A(nother) conceptual model for coach learning

revisiting and revising Schön's 'reflective practitioner'

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"The standards implied in common behaviour are themselves open to criticism and it is the task of the philosopher to provide such criticism, and not to be satisfied with popularity." (Feyerabend, 1981: p. 204)

Outline

1. Appraisal of present situation (in research and practice)
2. Revisiting Schön
3. Revising Schön
4. Illustrations of potential (LBU, PL, UEFA)

Critical evaluation of the research

- Reflection as an important component of coach learning
- Descriptive in nature (e.g. how do model/ undergraduate/postgraduate coaches reflect?)
- Uncritical adoption of basic taxonomies and models (sometimes wrong e.g. Schön and RIA/ROA/RFA)
- No clear theory of learning through reflection is offered
- Little value for designers of coach education programmes!

From a recent review (Huntley et al., 2014)

"there is perhaps no longer a need to argue in favour or convince sport professions as to the benefit of reflective practice" (p. 873)

"we believe that the *'how to' of reflective practice has not been sufficiently addressed in sport.* Therefore, more appropriate education on and pedagogical approaches to reflective practice is required for practitioners, educators and supervisors of the future…" (my emphasis) (p. 874)

Revisiting Schön (1983, 1987)

- Theory of learning in minor professions
- Contrasts technical rationality (high, hard ground) with reflection-in-action (swampy lowlands)
- Based on 'idealized descriptions' (1987 p. 29) of practice in architecture, counseling, town planning
- Abstracts to a theory of learning through 'reflection-in-action' or 'professional artistry' (with a similar epistemological process to Popperian science)
- Does not explore necessary conditions for RIA

Learning to reflect? (Piggott & Ashford, 2014)

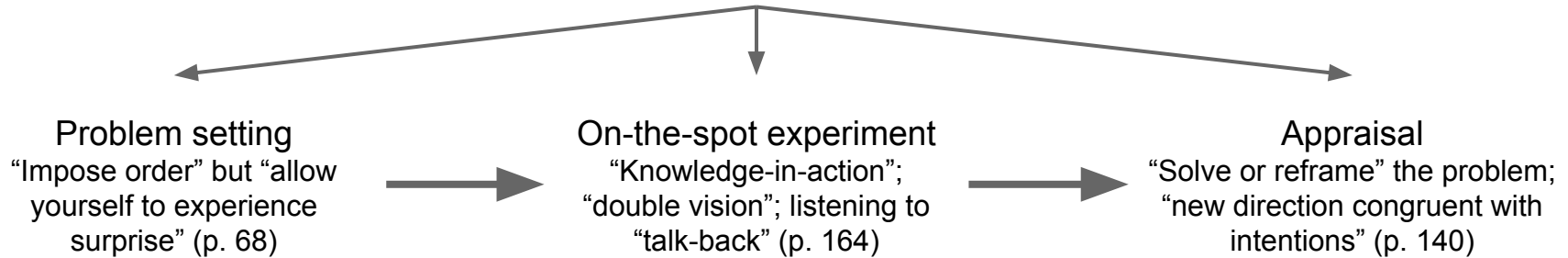| The task	Results of analysis	Conclusions...	
38 Level 5 undergraduate students 120-hour placement Reflect on experience in Blog posts (approx. 500 words per post) Synoptic engagement assessed on 'level of reflection' achieved	Blog posts analysed deductively against Schon's model i.e. how many students demonstrated RIA? Only 10% of students stated clear expectations and reflected explicitly on theories informing action	Students lacked basic capacities required to engage in reflection Largely due to lack of experience: ● Expectations ● Knowing-in-action ● Lack of alternative ideas for on-the-spot experiments	Do students simply need more experience...? Or can we actively intervene to accelerate experience?

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Properties of a good theory

Adapted from Popper (1934/1959) and Lakatos (1970)

1. When paired with initial conditions, enables prediction of future events (bold)
2. Explains more facts than rival theories, in fewer statements (parsimonious)
3. Possible to specify conditions under which theory would be rejected (testable)

Revising Schön

REFLECTION-IN-ACTION

Problem setting
"Impose order" but "allow yourself to experience surprise" (p. 68)

On-the-spot experiment
"Knowledge-in-action"; "double vision"; listening to "talk-back" (p. 164)

Appraisal
"Solve or reframe" the problem; "new direction congruent with intentions" (p. 140)

> Have clear expectations (envisage outcomes)
> Observational/perceptual skills to notice clashes

> Sufficient knowledge-in-action (double vision)
> Confidence to try it out

> Ability to gather accurate 'talk-back' (video, mentor)
> Time to weigh intended/unintended cons.

Prerequisite capacities for 'reflection-in-action' **OR** "the 'how to' of reflective practice" [in addition to motivation, experienced others, time, criticality - e.g. Peel et al., 2013]

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From description to prescription?

i.e. how can we accelerate learning through RIA?

Learning through professional practice is accelerated when practitioners have*:

1) a clear 'horizon of expectations' against which to observe clashes (with reality) and set problems;

2) sufficient 'knowledge-in-action' (different to knowledge) to generate, and confidence to conduct, an effective on-the-spot experiment;

3) ability to maintain 'double-vision' and listen to situational 'talk-back';

4) the time and ability to 'objectively' weigh the intended and unintended consequences of experiments and a willingness to change.

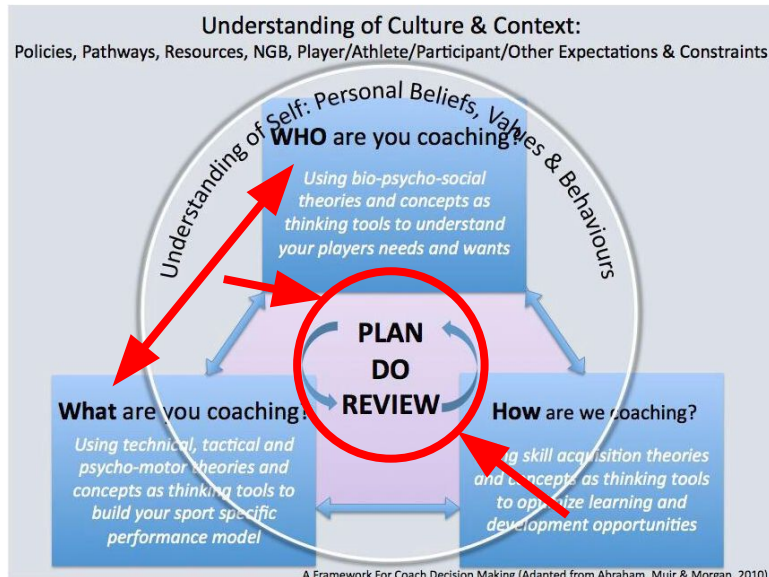*individually <u>necessary</u> and collectively <u>sufficient</u> conditions for professional learning*

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Three illustrations of potential value
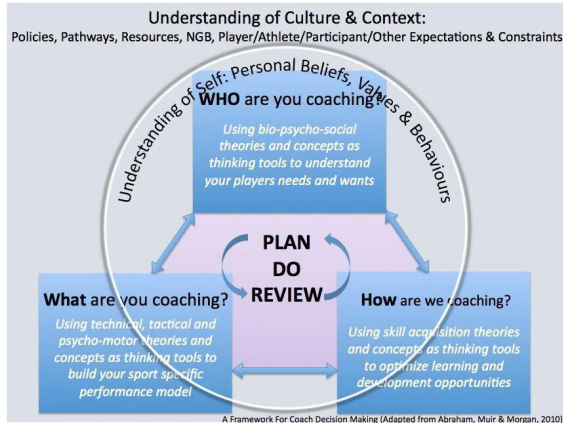
LBU undergraduate degree

Problem: what (and how) do we teach in a "coaching process" (plan > do > review) strand?

Understanding of Culture & Context:
Policies, Pathways, Resources, NGB, Player/Athlete/Participant/Other Expectations & Constraints

Understanding of Self: Personal Beliefs, Values & Behaviours

WHO are you coaching?
Using bio-psycho-social theories and concepts as thinking tools to understand your players needs and wants

What are you coaching?
Using technical, tactical and psycho-motor theories and concepts as thinking tools to build your sport specific performance model

PLAN DO REVIEW

How are we coaching?
...g skill acquisition theories and concepts as thinking tools to optimize learning and development opportunities

A Framework For Coach Decision Making (Adapted from Abraham, Muir & Morgan, 2010)

THE REFLECTIVE PRACTICUM

(Cf. Schön, 1987 § 11 & 12)

1) Clarifying expectations for the session (whiteboard)
2) Freeze on a clash (self or tutor)
3) Discuss options for experiment (group exercise)
4) Conduct experiment and listed to 'talk-back'
5) Write Blog post for future action

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Tentative level outcomes

Level	Problem setting		OTS Experiment	Appraisal
4	Setting a clear and specific goals or learning outcomes	Notice differences between goal and reality in own coaching practice (video)	Can think of at least two options (solutions), based on tacit knowledge	Suggests a plausible way forward
5	Effective learning outcomes (all, most, some) Performance vs Process Goals Clear expectations	Identify participant engagement against goals (do the participants respond in the way you expected?)	Can think of more than two options (solutions) and begins to raise tacit knowledge to explicit	Suggests a way forward and can begin to explain *why* (i.e. informed by explicit knowledge)
6	Very specific and clear outcomes and expectations can be described in detail	Understand *why* the reality differs from the expectations	Has strong applied understanding of different options founded mostly on explicit knowledge	Knows what to do and *why* (based on analysis of situation) and also what to read to develop explicit knowledge

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ECAS and the 'coaching cell'

Problem: how do the various elements of a complex coach education programme interact to promote development?
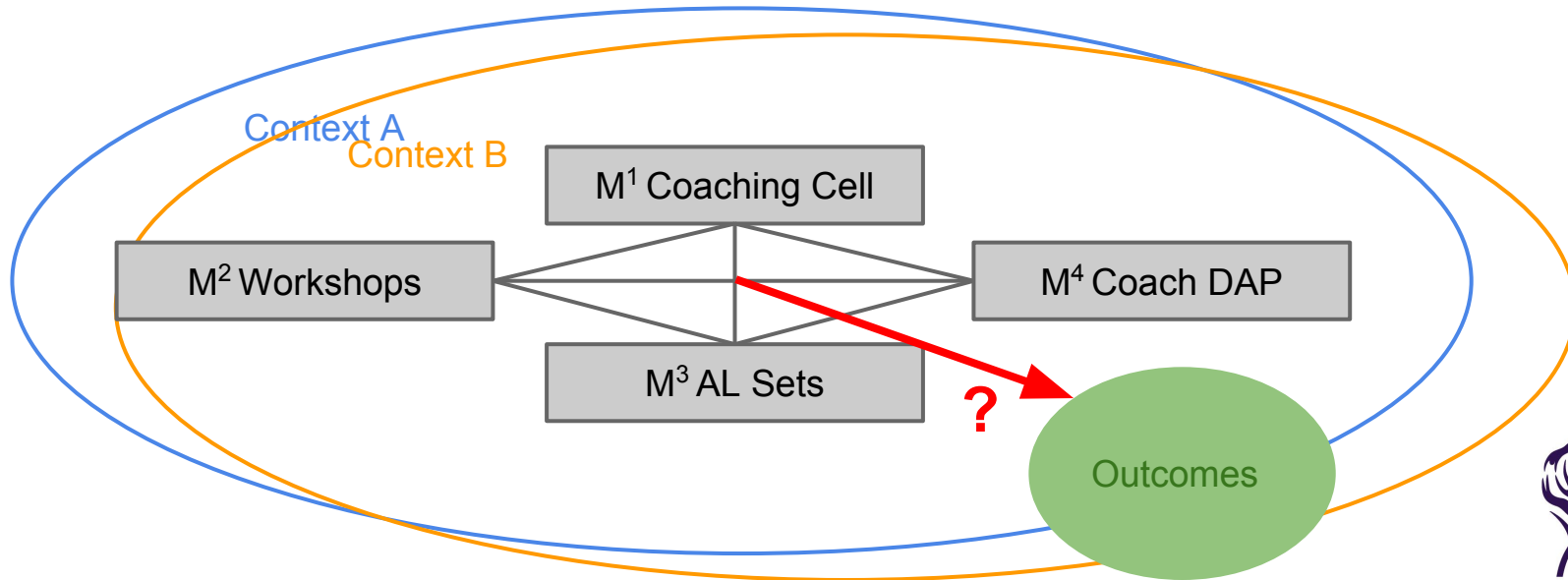
UEFA and 'reality-based learning'

Problem: what is RBL, and how can it be implemented across 54 UEFA endorsed national associations?

Current definition… (UEFA, 2015)
- 'Learning mainly in the club context, using knowledge, skills and attitude to solve realistic situations and problems in football'.
- The coaches are encouraged to engage in a 'learning circle' of planning, activity, reflection, theory building, and planning – often working with others coaches and mentors.
- Where possible this mode of learning is supplemented by distance learning from external sources.
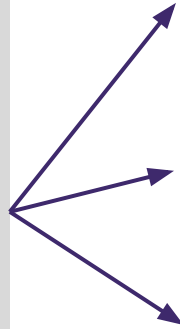
- High levels of variability due to significant room for interpretation
- Potentially very expensive under more literal interpretations
- NAs distracted by theory-practice quotas (60:40)

Capacities for RIA can be developed through RBL, offering clearer articulation of the process, especially for smaller NAs.

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Summary

1. Research on reflective practice has yet to articulate 'how' it is done or the capacities required to do it well
2. With some modification, Schön's original descriptive theory of professional learning can be turned into a prescriptive theory of 'ideal conditions' for learning
3. Early attempts are being made to apply this theory in undergraduate coach education (coaching practicum)
4. The theory could also be applied to solve problems in wider coach education settings

Thank you for listening...

Questions and constructive feedback are welcome.