Coaches’ dispositions and non-formal learning situations: An analysis of the ‘Coach Talent Programme’.

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Abstract

Research which identifies and describes the learning situations coaches engage with often overlooks how coaches’ dispositions and the ‘learning cultures’ they occupy influences their opportunities for learning, limiting our understanding of what ‘works’ and for ‘whom’. Seven coaches from five sports were interviewed regarding their experiences of ‘The Coach Talent Programme’ (CTP); a non-formal learning situation consisting of cross-sport CPD workshops delivered by a UK County Sports Partnership. Data were analysed thematically, integrating Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology alongside Phil Hodkinson’s theory of ‘learning cultures’. Three themes were developed: (1) social interaction and cross-sport learning; (2) workshop content and online learning; and (3) tutor capital and the coaching field. The findings demonstrate how coaches’ ‘learning’ within non-formal situations varies significantly due to embodied dispositions, capital, and the social fields coaches are positioned within. Sports organisations would benefit from recognising the influence of these factors to develop transformative non-formal environments for coach learning.

Keywords: Continuing professional development, non-formal, coach learning, coach education, dispositions
Introduction and background

Understanding how best to facilitate and support coach learning has been a persistent area of interest for policy makers, coach educators and coaching scholars alike (Purdy 2018). The complexity of coaching has made it difficult to capture the everyday realities of practice in a relevant and meaningful manner when attempting to educate and develop coaching practitioners (Jones 2007). Nevertheless, the need to modernise and professionalise sports coaching through government led initiatives, such as the introduction of the UK Coaching Certificate¹, has been a significant factor behind the increased scholarly work into the fields of coach education, coach learning, and coach development (Piggott 2015; Taylor and Garratt 2010). It has been established that the process of learning to coach is idiosyncratic, where a blending of multiple learning situations contributes to an individual’s personal development (Lyle and Cushion 2017). Building upon the work of Coombs and Ahmed (1974), the learning situations coaches experience have traditionally been conceptualised as either formal, non-formal, or informal, with an explicit focus on formal and informal situations evident within the literature (Cushion et al. 2010; Nelson, Cushion, and Potrac 2006).

Traditional formal learning situations take the shape of certified courses delivered by sport governing bodies (SGBs). These courses have tended to involve the coaching process being deconstructed into a set of sequential and standardised components, with the ‘educational’ element argued to be more akin to a process of training or indoctrination whilst having a limited impact on coach learning (Cushion et al. 2010). Due to the restricted time a coach will devote to engaging with formal situations, informal sources such as practical coaching experience, interactions with other coaches, as well as previous athletic careers are seen to be more influential on coach learning (Cushion et al. 2010; Stoszkowski and Collins 2016). Sandwiched between formal and informal learning...
situations, non-formal learning situations refer to educational provision delivered by
SGBs outside of their formal coach education pathways. Non-formal learning situations
commonly refer to optional coaching workshops, interventions, or conferences on
designated content or themes. These situations are considered a form of continuing
professional development (CPD), where content is delivered to a select group of
individuals through condensed formats after initial certification (Cushion et al. 2010;
Nelson et al. 2006). It would seem at present the current evidence base is indecisive on
how to successfully implement meaningful non-formal CPD provision to enhance
practitioner learning (Griffiths, Armour, and Cushion 2016; Makopoulou 2017).

Much of the literature investigating how coaches learn to coach has centred on
describing and categorising the situations or experiences coaches encounter throughout
their career pathways (see Stodter and Cushion 2017). This mere identification of the
learning situations coaches engage with offers little in enhancing our understanding of
what works, why, and for whom in similar scenarios (Stodter and Cushion 2017). Such
descriptive accounts simplify learning by presenting it as a staged and linear process,
ignoring the significant influence of the social and cultural context of the ‘learning
situation’. Furthermore, the process of learning to coach has tended to be viewed through
the traditional metaphors of acquisition and participation (Cushion et al. 2010; Sfard
1998). These metaphors emphasise either the individual or social aspects of learning,
overlooking the role of power, culture, and the on-going re-construction of dispositions
through the life course (Hager and Hodkinson 2009). To overcome this, one avenue which
may enhance our understanding of the nuances of coach learning within non-formal
learning situations is through exploring coaches’ dispositions and the learning cultures
they are embedded within, helping to account for the complex interactions between the
learner and the learning context (Hodkinson, Biesta, and James 2008). According to the
sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 82/83), each individual possesses a habitus, understood as ‘a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix or perceptions, appreciations, and actions’. A disposition can be considered as an attitude or preference towards practice, reflecting a lived trajectory through variable social contexts (Bourdieu 1998). Individual dispositions shape and are re-shaped by cultural factors, with the term learning cultures adopted as a ‘way to understand a learning site as a practice constituted by the actions, dispositions and interpretations of the participants’ (Hodkinson, Biesta, and James 2007, 419).

Consequently, through investigating an individual’s dispositions towards both learning and coaching, alongside the different learning cultures they engage with, learning to coach can be appreciated as complex and multi-dimensional and part of a wider process of ‘becoming’ (Hodkinson et al. 2008). In adopting the metaphor of learning as ‘becoming’, learning can be seen as an active process, where individual dispositions are either reaffirmed or transformed. Indeed, an individual’s habitus can be considered an open set of dispositions which are subjected to and developed by new experiences throughout the life course (Bourdieu and Chartier 2015; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Learning is therefore a holistic, social, and embodied process, with the learner connected to their surrounding environment in an evolving way (Hager 2008).

Within the sports coaching literature, research has previously highlighted how cumulative coaching experience becomes embodied over time, influencing coaches’ dispositions towards practice and their subsequent coaching behaviours (e.g. Cushion and Jones 2014; Light and Evans 2013). However, little research has explicitly explored how individual dispositions and learning cultures influence coach learning and coaches’ engagement with offered learning opportunities, specifically within non-formal situations.
An exception to this is research by Griffiths and Armour (2013), who have conceptualised two broad dispositions coaches’ possess towards learning; intentionality (being open-minded, inquisitive, awareness of support) and reciprocity (importance of co-operation with others and accommodation of alternative views). Moreover, the influence of such dispositions upon coach learning within high performance workplace environments has been detailed further by Phelan and Griffiths (2018), who identify personal dispositions as a mediating factor that will impact upon a coach’s role perception and intentionality towards learning opportunities. Although Griffiths and Armour (2013) have begun to explore how coaches’ dispositions towards learning may potentially impact (or not) their engagement within formal learning situations i.e. certified coach education courses, our understanding of how individual dispositions and learning cultures might influence coaches’ experiences of non-formal learning situations (e.g. CPD workshops) remains less clear. Non-formal learning situations have been cited within the literature as one of the lowest preferred sources of knowledge for coaches across varying domains (see Stoszkowski and Collins 2016). Yet, the reasons for this low preference often fail to be adequately stated, whilst the influence of factors such as habitus, positions, and learning cultures remains an unknown quantity. Whilst some research has investigated sports coaches’ experiences of CPD workshops, this work has tended to come from the perspective of singular sports, i.e. basketball (see Falcão, Bloom, and Bennie 2017) and football (see Jacobs, Knoppers, Diekstra, and Skland 2015). These studies focus on coaches’ perceptions towards such workshops rather than providing evidence of dispositional changes to learning and the factors which significantly influence this process. Therefore, although insightful, these studies fail to acknowledge the reasons how and why coaches’ learning within the same non-formal situation or workshop might
differ. To overcome this, critical exploration of coaches’ experiences, dispositions and learning cultures could prove productive.

It would seem meaningful empirical research on the impact non-formal approaches have towards coach learning is limited at present (Cushion et al. 2010; Winchester, Culver, and Camiré 2013). Therefore, the aim of this research was to explore how coaches’ dispositions impacted upon their engagement with a cross-sport CPD programme delivered by a County Sports Partnership in the UK, entitled the ‘Coach Talent Programme’ (CTP). In building upon the work of Griffiths and Armour (2013) on volunteer sports coaches’ dispositions towards formal learning situations, this research sought to examine the individual differences of coach learning by examining coaches’ habitus, capital, and position within learning cultures as mediating factors towards analysing how non-formal learning situations are experienced. Thus, this research contributes to the field of coach learning by enhancing our understanding of how both agentic (dispositions, capital) and structural (learning cultures) factors influence coaches’ engagement (or not) with learning opportunities within non-formal learning situations. Thus, practitioners and SGBs will possess a more coherent understanding of what works, why, and for whom when looking to re-design meaningful non-formal CPD workshops to enhance coach learning (Stodter and Cushion 2017).

Methodology
Context
The Coach Talent Programme was coordinated and delivered by a County Sports Partnership in the Eastern region of England. The CTP aimed to provide coaches operating within the first selective environment of their sport an opportunity to access CPD opportunities at a local level in a cross-sport environment. Coaches were specifically identified by the County Sports Partnership and invited to attend the CTP
workshops. Since the programme’s inception, coaches have been provided with one workshop every three months delivered during weekday mornings. Each workshop has lasted approximately three hours, with on average 15-20 coaches in attendance. The workshops were held at accessible and convenient locations for the CTP members, such as a local sports centre and university. Each workshop had a designated theme (i.e. sport psychology, talent identification) and were delivered by a guest tutor who was often a practitioner working within the ‘elite sport coaching context’ (Trudel and Gilbert 2006, 522). Although classroom based, the workshops’ format was generally interactive involving group discussions, whilst providing coaches with the opportunity for questions and answers with the tutor about their experiences and learning.

In addition, the CTP developed an online platform to provide coaches with access to a website where they could further interact and share ideas. This online platform took the shape of a forum which allowed coaches to upload reflections regarding coaching related issues, whilst also being able to comment on other coaches’ posts. The CTP is driven by two main aims: (1) to develop a culture of continuous self-learning and cross-sport learning; and (2) to create a perceived change in coaches’ performance or results. Due to being delivered to a sub-group of cross-sport coaches outside of formal or certified frameworks (i.e. in the form of short, irregular CPD workshops), the CTP was viewed as a non-formal learning situation for the attending coaches (Coombs and Ahmed 1974; Nelson et al. 2006).

Procedure and sampling
This research was positioned within the interpretivist paradigm, adopting a relativist ontology with the view that social reality is subjective and multifaceted, along with a subjectivist epistemology, assuming the knower and the known are co-constructed together (Creswell 2013; Sparkes and Smith 2014). The County Sports Partnership
provided the research team with contact details of all coaches who were recognised as members of the CTP. A convenience-based sampling approach was employed, meaning any coach within the CTP who agreed to take part in the research was recruited (Sparkes and Smith 2014). In total, seven coaches from five sports who had been coaching on average for 19.7 years (range 6 to 30 years) were involved in the research. Coaches varied between both full and part-time coaching roles, however all stated they were participating in paid coaching employment at the time of contact. Variation occurred in how long the coaches suggested they had been attending the CTP’s workshops, with the average time being 3.7 years (Table 1).

Following ethical approval from the authors’ institution, the seven coaches took part in semi-structured interviews, conducted either face-to-face at a convenient location for the participant (n = 4) or over the telephone (n = 3). Interviews lasted on average for 41 minutes and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the lead author. A combination of both face-to-face and telephone interviews provided a flexible and productive way to gain insight into coaches’ learning experiences, helping to develop detailed description (Smith and Sparkes 2016). Specifically, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted using a pre-planned interview guide to help facilitate focused but open-ended questions (Smith and Sparkes 2016). The interview guide helped direct the interaction between the researcher and the coaches, whilst the semi-structured nature helped to steer the interviews in evolving directions as the conversations progressed (Sparkes and Smith 2014). Primarily, the interviews were structured around four main areas: (1) coaches’ demographic and background information; (2) coaches’ general learning and experiences/perceptions of the CTP; (3) impact of the CTP’s workshop content and format; and (4) suggested improvements and overall review.
Data analysis

Thematic analysis is a method which helps to organise and describe data through a thorough process of analysis and interpretation (Sparkes and Smith 2014). Due to its capacity to produce nuanced, robust, and interpretative analysis, this research employed a thematic analysis procedure that followed Braun and Clarkes’ (2006) six-phase model. Thematic analysis should be seen as an interactive analytical process, influenced by theoretical assumptions, disciplinary knowledge, and the content of the data itself (Braun, Clarke, and Weate 2016). Initially, the lead author familiarised himself with the interview transcripts by thoroughly reading and re-reading all data items, becoming immersed with the data’s principle content. The data were then coded both inductively and deductively to identify passages of interest, with the codes collated and organised into ‘higher-level’ candidate patterns and themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). The flexibility and adaptability of thematic analysis enabled social interpretations of the data to occur, with Bourdieusian concepts and the work of Hodkinson supporting the coding process and representing the deductive element of the analytical process (Sparkes and Smith 2014). Developed themes highlighted noteworthy aspects of the data and were relevant to the research questions, with each theme reviewed, refined, and named appropriately (Braun et al. 2016). Finally, the write up phase occurred, viewed as an integral analytical step, influenced significantly by the researcher’s position and demonstrates a combination of analytical narrative and illustrative data extracts (Braun and Clarke 2006). A key element of qualitative research are the subjective and unique experiences of the participants under study, however the subjectivities of the researcher cannot be overlooked, as these will influence how research is both conducted and analysed (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Therefore, it is acknowledged that the thematic analysis process, intertwined with the theoretical perspectives of both
Bourdieu and Hodkinson, was not benign but instead influenced by the dispositional preferences and habitus of the lead author.

**Results and Discussion**

The aim of this research was to explore how coaches’ dispositions impacted upon their engagement with a cross-sport CPD programme delivered by a County Sports Partnership in the UK, entitled the ‘Coach Talent Programme’ (CTP). Through the thematic analysis procedure, three themes were developed: (1) social interaction and cross-sport learning; (2) workshop content and online learning; and (3) tutor capital and the coaching field.

The social theory of Pierre Bourdieu and its more recent application by Phil Hodkinson and colleagues on ‘learning cultures’ are used as analytical tools to assist in understanding the influence of dispositions on the embodied process of learning to coach.

**Social interaction and cross-sport learning**

In understanding learning as a cultural endeavour, the phrase learning cultures is used to describe ‘the social practices through which people learn’ (Hodkinson et al. 2008, 34).

Both Joseph and Mick explain how the CTP facilitated group discussions and collaborative interaction via the use of group-based social practices.

Very often we get given a subject matter and split off into groups of 4 or 5, we’ll all have some input on this, scribbling up onto a chart or whatever. That is useful, a quick exchange of ideas then a round up within the room (Joseph, fencing).

Some will have tasks involved, so working in groups on task-based activities, which is good. One which was very good was really interactive, you could try out some things… it’s always good to break off into groups and then
you get more of a chance to talk in your groups and start discussions on a cross-
sport basis (Mick, table tennis).

Learning cultures which permit social practices such peer discussions and interactions
with other coaches are deemed invaluable by coaches to help share experiences and ideas
they can implement in their practice (Bertram, Culver, and Gilbert 2017; Nelson,
Cushion, and Potrac 2013). Stanley (table tennis) highlights this when explaining his
motives for attending the workshops: ‘making contacts with other coaches…so becoming
part of a network and sharing experiences’. This sentiment was echoed by Mick (table
tennis) in suggesting: ‘the most beneficial things to me are firstly, picking up bits and
ideas from experienced speakers and the second one is spending time with coaches from
other sports’. These extracts highlight the importance of collaboration and social
interaction between coaches within non-formal coach development workshops. This
perception is echoed within the literature, where facilitating the exchange of new ideas
and practices is deemed pivotal for effective CPD provision (Armour and Yelling 2004).
The importance of collaboration was identified by Andy (table tennis) and Sidney
(triathlon) through demonstrating the learning disposition of reciprocity, which captures
the ‘importance of cooperation and mutual exchange between individual and context’
(Griffiths and Armour 2013, 684).

I think you always pick up something. You also learn from all the issues all the
other coaches face and quite often they are the same for whatever sport you do.
I think they’re great (Andy, table tennis).

You can't you can't put a value on it. Even if you were there just for 10 minutes
listening to one question, or open floor discussions, it’s very valuable. Because
even if you do know everything, which I don't think anyone does, you will still
come away with even a five minute discussion that you’d think, “Oh, do you
know what? That actually did hit home on me” (Sidney, triathlon).

It would appear the learning culture and associated social practices of the CTP workshops,
in conjunction with coaches’ preference and dispositions towards dialogic collaboration,
mediated social interaction amongst the attending cross-sport coaches. In addition to
coaches demonstrating the disposition of reciprocity within their habitus, alternative
dispositions were identified which influenced how coaches took advantage of the learning
opportunities available to them within the workshops. It has been suggested by Griffiths
and Armour (2013) that being inquisitive and open-minded can be characterised as an
intentionality learning disposition, which influences how coaches perceive and attain
value towards available learning opportunities. Consequently, through being open-
minded and showing curiosity towards learning from cross-sport coaches, the disposition
of intentionality impacted upon some coaches’ perceptions of the value the CTP had on
their development.

I wanted to go into it and just be very open. Shut my mouth and listen, and absorb
as much as I can from other people’s experience. I certainly like to try to go in
there with a very open mind. It's like going to school, isn't it? You’re in a
classroom… Everyone's got their own unique thing to bring so I think that it’s
important to come to the workshops open (Sidney, triathlon).

I’m interested in learning and that's what I go for because I just consider myself
so open to learn. Although I’ve probably got more experience than most
people, there is always something to learn. Certainly, my experience in coaching
is it doesn't stand still. Continuously developing and changing the way you do
things because nothing works the same with everybody (Claire, tennis).
I try to keep an open mind. I suppose there are times when you go “hmm”. But experience tells you to hear it out. We all like to be right, but experience tells you that sometimes you’re wrong. You might come out and say, “told you so” but at least you’ve heard it through (Joseph, fencing).

I like to hear from coaches. I think coaching generally is something that needs to be expanded. People tend to be quite narrow-minded in what they do. It's useful to learn from other coaches in other sports to see where I can use something from another sport into my sport (Jesse, hockey).

In drawing upon Hodkinson and colleagues’ (2008) cultural theory of learning, we can begin to see that the connection between the learning culture of the CTP workshops and coaches’ reciprocity and intentionality dispositions enabled social interaction and group collaboration practices to be perceived as meaningful learning endeavours (Griffiths and Armour 2013; Hodkinson et al. 2008). These findings help illuminate the importance of individual dispositions developed through the life course in shaping coaches’ engagement within non-formal learning situations. Coaches’ horizons for learning and embodied dispositions allowed them to ‘see’ what learning possibilities were afforded to them within the CTP’s learning culture (Barker-Ruchti, Barker, Rynne, and Lee 2016). Learning cultures offer different opportunities to learn for those within them. Accordingly, the learning culture of the CTP provided cross-sport coaches with learning prospects their primary sports’ culture might not be able to provide (Hodkinson et al. 2008; Nash, Sproule, and Horton 2016). This aspect was expressed in greater depth by Claire and Jesse.

I think you just always pick up something and people who don't go because they feel “that's not my sport, what have I got to learn from cycling, or rowing or
whatever”, I think that's very narrow-minded… I'm quite happy to go along and I want to pick up things from other sports they find that they've done well, things that they find really useful within their programme, their coaching journey… (Claire, tennis).

It's like everything else that’s new. “Oh, I don't know what it is, so I don't want to go.” Maybe it's getting the message across about what these things are. It's not just focusing on that particular sport, of that session, it's looking at the bigger coaching aspect. I think it also comes down to coaches having a very blinkered outlook sometimes. “Oh, it’s not my sport, I don’t want to know anything about it.” That's a problem… from a coaching point of view, you should get those blinkers off and look across other sports (Jesse, hockey).

These findings echo recent literature which has established coaches are open to embracing experiences from individuals outside of their sport’s milieu, potentially overcoming issues with their primary sport’s educational provision (Nash et al. 2016). All sports have their own entrenched cultures which subsequently mediate learning and knowledge, endorsing certain practices and behaviours within SGB coach education and CPD provision (Barker-Ruchti et al. 2016; Townsend and Cushion 2015). Fields can be viewed as social arenas of shared activity (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), with institutions such as SGBs examples of social fields coaches are positioned within. Learning cultures as social practices within SGB fields work in accordance to normalising expectations, governing what ‘good’ learning might entail for individuals such as sports coaches (Hodkinson et al. 2007). Bourdieu (1990, 68) refers to these normalising beliefs as doxa, defined as ‘the immediate adherence that is established in practice between a habitus and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense’.
Coaches operate within multiple learning cultures and fields of practice. Therefore, the learning cultures of CTP participants’ primary sport and their associated SGB social fields might influence coaches’ dispositions towards other professional development opportunities and what they perceive ‘good’ learning to entail. Sidney (triathlon) supports this view:

Within our sports we get very blinkered… to put away the knowledge of the sport and look at the formats of coaching, there's no other CPD stuff for you to be able to do that’ (Sidney, triathlon)

Moreover, Stanley (table tennis) believed the cross-sport environment and learning culture of the CTP workshops provided greater freedom for coaches to really express their perspectives on coaching:

I think people are scared to say what they are doing in case they are doing something wrong… so, if it is from other sports there is a bit more freedom to say, I do this, I do that (Stanley, table tennis).

Coaches will have experienced and engaged with their own sport’s ‘learning culture’, which in turn may have prevented or constrained their ability to learn from cross-sport coaches through the promoted doxa of that SGB’s field. Therefore, non-formal learning situations such as the CTP which draws in cross-sport coaches, might provide an arena to challenge the orthodoxy which prevails within particular sporting sub-cultures and fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). As such, non-formal learning situations in this manner provide a medium to exchange ideas, re-working coaches’ dispositions and permitting meaningful coach learning to occur. Through engagement with the CTP’s learning culture and associated social practices, new possibilities for learning from cross-sport coaches became available for the attending coaches.
Workshop content and online learning

It has been acknowledged that for CPD to have a significant impact on participant learning, the educational content needs to be perceived as relevant by learners and recognise the nuances of practice (Nelson et al. 2013). In adopting the Bourdieusian concept of habitus, described as ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions’ (Bourdieu 1990, 53), it is possible to understand how exposure to cultures and fields within education, training and employment contexts may alter an individual’s dispositions (towards learning or coaching) and consequently impact upon their future practice (Costa and Murphy 2015). For coaches such as Joseph (fencing), the perceived relevancy in terms of the CTP workshops’ themes and content enabled adjustments and developments to occur to his current dispositions towards coaching practice.

To a greater or lesser degree, they are relevant. Very often they are thought provoking… you come away thinking “I never really thought about that”… You’ll go away and be mulling over things for days afterwards until it all sinks in… Very often you’ve got ideas, but you get a slightly different slant on the ideas, so it develops them a lot. I think that’s the important bit. It’s not totally new, but it gives you a new perspective (Joseph, fencing).

Mick (table tennis) expands upon this notion and provides an example of how dispositional changes within his habitus has enabled him to “perform acts of practical knowledge” with regards to his current and future coaching practice (Bourdieu 2000, 138).

There are certainly a couple of things I do differently… I mentioned the psychology one before. We now sit down with each player and when we are doing goal-setting, we use some of those ideas to see how they react to them basically.
But yeah from that point of view we have. But certainly, as always with these courses some of the bits won’t be overly relevant to what I do but I can still learn from that as a coach (Mick, table tennis).

Habitus helps to express how the individual is social, presenting learning as an embodied process exemplified through the metaphor of ‘becoming’. Here, a coach’s habitus and subsequent dispositions towards learning and coaching might be ‘confirmed, developed, challenged or changed’ through interaction with learning cultures (Hodkinson et al. 2008, 39). Using Bourdieu’s conceptual tools enables a more nuanced understanding of how coaches’ habitus along with the learning culture of non-formal learning situations, may influence the process of learning to coach through dispositional changes (Bourdieu 1990; Griffiths and Armour 2013). As Hodkinson et al. (2007, 425) signify ‘Bourdieu himself was quite clear that the dispositions which make up a person’s habitus can and do change. We would argue that learning is one major mechanism what can bring about such change’. However, in the case of Stanley (table tennis), his existing dispositions towards coaching within his habitus were merely confirmed as opposed to being significantly developed.

Interviewer: So, would you say you have gained new knowledge from being part of the programme or has it been reaffirming what you already know from other sources?

Stanley: Maybe 10-20% new knowledge.

Interviewer: So, the rest has been just topping up?

Stanley: Yeah, it’s just been about reaffirming some of the things… At times, the topics are stuff that you know, but it just reminds you more of it. Just awareness
really. It sews the seed to probably go away and investigate that area a bit more.

In terms of coaching development, not really.

From Stanley’s perspective, although his existing dispositions and beliefs towards practice which form his habitus seem to be reaffirmed, he still experienced a form of ‘learning’ through engagement and participation within the CTP’s non-formal workshops and subsequent learning culture. Nonetheless, if dispositions remain unchallenged or stagnant, individuals may struggle to articulate what they learnt from attending non-formal educational provision, despite perceiving them to be of value. Andy (table tennis) highlights this by suggesting: ‘I think they are really useful, but if you ask me “what did you take from them?” Then it’s hard to pinpoint’. Although Bourdieu argues dispositions are embodied and largely tacit, there is a recognition that individuals possess a degree of agentic reflection in which they can consider new material. This is explained by Hodkinson et al. (2008, 40) who propose ‘learning is more than the subconscious transformation of our dispositions. We learn not only by doing but also by reflecting upon what we do and by consciously monitoring our actions’. Through reflecting upon their underlying beliefs and the espoused workshop content, Joseph and Mick provide evidence of dispositional changes towards their coaching, whilst Stanley did not. Thus, despite the fact coaches may engage with the same learning cultures, there is no guarantee their dispositions towards learning or a phenomenon (such as coaching) will develop in the same way.

When coaches engage with learning situations several individual factors impact upon whether new knowledge is either adopted, modified, or rejected (see Stodter and Cushion 2017). A key determinant of this, as already alluded to, will be a coaches’ developed dispositions and mediating habitus. Further analysis highlighted how for
coaches such as Jesse, their horizons for learning set the boundaries of what learning was possible and identifiable within a non-formal learning situation (Hodkinson et al. 2008).

The biggest barrier? Hmm I suppose it’s identifying easily where I can pick something out, and take it, and use it possibly… It may be the content of the session, actually saying “yeah, I can hone in on that bit and take it away”. In the session, it's often got a route to go down, so how do you take something off that route? (Jesse, hockey).

Over time, Jesse’s habitus has developed ‘meaning-giving perceptions’ (Bourdieu 1984, 170), attempting to ‘pick out’ information and knowledge espoused from the CTP workshops’ which matches his pre-existing dispositions and beliefs, arbitrating the process of coach learning. For Jesse, a reproduction and confirmation of underlying dispositions towards coaching practice ultimately transpired through a cherry-picking process, with new or unknown concepts ignored and not embodied within his habitus (Griffiths and Armour 2013; Hodkinson et al. 2008; Stodter and Cushion 2017).

Hodkinson et al. (2008, 39) advocate ‘a person’s dispositions can enable or facilitate some forms of learning, whilst inhibiting or preventing others’. Within this research, coaches’ dispositions and their engagement within their SGB’s social field influenced their engagement (or not) with the online forum developed by the CTP, designed to encourage lasting communication outside of physical attendance. Coaches are becoming more open to the use of online support mechanisms to enhance their learning, due to the increased accessibility of the internet and coaches’ preference for informality (Trudel, Culver, and Werthner 2013). Yet, the analysis offered contradictory results, signifying the online forum was not exploited by any of the interviewed coaches. Jesse (hockey) exemplifies this: ‘I'm aware of it but I haven't utilised it… I think it would
be useful. It’s like everything else, its time’. Logistical issues such as time have
previously been cited as a potential reason why online forums may not be effective for
coach learning (Stoszkowski, Collins, and Olsson 2017). Nevertheless, coaches’
developed dispositions and embodied experiences from SGB fields may prove significant
in explaining the reasons behind the limited online engagement.

I wouldn't do all those blogs or the online stuff anyway… it gets a bit too much
then. If I really want to do all those things then I’m 24/7 on every website… There
are other things like Twitter that connects coaches, if you really look for those
things, there’s loads of things going on (Andy, table tennis).

From my experience of my Level 3 coaching course we have a closed page, but
very few people post in there or expose themselves to what they are doing. There
seems to be a fear of exposing what they are doing in case there’s a gap in their
knowledge or they are doing something wrong… it seems people are scared to put
stuff on there (Stanley, table tennis).

In the case of Andy, his horizons for action, how personal dispositions influence future
activities, potentially elucidates why he failed to perceive the online platform as a
significant opportunity for learning, with time constraints and an acknowledgment of
other sources proving influential (Barker-Rucht et al. 2016). Likewise, Stanley’s
previous experiences of a SGB learning culture potentially impacted upon his own and
other coaches’ dispositions, revealing the fear of being scrutinised was a potential reason
behind the online forum’s limited utilisation (Stoszkowski et al. 2017). An individual’s
habitus is shaped through lasting exposure within fields of practice, with dispositions
becoming embodied and evident in practice (Bourdieu 1990). Hence, through
engagement and exposure to their primary sport’s social field and associated doxa, some
coaches arrived at the CTP with deep-rooted dispositions towards online learning, significantly influencing their decisions to engage (or not) with that afforded learning opportunity. Cushion and Townsend (2018, 16) have recently argued that technology enhanced learning can provide environments that enable ‘individuals to address unique learning interests and needs relevant to coaches’ individual contexts, study multiple levels of coaching complexity, and deepen understanding of reflective practices’. Therefore, non-formal learning situations and their distinctive learning cultures may provide a social space for coach developers to promote and facilitate the use of technology enhanced learning, away from some sport’s doxic formal coach education provision coaches may have experienced previously.

**Tutor capital and the coaching field**

Learning cultures are permeated by wider social fields, with Bourdieu (1990, 98) describing fields as ‘structured systems of social positions within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over resources, stakes and access’. Individuals and social groups are positioned in fields based upon the volume of capital they possess, with capital considered a form of power operationalised principally as being economic, cultural, and social (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu 1998). These forms of capital can become symbolic when they are perceived as significant by those within that designated field. An appreciation of the influence wider social fields can have on local learning cultures helps to locate power relations within the holistic process of coach learning (Hodkinson et al. 2008).

Attendance at non-formal learning situations such as CPD workshops is often determined by who delivers the session, with coaches respecting workshop tutors who possess extensive knowledge and practical experience (Nelson et al. 2013; Winchester et al. 2013). Despite Trudel et al. (2013, 381) arguing the decision on who delivers non-
formal workshops ‘has to be judicious and cannot be based purely on sport experiences’,
the CTP’s workshops were generally tutored by full-time coaches who operate within
elite sporting contexts such as professional sport clubs or work with Olympic/Paralympic
athletes. These individuals were described as ‘very experienced people within their
sphere’ by Joseph (fencing), with the analysis suggesting that some coaches attended the
workshops they were invited to purely based upon the tutor delivering the session.
Seemingly, the opportunity to network with cross-sport coaches and gain knowledge via
the workshop’s theme were considered inferior by Claire and Jesse.

I think they've had really good speakers. I think really good quality speakers. I
am not bothered about who else is there to network to be honest… I
suppose I’m going for the experience of the person who’s up there more than
perhaps local experiences (Claire, tennis).

The theme is not the key driver. It's “I’ve heard of that person, I'd be interested to
hear what they say”. Some people probably need to understand what the theme
is, but it's not so important the theme, it's more important the individual who's
presenting it possibly (Jesse, hockey).

The sports coaching field bestows symbolic capital upon coaches possessing practitioner
knowledge/experience (embodied cultural capital), along with connections to elite
sporting individuals or institutions (social capital). Sports coaches are disposed to
‘valorise practitioner knowledge’ and experience (Cushion, Griffiths, and Armour 2017, 1)
over alternative educational credentials, potentially explaining why the symbolic
capital possessed by the workshop tutors was fundamental in dictating coaches’
attendance at the CTP workshops. Bourdieu’s concept of doxa demonstrates how fields
can develop ‘a set of shared opinions and unquestioned beliefs that bind participants
together’ (Wacquant 2008, 70). An individual’s thoughts and dispositions may evolve and reshape after engagement with a field’s doxa. In this research, through being positioned within the wider sports coaching field and experiencing its associated doxa (the valorisation of practitioner experience), some coaches had developed dispositions that distinguished what they believe ‘good’ learning constitutes (Bourdieu 1998). In the case of Claire and Jesse, their embodied dispositions and habitus may have orientated them towards perceiving the opportunity to hear from elite coaches as ‘good learning’ at the expense of social interaction with other coaches and the CTP workshops' designated theme. Jesse (hockey) provides further evidence on the importance of coaches’ dispositions towards learning from tutors who embody the required symbolic capital.

I think you’ve got to have someone at that level to attract people. If you just had “Johnny Smith” from some hockey club down the road you wouldn't get people there. I think it has to be national level, or you know Premiership level, because otherwise, you won't get the people in… You need to have the elitist… not just the grassroots locals. Otherwise, you spend half the time not learning anything (Jesse, hockey).

Learning cultures have the potential to be influenced through a combination of dispositions, capital, and the position individuals behold within a learning culture (Hodkinson et al. 2008). Consequently, coaches’ dispositions towards what ‘good’ learning entails along with the capital and position of the tutors had an influence on the learning culture of the CTP workshops, regardless of whether this influence was intended or not (Hodkinson et al. 2008). The extracts provided within this study are illustrative of this factor, highlighting how learning cultures and non-formal learning situation may be permeated by the doxa of wider social fields, with the symbolic capital tutors possess significant in structuring legitimate knowledge (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).
In adopting the theoretical concept of learning cultures, we can begin to understand more succinctly the relationship between how people learn and the context or setting in which they learn (Hodkinson et al. 2007). Therefore, in focusing on how social practices influence individual learning, our findings suggest that the opportunity to learn from tutors embodying the requisite symbolic capital was made possible by the CTP’s learning culture. However, the possibility for learning to occur was equal for all coaches. For some coaches’ their embodied dispositions guided their attendance at the workshops to specifically exploit this opportunity, but at the expense of neglecting the value of interacting with other coaches and utilising online learning resources.

**Conclusion**

Bourdieu (2000, 136) has argued that ‘to deny the existence of acquired dispositions, in the case of living beings, is to deny the existence of learning’. Consequently, this research has explored how coaches’ experiences of non-formal learning situations, such as CPD workshops, are significantly influenced by their developed dispositions, in conjunction with the learning cultures and wider social fields they are engaged with (Bourdieu 1990; Hodkinson et al. 2008). To date, research on non-formal CPD workshops has overlooked the influence of dispositional changes towards coach learning (see Falcão et al. 2017; Jacobs et al. 2015), or merely stated whether they are a preferred source of knowledge acquisition (Stoszkowski and Collins 2016). Thus, the significance of this research lays with its ability to illuminate how individual differences in learning within non-formal situations are mediated through the interacting elements of learning dispositions, coaches’ habitus, and the learning cultures of CPD workshops. By merging the conceptual tools of Pierre Bourdieu along with Hodkinson and colleagues’ (2007, 2008) work on cultural learning, it is argued learners within non-formal situations cannot be viewed as isolated empty vessels. Instead, we develop the understanding that learning to coach is social,
embodied, and part of a wider process of becoming, where dispositions towards coaching can be re-constructed through engagement with non-formal learning situations. In moving away from a focus on formal coach education, this research provides further evidence that non-formal learning situations are significant for coach learning, with both learning cultures and dispositions proving influential in structuring the potential for individual learning within the same social space (Hodkinson et al. 2008).

Crucially, this research highlights the need for SGBs who provide non-formal learning situations to recognise ‘the influence of dispositions on how coaches act and organise new knowledge’ (Griffiths and Armour 2013, 686). Moreover, the use of specific tutors is an important consideration for SGBs designing and developing non-formal learning situations. The capital of individuals within learning cultures and indeed any social field can dictate what is considered as legitimate knowledge. It is therefore proposed that SGBs should attempt to account for coaches’/teachers’/sports practitioners’ dispositions prior to attending delivered educational provision. Through this enhanced understanding, it might be possible to design transformative CPD provision that has the potential to modify the dispositions and the beliefs of the attending learners. SGB coach developers and tutors through their possession of symbolic capital, may help to restructure more expansive learning environments by utilising cross-sport non-formal learning situations to overcome the doxic cultures embedded within sports. Future research should consider in greater depth the impact that expansive cross-sport CPD workshops might have on enhancing coaching practice and promoting innovative approach towards developing coaches i.e. technology enhanced learning.

Nevertheless, it should be recognised that engagement with non-formal learning situations such as CPD workshops is not a means-to-an-end for coach learning. Experiences both within and outside of a learning situation will take precedence and
structure individual dispositions and positions within social fields (Hager and Hodkinson 2009). In any learning situation, there are always opportunities to learn; however, these opportunities will fluctuate with learners’ dispositions being either developed or confirmed through engagement with the learning culture (Hodkinson et al. 2008). Through this notion, we suggest ‘a person [coach] is constantly learning through becoming, and becoming through learning’ (Hodkinson et al. 2008, 41; insertion added). In encompassing the metaphor of becoming which presents learning as a continual, transformative, and embodied process, it is appropriate to leave the final word to Joseph (hockey) who articulates: ‘I think the one thing you are going to have to go away with is that you never stop learning’.

Notes

1. The UK Coaching Certificate (UKCC) is a framework that supports the development, endorsement, and improvement of SGB delivered coach education.
2. County Sports Partnerships are networks of local organisations and agencies aimed at improving sporting opportunities and experiences at a regional level. Across England there are 44 County Sports Partnerships, who work together with other partners such as SGB’s to improve the workforce development of coaches, clubs, and volunteers.
3. Coaches working within the ‘First Selective Environment’ refers to the ‘entry level’ of the talent pathway within that sport. Although variable, generally it will refer to coaches who are working with county, district or regional athletes.
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References


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