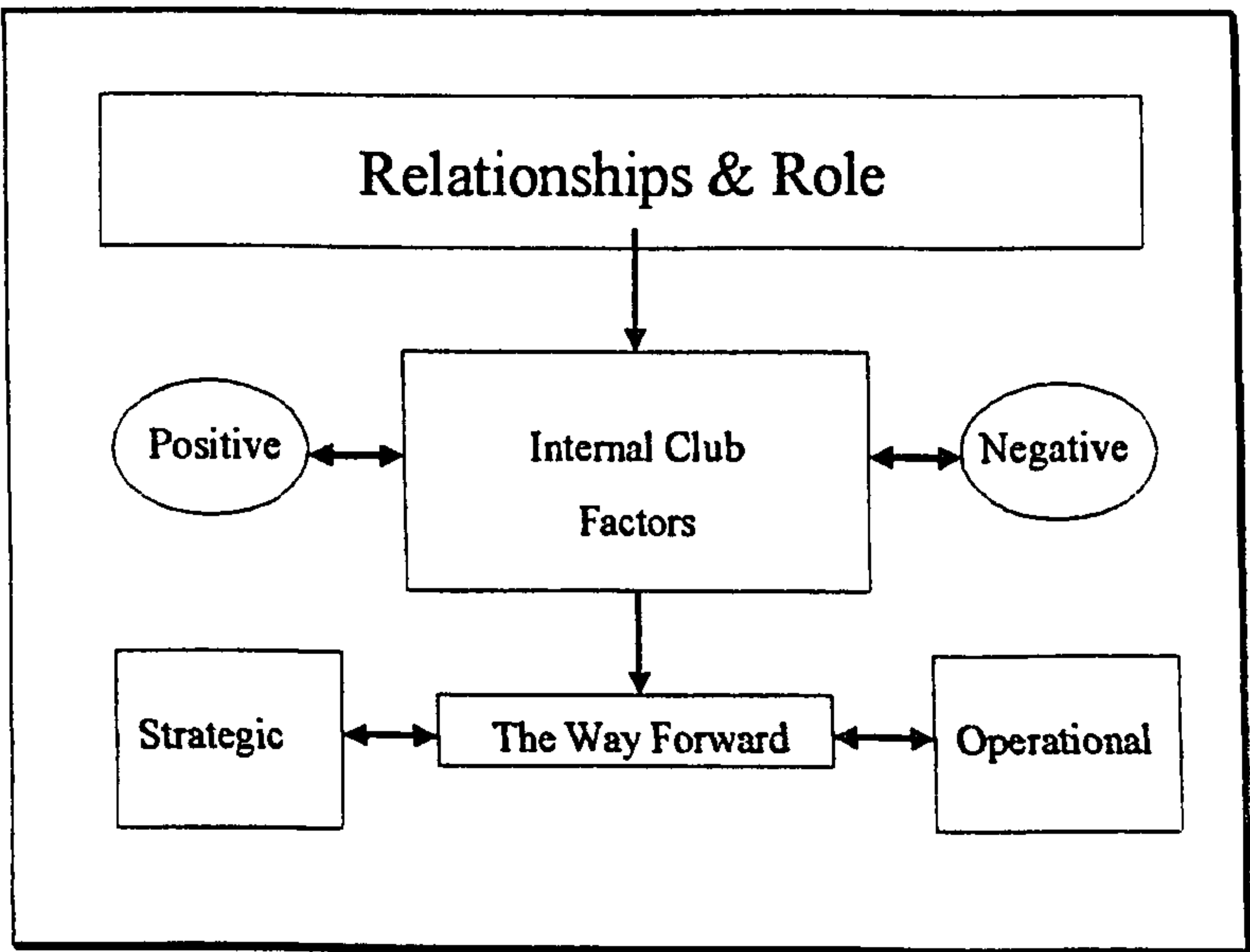
Team supported	Club 1	Club 2	Club 5	Club 4	Club 5
Playing experience	College and amateur level	Modest – school and college level	College and amateur level	Semi-pro, County level. Schoolboy forms with professional club. British Universities, 1 st division reserve team. County basketball player	Semi-pro, non-league and University playing standard. Offered (but declined) pro contracts at 3 professional clubs. Squash and tennis to a reasonable standard.
Coaching experience	Club 1's Centre of excellence (i.e., pre Academy status). Manager of a Saturday youth team for past 26 years. Involved in County team for 17 years including coaching.	None	Area 5 Schools manager. Coaching experience with Club 5. Assistant manager - England schoolboys & manager England schoolboys for 5 years.	School team and American soccer camps.	None
Other experience	7 years as 'physio' for England under 15's part-time	External Examiner for Wolverhampton University.	N/A	N/A	Senior examiner and assistant senior examiner for the NAAB biology.
Application process	Formal – interview with Academy Director. Not publicly advertised.	Assumed role in addition to existing position within the club.	Informal – development of existing role at the club.	Formal – publicly advertised plus interview process co-ordinated by external consultants	Informal – approached through existing links with club.
Contract	3 years f/t	On going - p/t. No real contractual terms	Short term - renewable as and when	Permanent - f/t	12 months p/t (20 hours) moving to 31 hours per week [at time of interview]
Salary (start)	£30,000 plus company car	None (existing Board member)	Undisclosed - Company car	Undisclosed – Company car	£18,000. Plus two seats for home games. Mobile phone and company car.

Appendix C: Construction of focus group slides

Slide 1

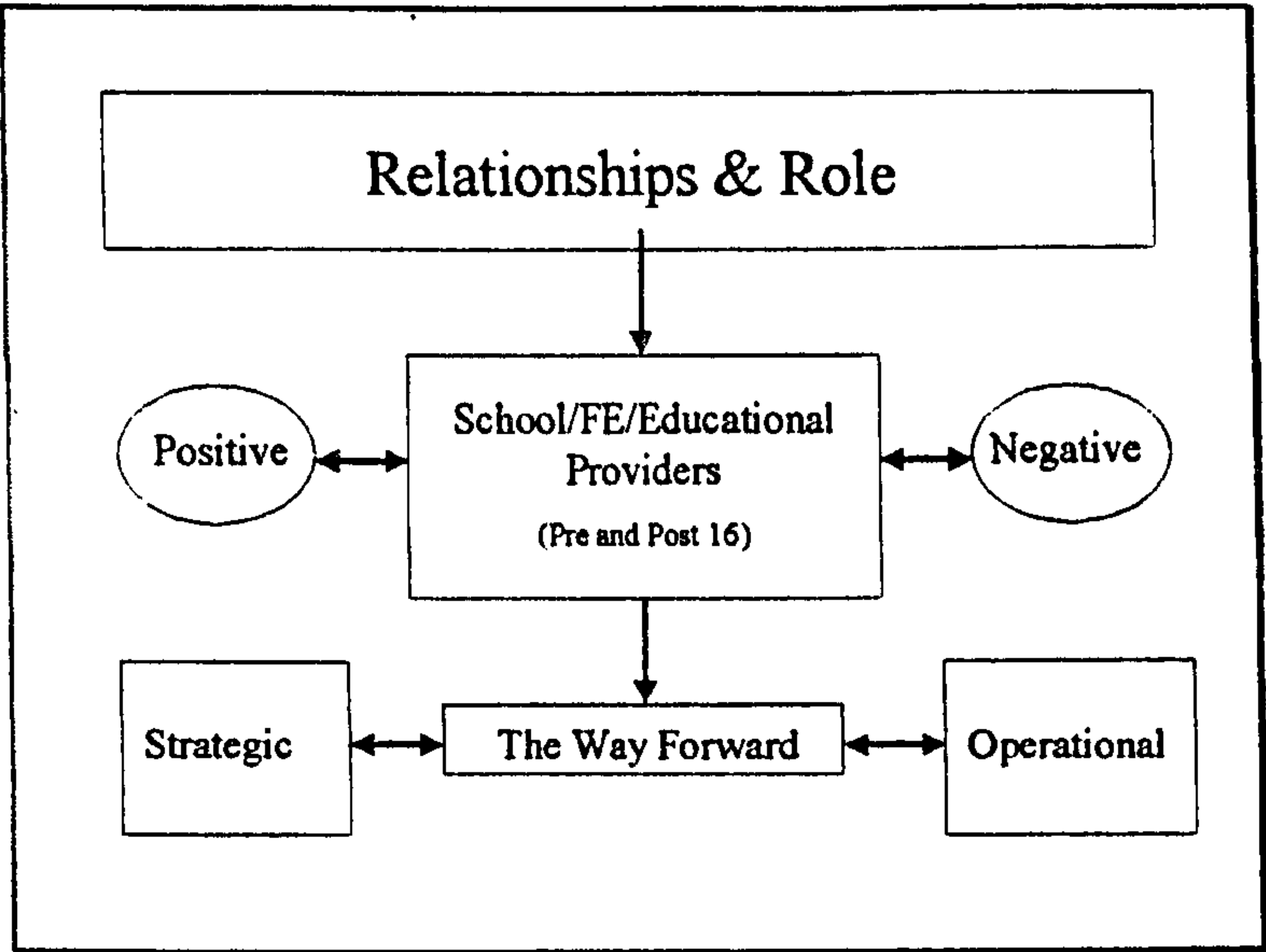


Slide 2

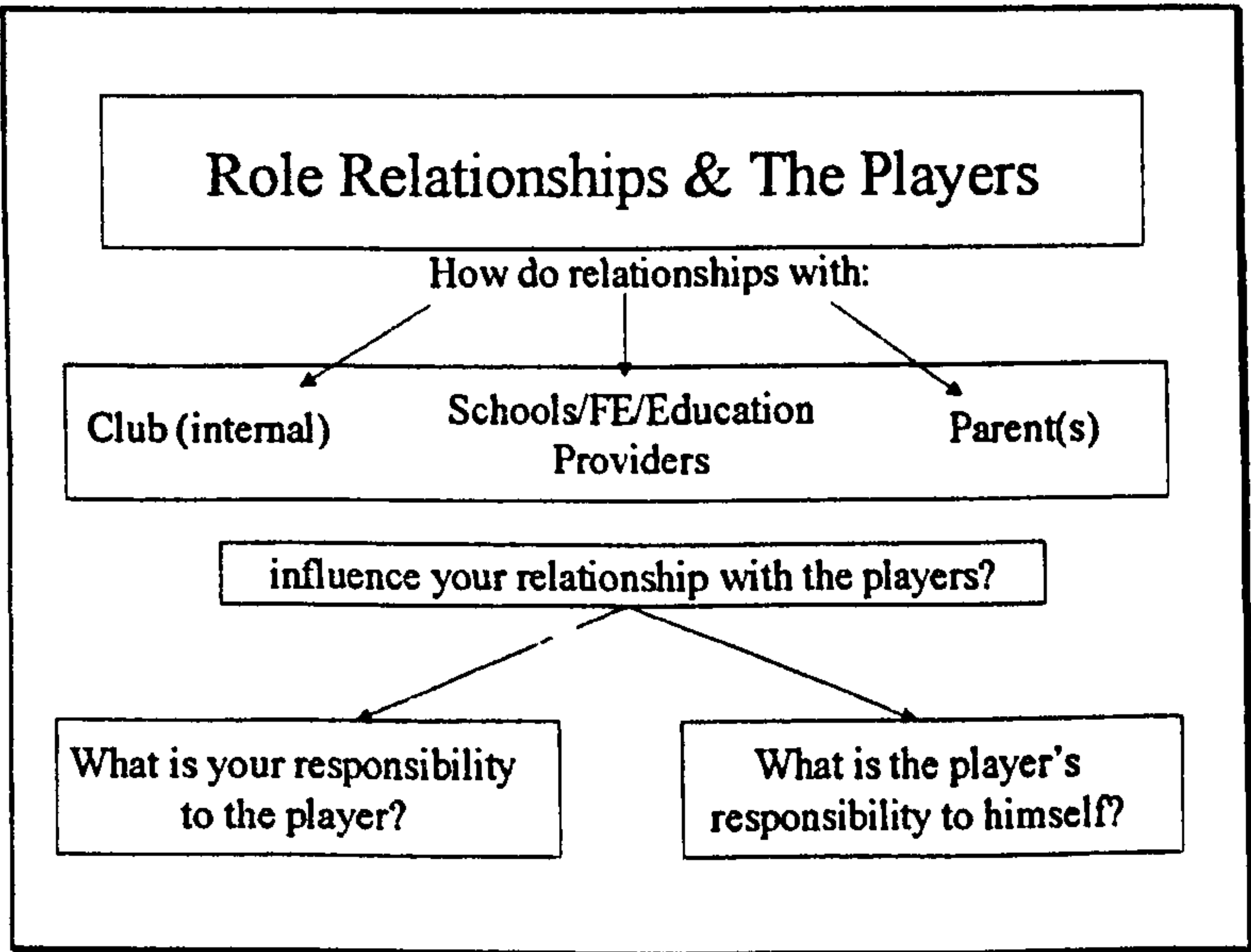


Appendix C: Construction of focus group slides (cont'd)

Slide 3

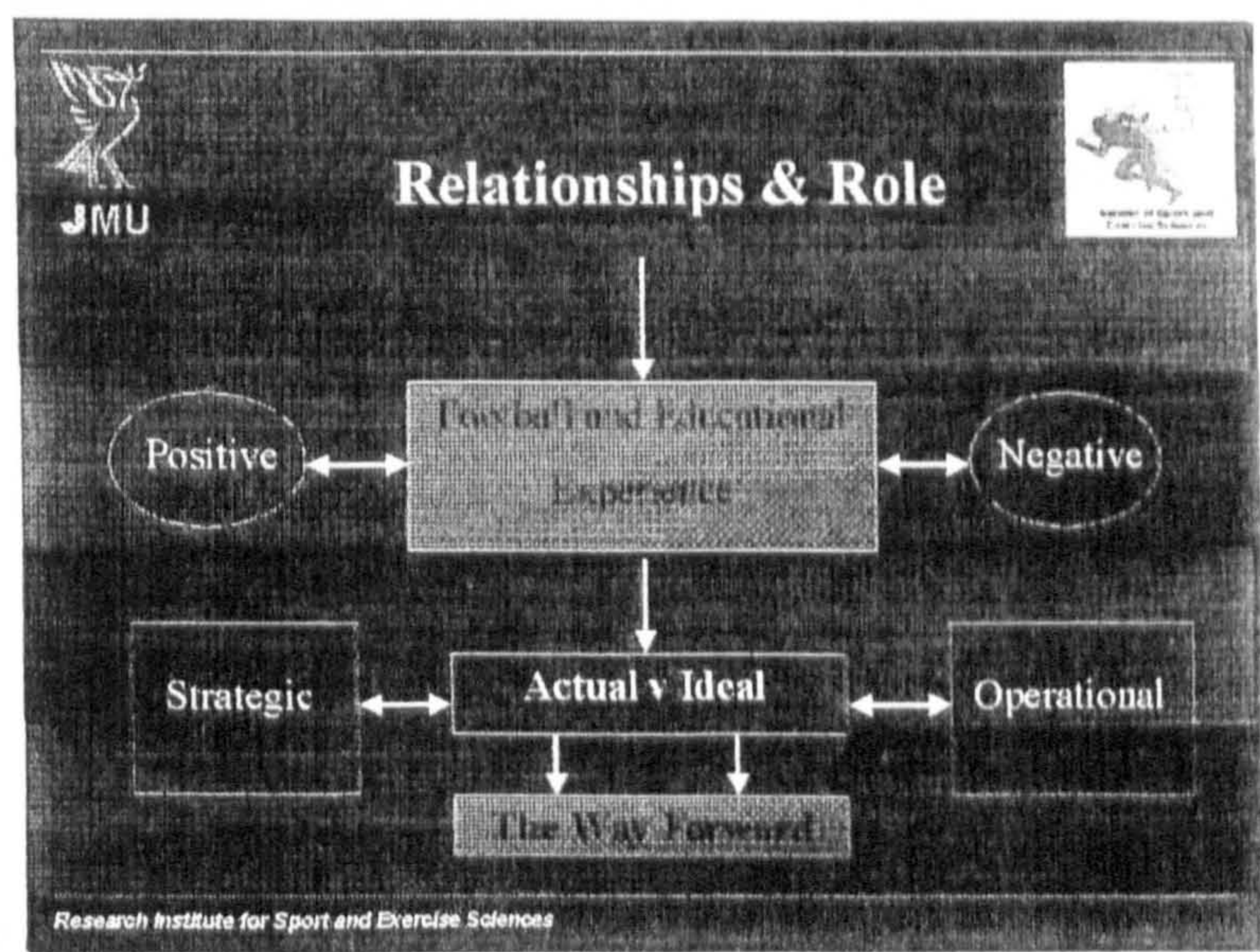


Slide 4



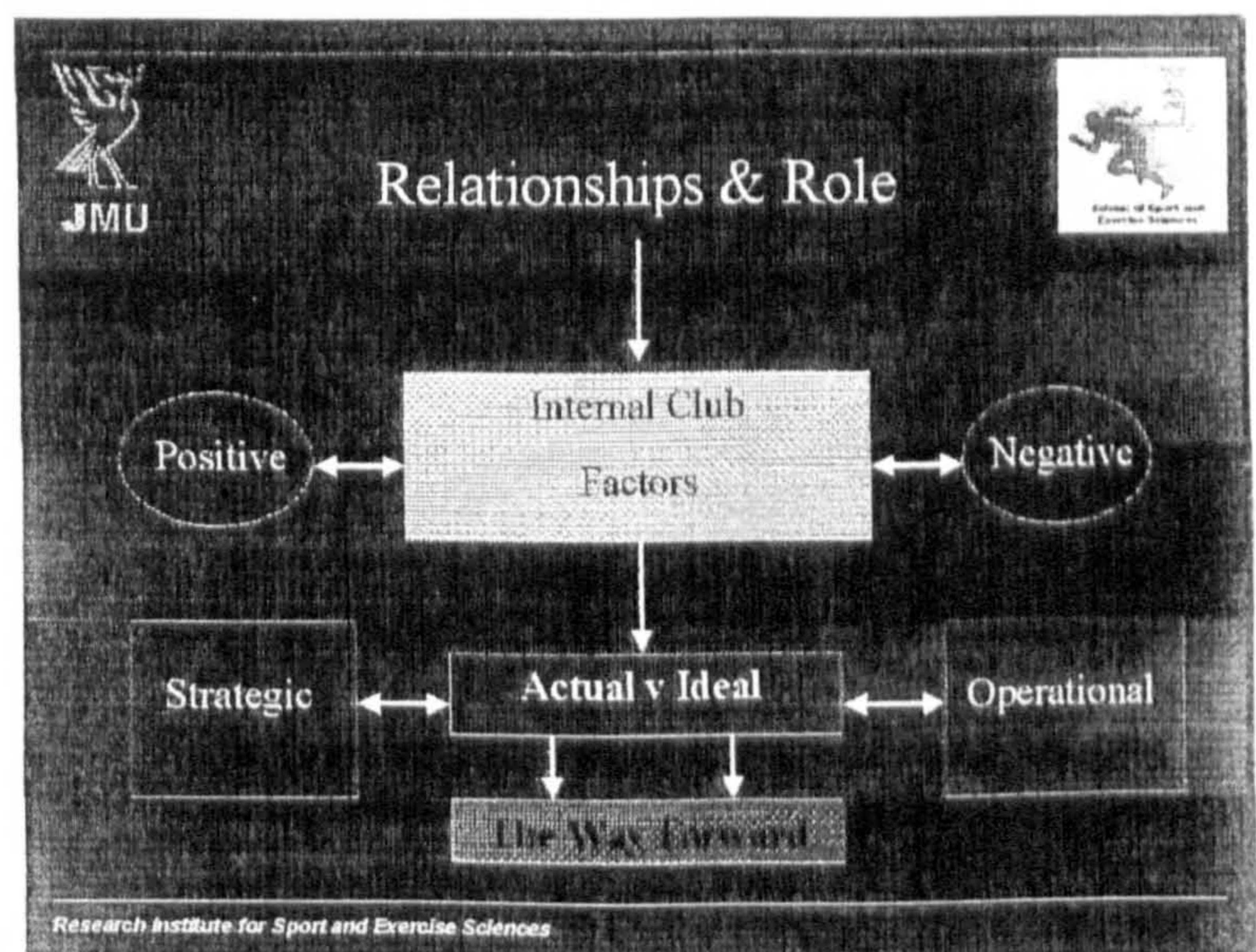
Appendix C: Construction of focus group slides (cont'd)

Slide 1



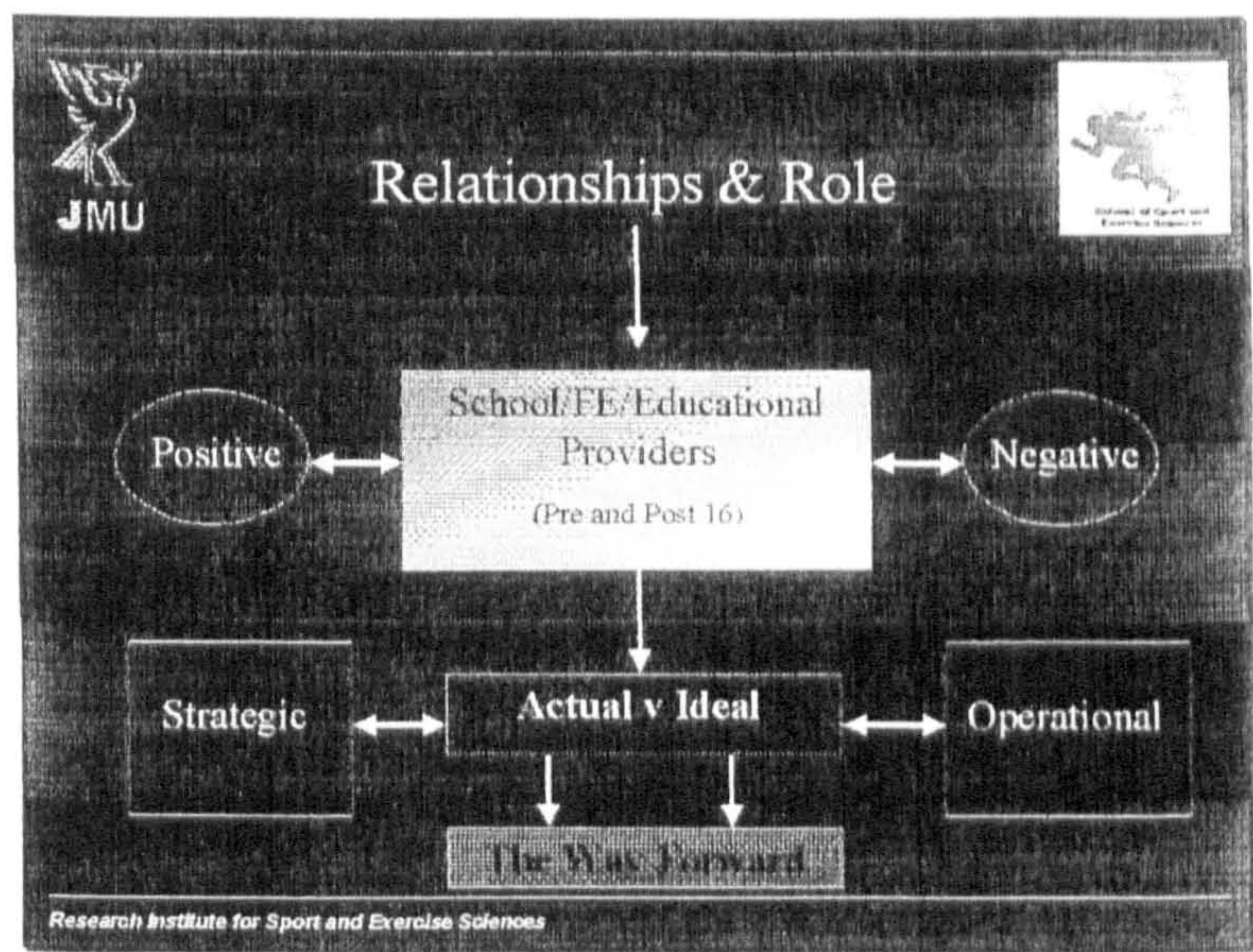
Aim: To explore the football and educational background/experience of the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and identify how this has affected their ability to carry out the role. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Slide 2



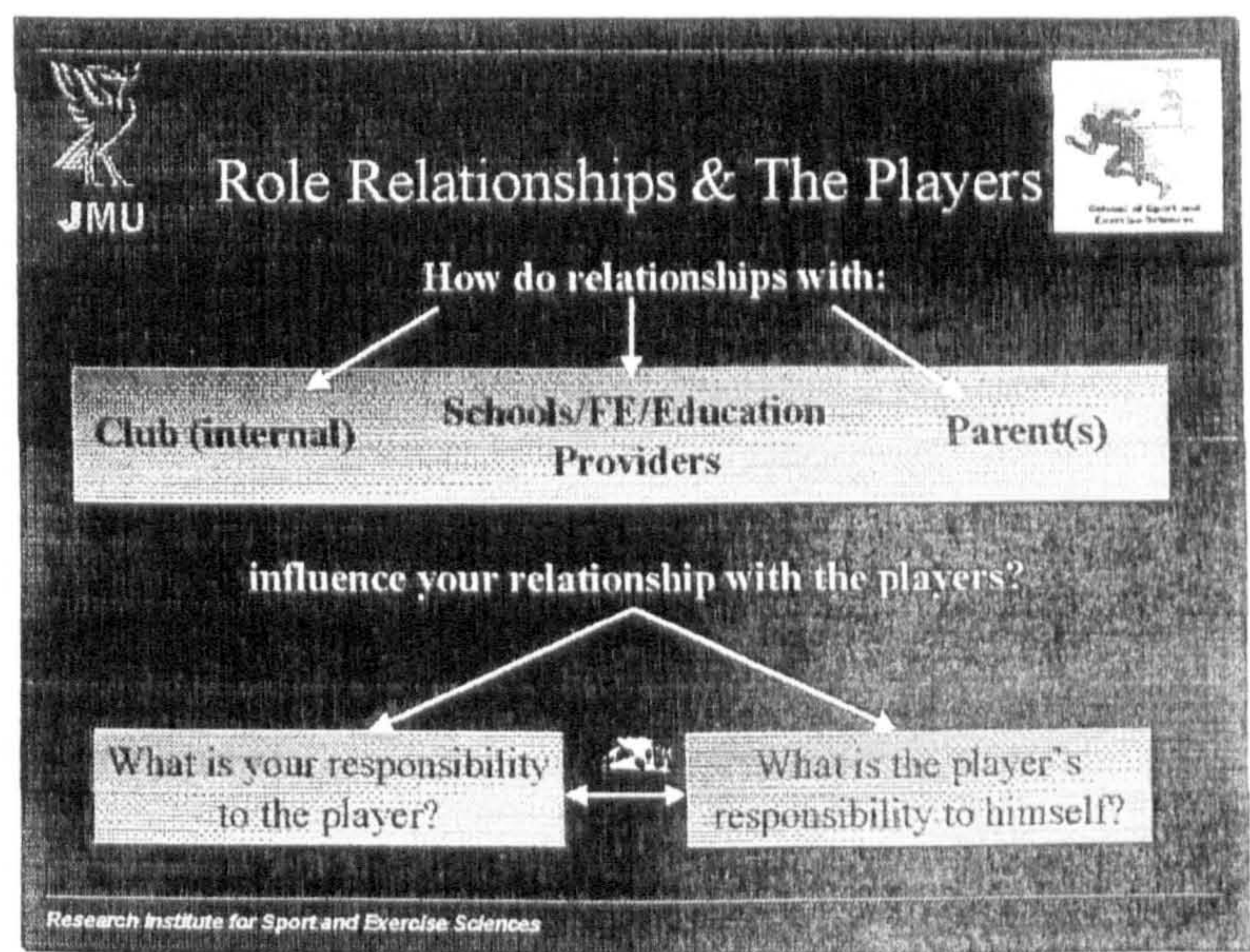
Aim: To explore relationships that exist between the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and internal club staff (e.g., management, academy director, coaches) and identify how this has affected their ability to carry out the role. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Slide 3

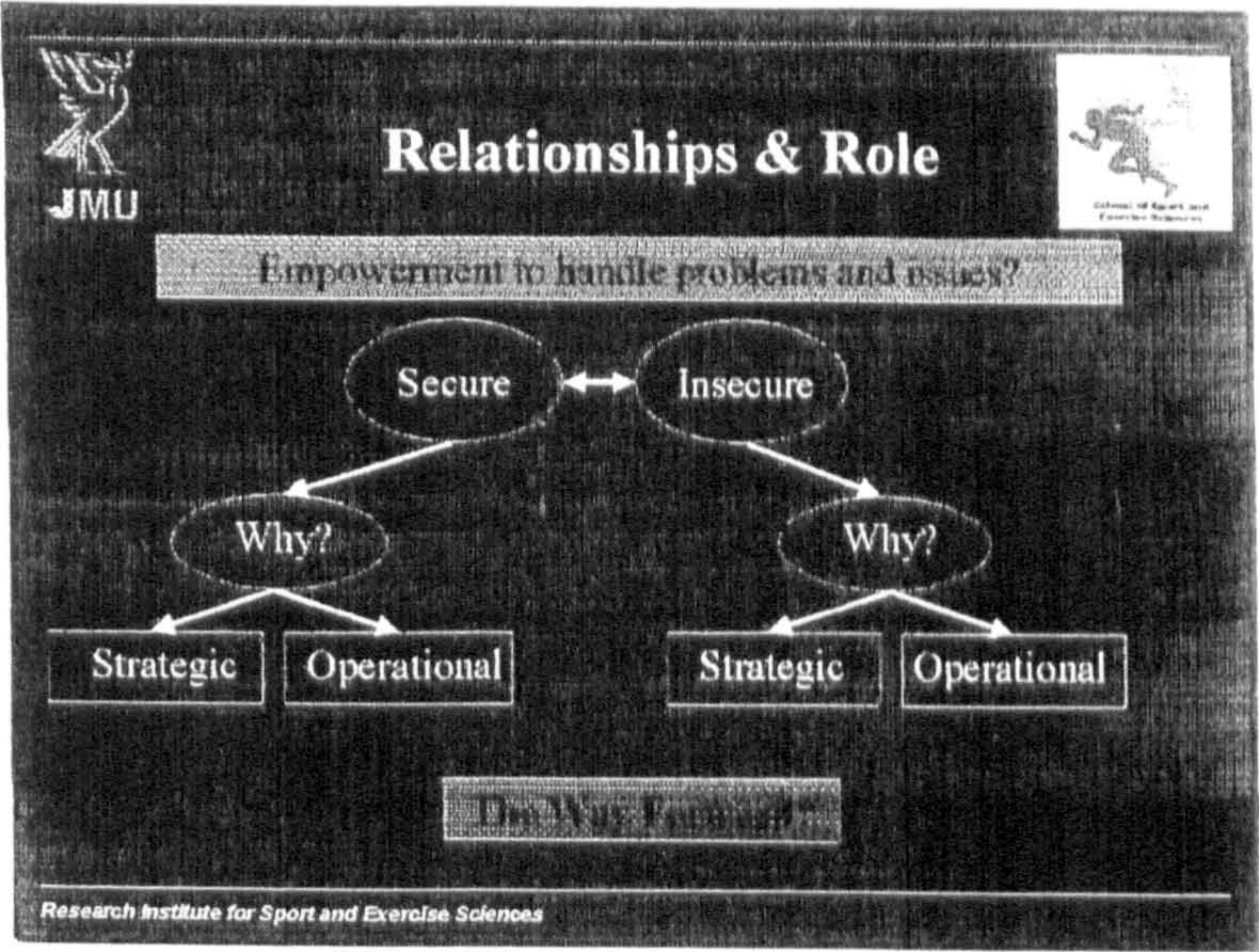


Aim: To explore relationships that exist between the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and schools/FE/Educational providers and identify how this has affected their ability to carry out the role. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Slide 4



Aim: To identify how the relationships that exist between the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and internal club staff, schools/FE/education providers and parents influence their relationship with the players. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.



Aim: To explore and identify particular situations where the HoEW has felt both secure and/or insecure in their working practice. Identification of both strategic and operational processes is implicit. The slide also encourages the group to identify ways forward.



Aim: To identify and rationalise key areas for training and development for HoEWs, players and club staff in order to enhance the working practice and/or environment of the HoEW. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Appendix D
Participant 2a Background Details

	Participant 2a
Age/gender	44 years old/ Male
Educational Background	14 years teaching experience Head of year (year 9, 10 and 11) PE and History
Educational Qualifications	Bachelor of Education 1982 MSc Physiology
Sport qualifications	Coaching FA Preliminary Badge FA Full Badge – 1995 Converted to UEFA A License 1997 FA Fitness Trainers Award Conditioning Coach
Team supported	Club 3
Playing experience	College and semi-pro level
Coaching experience	Local town and County Club 1's Director of Youth Development at 1 st Division Club
Other experience	N/A
Application process	Informal – interview with Academy Director. Not publicly advertised.
Contract	3 years f/t
Salary (start)	Undisclosed – company car

Appendix E: Summary of focus group slides sent to HoEWs

Centre for Sport and Exercise Sciences
Liverpool John Moores University
Henry Cotton Campus
15-21 Webster Street
Liverpool
L3 2ET

Telephone: 0151 231 4331
E-mail: d.j.richardson@livjm.ac.uk

19th December 2000

Dear

Please find enclosed the summation of the focus group session that you attended on Tuesday 12th December 2000.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for taking the time to attend. The session was an extremely informative and productive experience.

The early analysis and interpretation of the interview data identified issues regarding 'strategic implementation' by Head of Education and Welfare. The initial summation of the focus group discussion has reinforced this notion with an expressed need to operate at a strategic level within the football club environment.

Further analysis of the discussion will take place following the transcription of the tapes. Three or four key 'action' points will then be identified. These action points will be put forward for discussion by the group in order to prioritise and identify specific goals and work towards the implementation and development of this action by each individual. The research will then move into the 'action-phase' (i.e., following implementation) where issues and developments can be monitored.

I hope that you have found participation within this exercise both informative and productive and I look forward to your continued support as the work progresses into the action-phase early in the New Year.

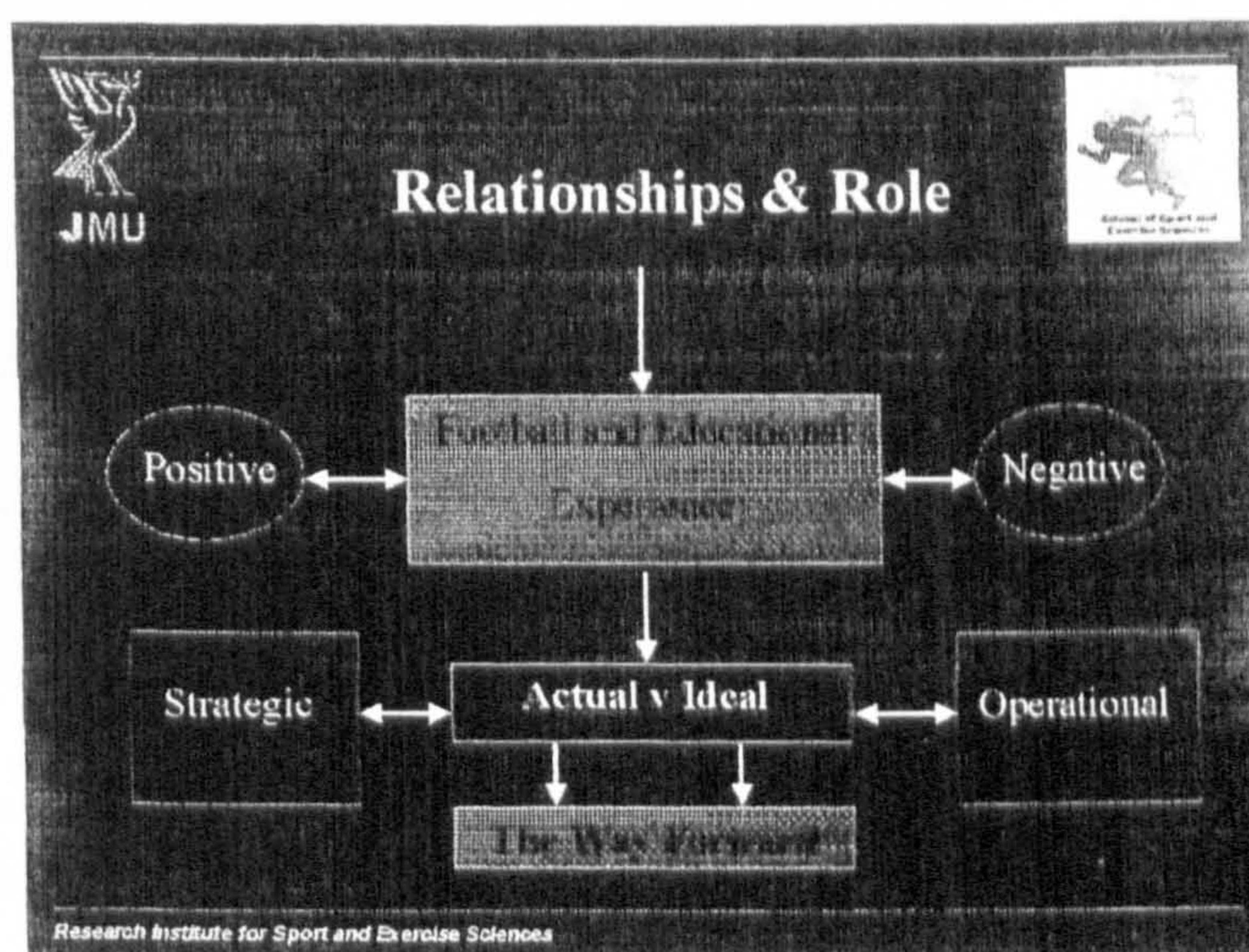
If you have any further comments or questions regarding the work please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes

Dave Richardson
Lecturer in sport management and development
Admissions tutor and Academic Recruitment Co-ordinator

In attendance: Mr John Grayson (Participant 1), Mr Paul Harrison (Participant 2a), Mr Billy Drisdale (Participant 3), Mr Derek Traynor (Participant 4), Mr Frank O'Hare (Participant 5), Mr David Richardson (facilitator) Dr David Gilbourne (rapporteur), Mr Martin Littlewood (video)

Slide 1



Aim: To explore the football and educational background/experience of the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and identify how this has affected their ability to carry out the role. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Summation of Response:

The HoEWs expressed a need for a football background in order to understand the existing football culture.

A football background aids acceptance. Initially, this background was primarily utilised as a *vehicle* establish credibility during the early stages of the role. However, this should not preclude others *without* a football background from doing the job.

An understanding of the coaches' role helps broker relationships and enables the coaches to *understand* the remit of the HoEW.

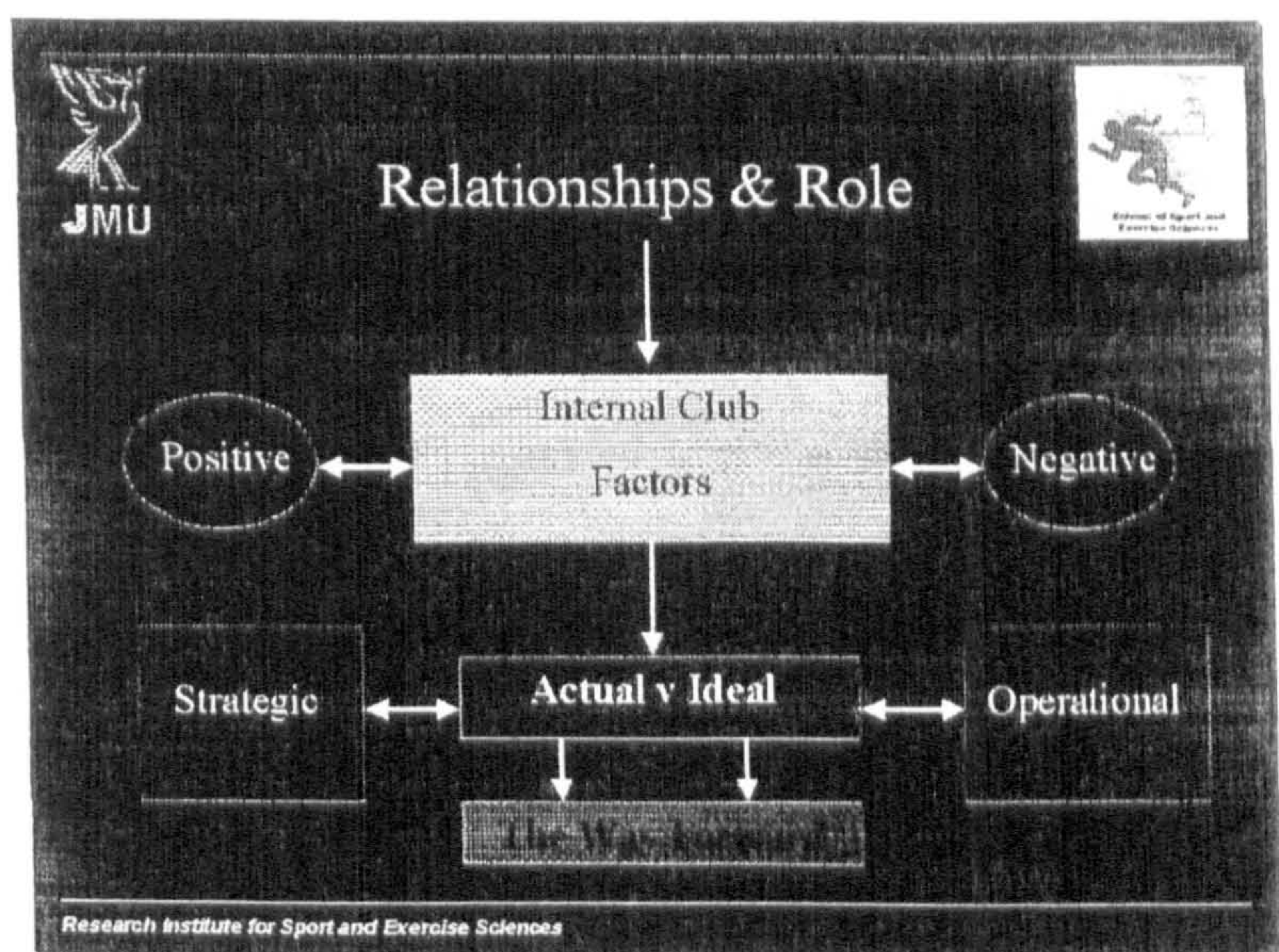
Operational tendencies were evident in establishing credibility (e.g., engaging with boys and the coaches in order to promote openness).

It was perceived that a football background was not necessary when establishing credibility with the boys. The issue was more pertinent to establishing credibility and acceptance with existing staff.

It was evident that the *educational background and experience* provided essential 'craft' skills that equipped the HoEWs with the necessary skills to cope with, and manage children and youths. HoEWs had an ability to offer solutions to day to day problems (i.e., fire-fighting skills, organisational skills) and an understanding of ethics and disclosure.

It was perceived that understanding what makes people *tick* on both sides (i.e., football and education) was helpful in order to carry out the role, although it was agreed that an *ideal* was difficult to isolate.

In order to facilitate change, a change of current 'attitudes', would be the preferred ideal (e.g., embrace educational/intelligence ideals, new ideas and working practices).



Aim: To explore relationships that exist between the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and internal club staff (e.g., management, academy director, coaches) and identify how this has affected their ability to carry out the role. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Summation of Response:

Having *access* to numerous levels of the club (e.g., personnel, players and coaches) gives rise to the perception of *others* being threatened by the existence of the HoEW.

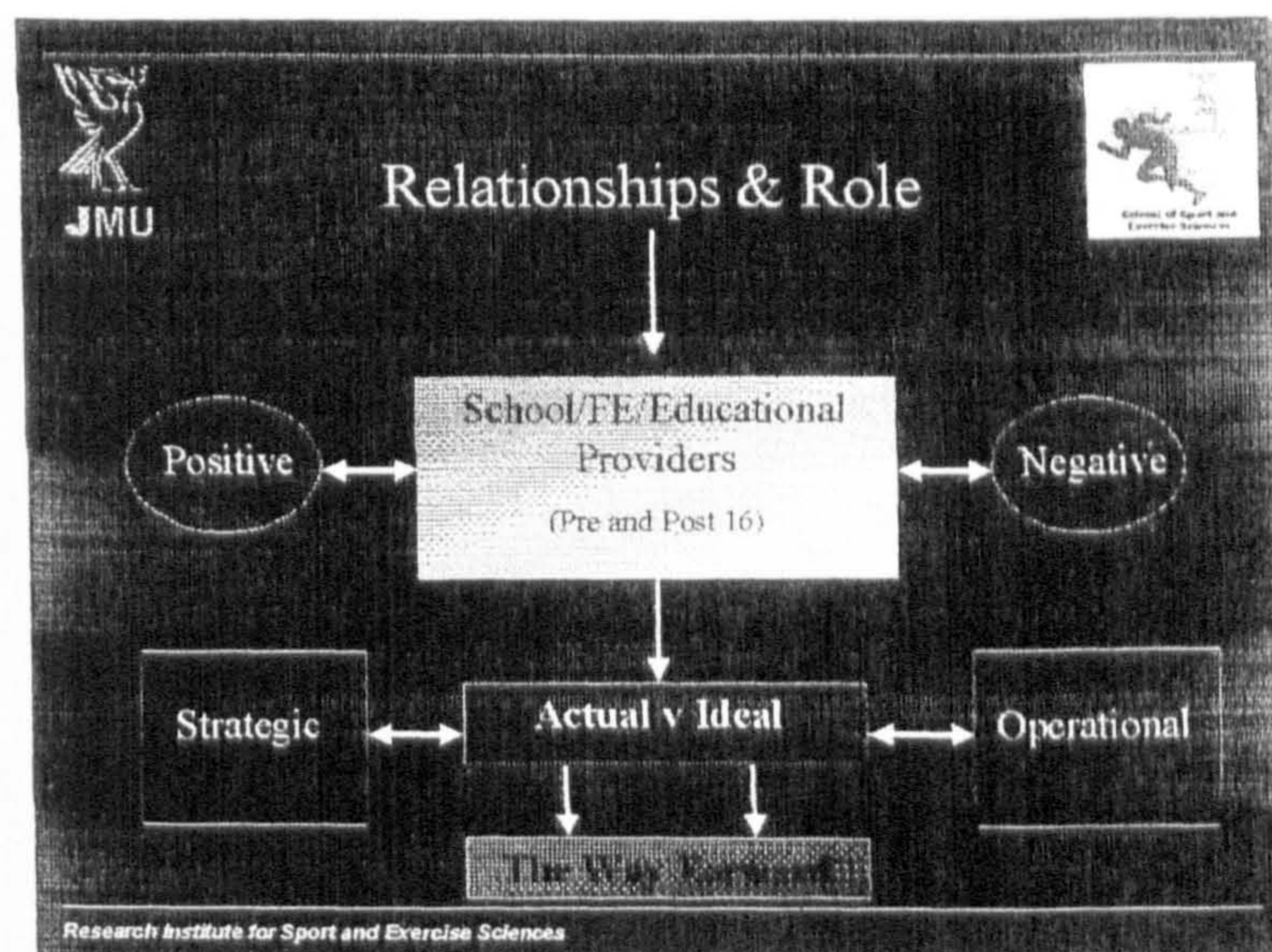
It was suggested that sometimes information related to the players' may not be forthcoming (e.g., players being released on loan without the HoEW being informed) which has inevitable educational consequences for the player. This was expressed as a deficient awareness and/or knowledge concerning the role of the HoEW, by other segments (or individuals) within the club, rather than a lack of professionalism.

As the role of the HoEW expands and develops (i.e., being perceived to touch on other peoples' patch) then certain staff can appear threatened, uncertain or insecure.

Conflict was expressed over what is 'best' for the player (e.g., between coach and HoEW).

Operational mechanisms were utilised in order to promote good practice. The key relationships here included the coaches and players. The young players' reliance on the HoEW appeared to diminish as the players' progressed through the Academy. It was evident that players were utilised as mediators (sometimes) keeping the HoEW informed of other segments of the club.

It was identified that there were alternative mechanisms should be explored to in order to establish more strategic change and/or influence culture. The Academy Director was identified as the key relationship (or gatekeeper) in connecting/influencing people from isolated pockets within the club.



Aim: To explore relationships that exist between the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and schools/FE/Educational providers and identify how this has affected their ability to carry out the role. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

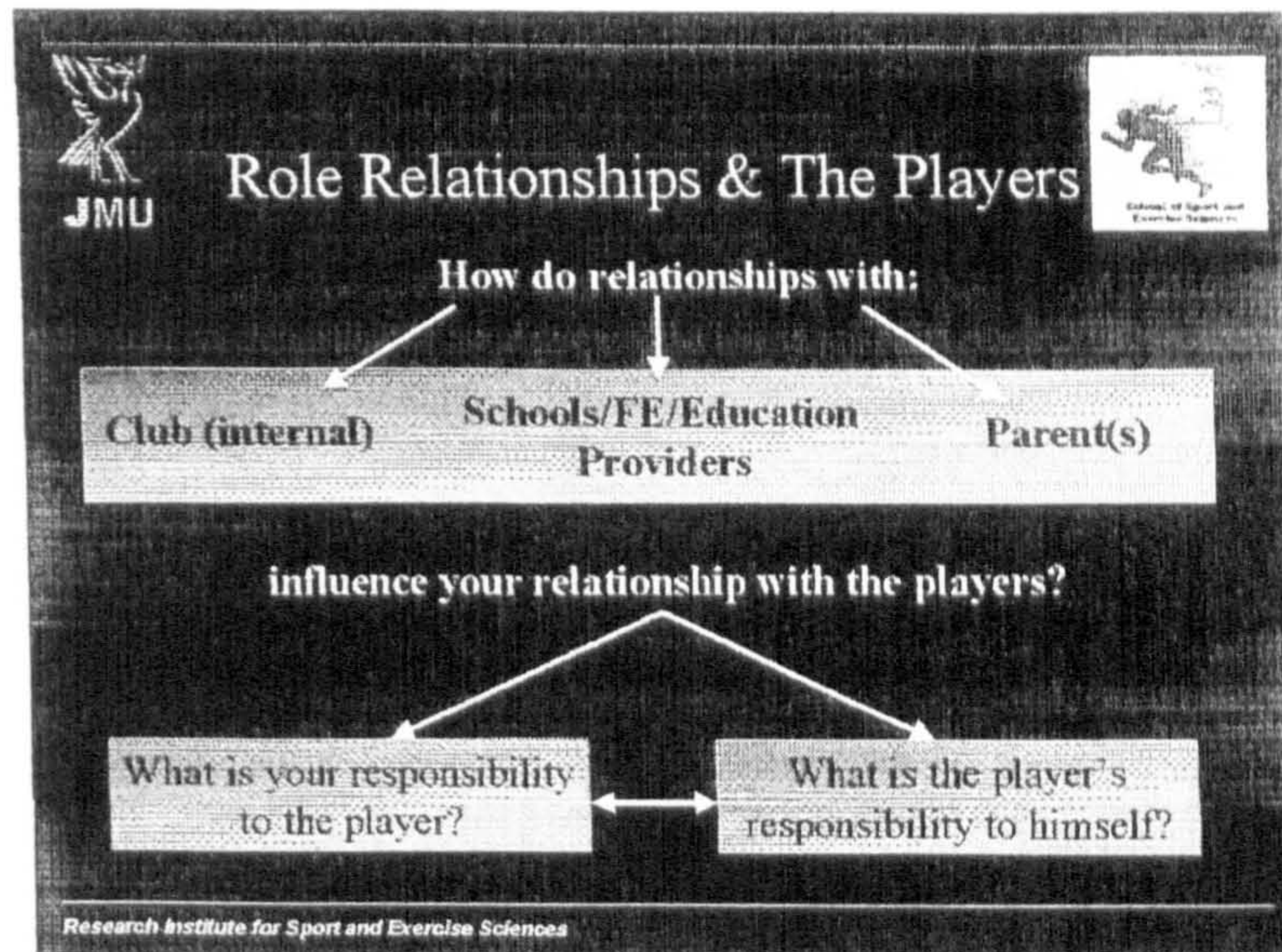
Summation of Response:

The general consensus was that the educational aspect of the role was one of the *easier* aspects of the role in terms of implementation (operational), control and influence (strategic).

There was universal concern that the FFE and VTS funding formula may not be in the best interests of the players. The HoEWs were striving for a more *flexible* approach to the educational provision, based on the needs of the boy rather than the funding criteria (needs) of the FFE and VTS.

It was apparent that the educational package was viewed as an important and integral part of the scholarship programme by (the majority of) parents. There was an appreciation that elements of education and football were slowly merging together as the nature and demands of the game evolve (i.e., both coach and player awareness). The HoEWs suggested that the *holistic development* of players was also beginning to be viewed as *critical* by club managers. The development of well-rounded, balanced and motivated individuals would ultimately produce better players (i.e., integrating football and education).

There appeared to be little 'role conflict' concerning the educational remit of the HoEW within the club. Occasional tensions arose but generally it was not a job that anyone else (i.e., within the club) wanted. Consequently, it was important to capitalise on the strategic opportunities that this presented in order to move the educational issues forward.



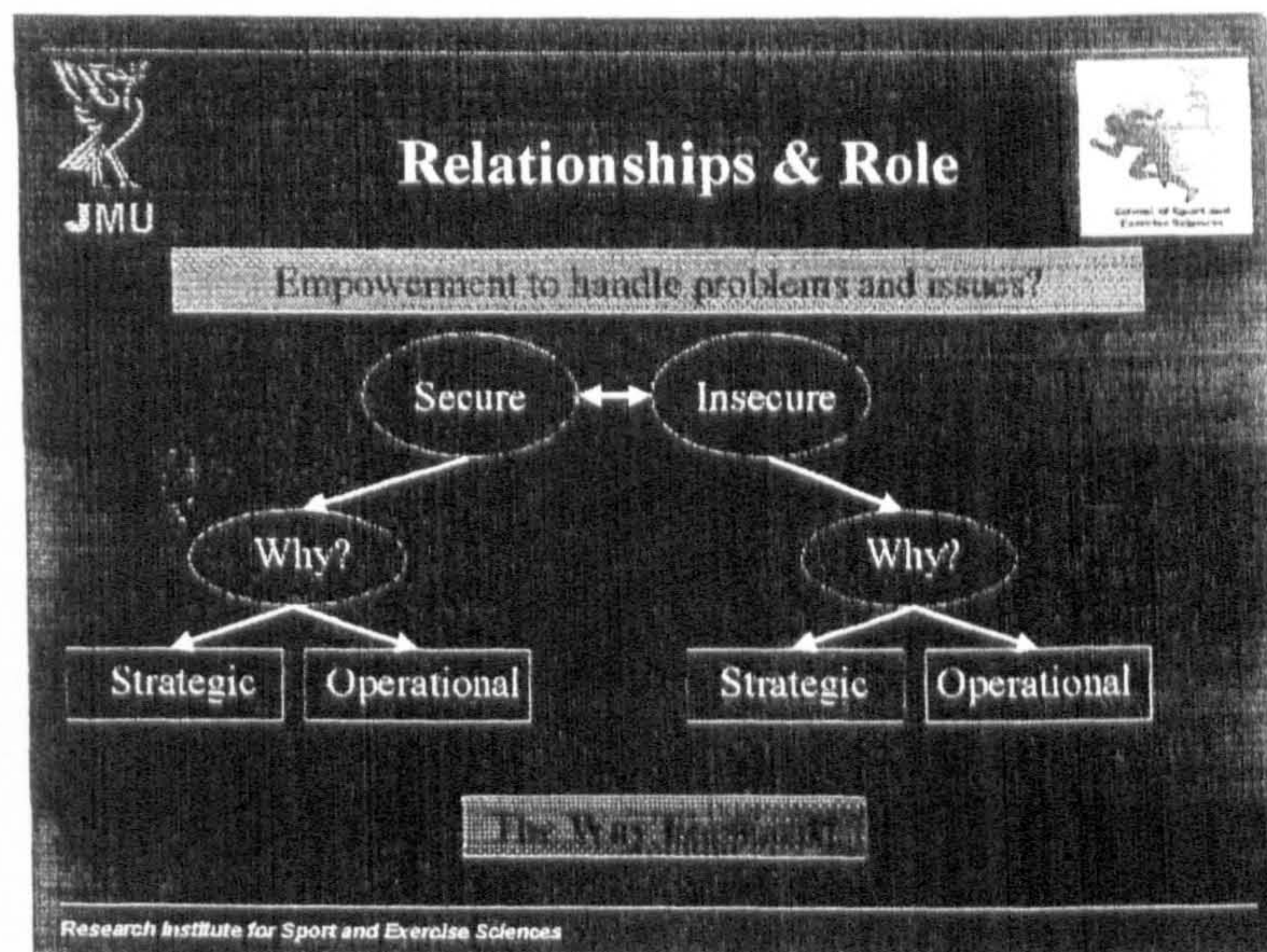
Aim: To identify how the relationships that exist between the Head of Education and Welfare (HoEW) and internal club staff, schools/FE/education providers and parents influence their relationship with the players. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Summation of Response:

It was recognised that the HoEWs need the support of the young player's parents (or guardian) to enable them to influence his educational motivation. There was a need to broker the school/college issue at times when parents may not have a complete grasp of, or commitment to the wider elements of the scholarship programme.

The HoEWs again identified the need for a flexible education programme to suit the needs of each individual player (i.e., educational needs and ultimately football needs). However, moral concerns were expressed with regard to the dangers of perceived favouritism (i.e., reducing the educational workload at appropriate times for boys who were *more likely* to make the grade) or discrimination (i.e., toward the boys *less likely* to make the grade).

Education was perceived as both a recruitment tool but also as '*football's conscience*'. Both these perceptions should be viewed as strategic opportunities to move the education agenda forward. It was evident that there were both operational and strategic benefits of empowering the boys to take responsibility for their own personal development (i.e., football and education).



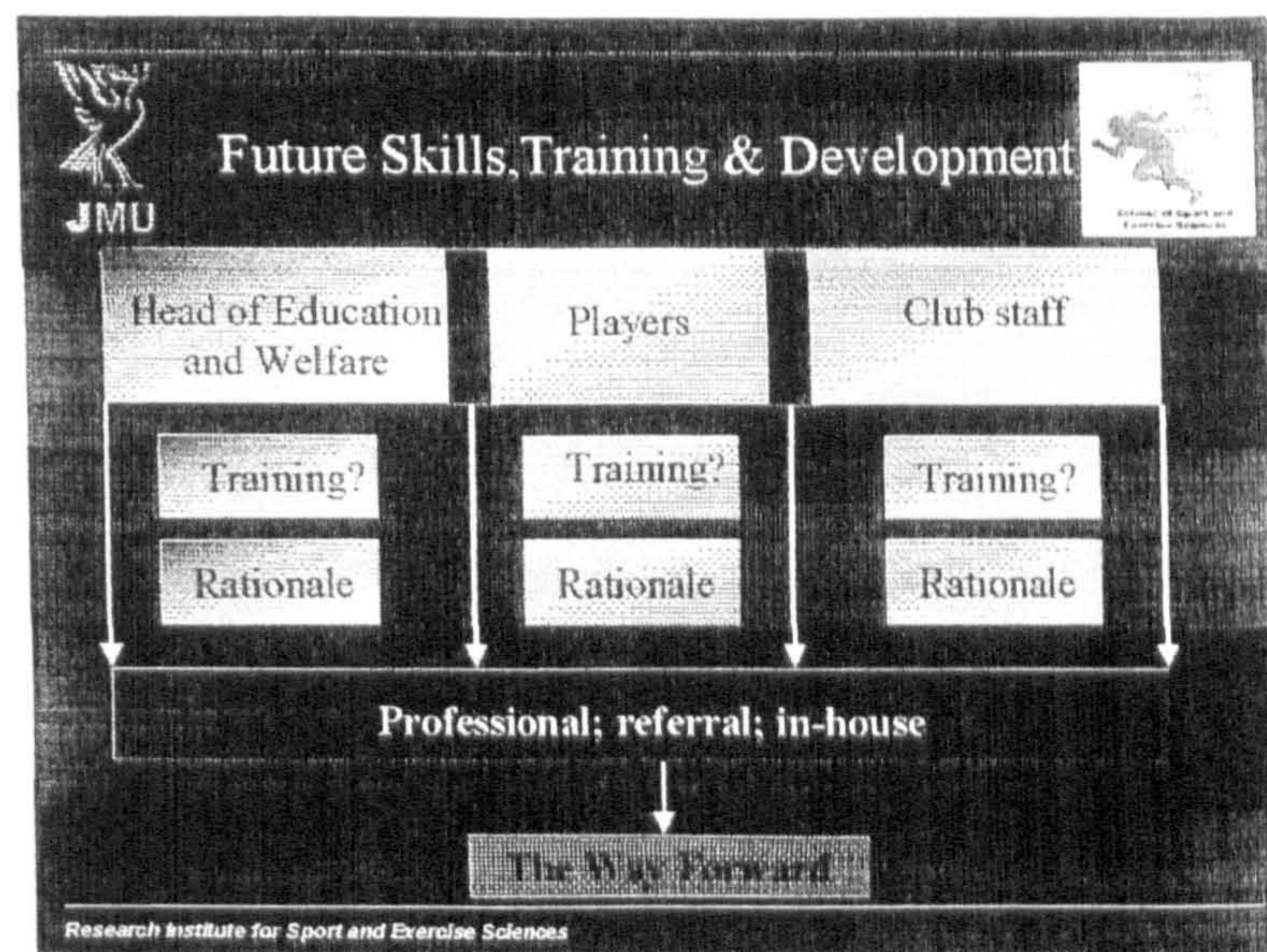
Aim: To explore and identify particular situations where the HoEW has felt both secure and/or insecure in their working practice. Identification of both strategic and operational processes is implicit. The slide also encourages the group to identify ways forward.

Summation of Response:

It was evident that empowerment of the HoEW role (i.e., ability to delegate and implement) was predominantly associated with their perceived 'key' responsibilities (e.g., child protection). This empowerment was also associated with the organisational and delegation skills of the HoEWs learned through teaching experience (i.e., craft skills).

Personal insecurity was apparent in establishing strategic change due to the perceived 'nuisance' value (e.g., change in traditional, comfortable procedures) of the HoEW. Insecurities also emerged from a sense that suggested ideas and/or changes were not being instigated. In addition, the operational demands of the role (i.e., the diversity of the role) could become overwhelming.

Contention and conflict of interests were expressed between the HoEW and the coaches, with regard to the 'the best interests of the boy' (i.e., the boy's general well-being being compromised by the pressures of performance).



Aim: To identify and rationalise key areas for training and development for HoEWs, players and club staff in order to enhance the working practice and/or environment of the HoEW. Identification of both strategic and operational processes was implicit.

Summation and Context of Response:

The HoEWs identified the need for generic staff development, with an explicit requirement to influence or instigate an *in-house* attitude change toward education. The wider issues incorporated a need for staff to appreciate the role of the HoEW (i.e., academy director and coaches). (e.g., shadowing of HoEW to appreciate role, away day).

The HoEWs identified the Academy Directors as the core elements in this strategic mission. The Academy Director needs to understand and promote the role of the HoEW within the Academy. Consequently, the HoEW should have more influence over and/or with the coaches, the young players and generic working practice.

There was an implicit recognition of the need to review and reflect on the meaning of the role within the wider scheme of things. This implied a strategic process that would therefore need the support and influence of the 'gatekeepers' in order to organise and implement such ideas and/or procedures.

Concern was expressed over *how* the HoEW could *realise* a strategic influence within the academy. Both operational and strategic mechanisms were identified. They recognised the need to involve, coerce, manipulate and convince significant others of the value of their role (i.e., the whole player experience not just education). It was even suggested that one should try to make procedures other peoples ideas (i.e., not just the remit of the HoEW), to reduce the fuelling of the perceived scepticism and nuisance factor of the role.