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Who coaches the coaches?


Exploring the biographies of novice athletics coach education tutors.


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Abstract

Despite coach education being a focus of academic inquiry for over twenty years, coach developers (e.g., tutors) have been neglected from the literature until recently. In recognising and understanding the role of the tutor in delivering quality learning programmes for sport coaches, it is also important to consider who tutors are and how biographical factors influence their development towards expertise. This article utilises Grenier and Kehrhahn's Model of Expertise Redevelopment as a tool to aid understanding of the transition from sport coaching to tutoring. Narrative interviews were used with seven novice athletics coach education tutors embarking on a 'fast-track' tutor development programme. Data were subject to narrative thematic analysis and presented as composite vignettes. The vignettes portray six common themes highlighting that becoming a coach education tutor is a lifelong process of episodic experiences. The features of novice tutors' biographies are a useful starting point in evidencing the development of expertise. These findings could be used to inform tutor recruitment and training. The current study adds to the emerging body of literature by providing one of the first empirical accounts exploring the developmental experiences of novice coach education tutors.

Keywords: coach developers; coach education tutors; biography; expertise
(re)development

Who coaches the coaches? Exploring the biographies of novice athletics coach education tutors.

Coach developers have received increased global attention in the last five years (Jones et al., 2023), due to recognition that this workforce is significant within sport governing bodies and the coach learning landscape (Stodter et al., 2021). On an occupational level, coach developers fulfil a number of key roles in providing learning and development opportunities for coaches operating at all levels from participation at grassroots to elite performance. Formal coach education has sought to professionalise coaching (Duffy et al., 2011), resulting in attempts to better define and develop the coach developer role (see International Council for Coaching Excellence [ICCE], 2014). In a recent systematic review of coach developer research, Jones et al. (2023) recommend that researchers seek to understand who the coach developer is and how they become coach developers. The umbrella term of *coach developer*¹ encapsulates several functional roles, recognised through professional standards within coach development (Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity [CIMSPA], 2020). This research focusses on the specific coach education *tutor* role, defined as teaching small groups of coaches through a syllabus provided by an organisation (CIMSPA, 2020; ICCE, 2014). These tutors in customer-facing roles (Allanson et al., 2019) form part of a larger coach developer workforce and are tasked with delivering coach education programmes from paper to people, requiring a coherency and relationship between the course materials and the coach learners (Stodter et al., 2021). Therefore, the role of the tutor in supporting and facilitating learning with coaches is a significant one requiring expertise (Dempsey et al., 2021; ICCE, 2014) but how people transition into this role and develop expertise is currently not well understood. As research on this specific population group remains sparse, literature is borrowed from wider sports coaching, coach developer, teacher education and expertise research (Watts et al., 2022).

Learning is experienced biographically to the individual but influenced by the social setting (Christensen, 2014), and is inseparable from the development of identity (Brasil et al., 2018).

Morgan and Hansen's (2008) research on physical education teachers suggested that biography plays a significant role in shaping attitudes, confidence and behaviours. Coaches' biographies also

shape their identities, learning and practice (Stodter & Cushion 2017; Watts & Cushion 2017), and as it is usually a requirement for tutors to also be coaches (Cushion et al., 2019), they are likely subject to the same biographical lens. Previous experiences are integrated into that person's biography (Werthner & Trudel, 2009) and the meaningfulness of learning experiences is therefore impacted (de Jong, 2000) as a subjective and individual judgement made by the learner (Callary et al., 2012). Acknowledging the influence of biography and identity is the first critical step in understanding the process and practice of those delivering coach development opportunities.

Enhancing coach learning through formal education depends on the interplay between the programme design, delivery and engagement (Paquette et al., 2019). Delivery of education programmes is similarly influenced by personal ideology, intertwined with the culture within an organisation (Phelan & Griffiths, 2019). Tutors may have pre-conceived ideas about what to coach and how to coach developed from their own experiences of coaching and being coached, which may not align to the goals of the organisation or intended course design (Wallhead & Dyson, 2017). Tutors would not usually be involved in the development of courses, where standardisation does not reflect the nuances of coaching contexts and practices. Tutors' own biography will influence how they react and interact with course material and coach learners, contributing to variability in course delivery (Lyle, 2021; Paquette & Trudel, 2018). Providing personalised learning opportunities relies on the depth of knowledge and experience of educators (Roberts & Ryrice, 2014). Therefore, the competency of the tutor is not solely located within a particular setting but shaped by the spheres of historical, cultural and social traditions (see Davidson & Townsend, 2023; Allanson et al., 2021; Downham & Cushion, 2020). Within these contexts, past experiences and interpretations of experiences form a significant basis for expertise (Bowes & Jones, 2006).

Model of Expertise Redevelopment

The recruitment, development and retention of individuals with expertise is crucial to organisational success (Grenier & Kehrhahn, 2008). While there are established routine and

outcome-focused definitions of expertise in coaching (e.g., Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Schempp et al., 2006), there is sparse evidence available on tutor expertise, its development and adaptive redevelopment. Tutors will have demonstrated examples of domain-specific 'expert' practice in coaching (Turner et al., 2012), informing a desire and confidence to transition into coach tutor pathways (ICCE, 2014) and confirmed by the organisation's belief in them through successful recruitment. Coaching and tutoring are related yet distinct, complex, and domain-specific activities, and expertise is necessarily dynamic and adaptive when faced with changing parameters, scenarios or challenges (Cushion & Stodter, 2023; Grenier & Kahrhahn, 2008). A more process-oriented view of expertise requires additional focus on practitioners' learning and 'redevelopment' (Cherrstrom & Bixby, 2018). The Model of Expertise Redevelopment (MER) (Grenier & Kerhahn, 2008) recognises the multiplicity of domains of expertise and the need to redevelop when transitioning to new roles in related contexts, for example from coach to tutor.

The MER examines the notion of redevelopment as a result of changes to domain by acknowledging contextual factors and illustrating its dynamic nature leading to a model that is fluid and cyclical. It consists of three *states of expertise*: *dependence* (when the individual relies on others or sources of information), *independence* (when there is comfortability in settings within information and skills), and *transcendence* (where freedom and confidence of knowledge and abilities exists). The state in which the individual sits is influenced by whether there is stability or change within domains, or what Grenier and Kehrhahn (2008) refer to as *territories of expertise*. These territories include: *content* (consisting of the knowledge one has and the ability to demonstrate skills), *environment* (the specific context, discourse and expected behaviours), and *constituency* (the audience who recognise and are interested in the specific expertise of the individuals). Tutors face multiple changes and challenges when operating in the field, for example, in their environment – working in different venues and with different co-tutors; in their content – delivering different courses and updated content or delivery notes; and in the constituency territory – as each course will involve different learners made up of various numbers, ages, experiences and coaching domains.

Due to limited research with the coach education workforce, there is a need to explore the state of expertise of novice tutors and the potential development within their territories of expertise via exploring shared biographies. This research addresses Jones et al.'s (2023) recommendation that providing more detailed explanations of CDs' backgrounds and contexts is critical to enable understanding, evaluation, and application of research.

Narrative Inquiry

Relationships between individual experiences and cultural contexts over time can be incorporated through narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2006; Moen, 2006). It is an approach that has been used to represent biographies in teacher education, but less so with sport coaches and tutors (Wood et al., 2021). Narratives are the primary method of constructing meaning through stories, which contribute to the development of identity (Ronkainen et al., 2019). Coaches' life stories and learning experiences are complex and fascinating (Jones et al., 2004) and representing them through narratives is an under-utilised resource that may condense complexity and offer insight into practice, learning, and dynamic expertise (Watts & Cushion, 2017; Gearity et al., 2013).

Jones et al. (2023) reviewed a growing yet insufficient body of literature surrounding coach developers making many recommendations for future research that include who the coach developer is and what key stakeholders look for when recruiting or training them. Our research aimed to explore shared biographical events of novice tutors in the context of formal coach education within a sport national governing body through the use of a narrative approach that foregrounds tutors' voices as a starting point in evidencing the development of expertise (Abraham, 2016). Compared to coaching, there is minimal research evidence that describes or explains tutor expertise (Abraham, 2016) and there is a need to further examine who influences coach learning, where, when and how (Dempsey et al., 2021). Those that make up the coach education workforce are driven by their own epistemologies (Collins & Collins, 2019), i.e., their values and beliefs will influence their actions, and the profile of the tutor is important in the development and facilitation

of coaching knowledge and practice (Horgan & Daly, 2015). By exploring the biographies of those who are newly transitioning into coach education territories, the findings can uncover the state of expertise that already exists, setting up the possibility to explore further links between tutors' own learning, delivery and subsequent impressions and impact on coach learners (Stodter & Cushion, 2019). Once the foundations of delivery practices are better understood, coach education can be better analysed, critiqued, and improved (Patton et al., 2013).

Method

This research was carried out with an interpretivist approach (Callary et al., 2018), underpinned by a social constructivist paradigm, acknowledging multiple possible meanings of reality within a specific context (Greene, 2000). A constructivist sees reality as socially constructed by those who experience it (Crotty, 2010), meaning that reality is subjectively interpreted (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). A social constructivist makes sense of their own world, and the researcher is seen as the 'sense maker' (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009, p20; Crickard et al., 2020), i.e., "the primary gatherer and interpreter of meaning" (Greene, 2000, p987). With a background of participation and coaching in athletics spanning 25 years, the lead researcher (DS) was also employed as a tutor for England Athletics. DS collected and analysed the data, with the second and third authors acting as critical friends in a supervisory role, positioned within pragmatism (see Morgan, 2014) and informed by their participation, coaching, and coach development experiences within other team-based sporting environments.. The lead author explained their position to participants as a colleague while stressing that this project was being carried out independently of the training process with any views anonymised, therefore participation in the study would not impact on tutors' training or future employment. Having some 'insider knowledge' of the organisation and the role builds rapport with the participants but also includes awareness of the micropolitical climate. The narrative approach adopted allowed participants to construct their own meaning, i.e., life as told (Bruner, 1986), which is their current perception of reality based on

context. As a result, the stories are a reconstruction of the participant's experience at that moment in time, including which aspects are told, how they are told and why (Etherington, 2006).

Research Context

England Athletics (EA) are the national governing body responsible for supporting member athletics clubs and athletes across the country. This support includes coach development; competitions and events; athlete welfare and volunteer and wider club development (EA, 2019). In December 2018, EA advertised positions for coach education tutors as part of a campaign to recruit new workforce to deliver on coaching courses across England in response to a shortage of available tutors. The role of the tutor is to deliver formal coach education courses to coach learners on behalf of the governing body through PowerPoint presentations, group discussions, and individual planning, delivery and evaluation of practical sessions. Due to the resource demands of recruiting a large workforce of tutors, a new approach to development was adopted to 'fast-track' the process. Previously, trainees would be integrated by first observing a course being delivered by experienced tutors before delivering small sections of the course. The number of sections delivered would increase with each course, supported by a tutor developer, until set competencies had been consistently applied and there was familiarity with the course content and materials. The timescale of that process varied depending on circumstances such as availability of the individual and the tutor developer. Following the Initial Tutor Training, the process for this new cohort was to deliver on a 'live' course. Instead of working with experienced tutors, the novice tutors were to deliver as teams to smaller than normal groups of paying coaches. A tutor developer was assigned to a pair of trainees to support before, during and after the delivery. The aim of this method was to increase exposure to delivery and course content, with the recruitment of suitable people onto the training programme an important step.

Participants

The participants in this study were purposively selected (Patton, 2002) on the basis of being recruited to become a coach education tutor for EA during the above-mentioned training and recruitment drive. A cohort of 29 novice tutors were invited on to the training programme. Following institutional ethical approval, initial contact with the participants was made via EA as gatekeepers. Seven participants agreed to take part in this study (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 here

Data Collection

Narrative interviews (Rosenthal, 1993) were conducted to elicit individual stories describing participants' pathways to becoming a tutor. A good researcher-participant relationship enhances research quality (Norris et al., 2020), and 'insider knowledge' of the organisation and the role built rapport. Interviews were carried out approximately 18 months after initial contact was made as part of a larger longitudinal study, meaning participants were familiar with DS, and were comfortable sharing personal stories after building mutual trust through regular attendance on their tutoring journey (Blodgett et al., 2011).

Interviews followed a two-phased approach, namely narration followed by a period of questioning. Interviews began with an initial *grand tour question* (Ronkainen et al., 2019), i.e., 'tell me about your journey to becoming a coach education tutor'. The purpose of this was to acknowledge reflexivity of the lead researcher having been through a similar tutor training process previously and invite the participant to share uninterrupted biographical stories of their past to present (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). This was followed by the researcher responding to the participant's stories with follow-up questions to probe further, clarify or confirm (Blodgett et al., 2011). This approach provided insight through storytelling where the participants highlighted biographical events that are unique, deemed important to them (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), and control what events to portray (Ronkainen et al., 2019). For the storyteller, this process is not only

an outcome of the learning process, but also learning-in-action through the active selection and narration of historical life events (Tedder & Biesta, 2009) and reflexivity in biographical learning (Hallqvist, 2014). Interviews lasted an average of 36 minutes (range: 23-51 minutes), resulting in 250 minutes of audio data.

Data Analysis and Representation

Data were analysed through a process of narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008) and subsequently presented as composite vignettes (Blodgett et al., 2011), to move beyond an individualistic focus and illuminate group lived experiences (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Narrative thematic analysis (NTA) (Riessman, 2008) scrutinises stories for core patterns and central themes (Williams et al., 2017). The emphasis is on the content of the text (the what more than how) (Riessman, 2008). The process of NTA follows a similar analytical pattern to thematic analysis, but without fragmenting narratives and missing themes and patterns running through stories (Wood et al., 2021).

Common aspects of participants' responses were noted during the interviews whilst being audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and re-read for immersion and familiarity. Key quotations were highlighted into codes representing the individual's story and important, generating 155 codes. For example, "I'd helped someone else out with theirs [coaching qualification] and sort of mentor them a little bit", was coded as a relevant step in *supporting coach learning*. Codes were reviewed to identify commonalities and patterns, organising related codes into broader subthemes. Subthemes were later reviewed (amalgamated, collapsed or disregarded). Tacit knowledge was initially identified as a potential subtheme from coding, "I don't know how it happens or why it happens? It just kind of comes naturally, It all just kind of seems to flow quite naturally", as it was assumed that this would become a common feature amongst experienced educators. However, this was not commonly evident as participants generally demonstrated a high level of self-awareness. Remaining subthemes were organised into overarching themes which formed the basis of composite vignettes.

As an example, the subthemes of “observing others”, “being coerced” and “collaboration” formed an overarching theme of “Influence of Others”. These themes and coded data were examined to ensure coherency, relevancy and alignment with the aim of the research.

Composite vignettes were chosen to represent the data as this provides full and flowing representation of each of the developed themes into a single narrative (Anzul et al., 1997; Blodgett et al., 2011; Spalding & Phillips, 2007). Vignettes present a shared account of multiple people, rather than snippets of individual accounts where common meaning can be lost through breadth (Shinke et al., 2016). Vignettes were formed through a creative writing process, involving unifying common words and phrases; extracting key words, quotes and stories; establishing links and developing a coherent storyline (Shinke et al., 2016).. Data extracts formed the content of each theme as direct quotations and contextual examples were maintained from the interview transcripts as much as possible to preserve the spoken words of the individuals (Ronkainen et al., 2019; Schinke et al., 2016). Approximately 95% of the vignettes comprised of direct quotations from the participants with minor edits to aid flow for linguistic purposes (Callary et al., 2012).

Composite vignettes were compared to the original transcripts to enhance reflection on whether the individual tutors would be able to see themselves in the story and relate to the generated themes. The composite nature, similar to other forms of data representation, risks losing some idiosyncratic features of individual stories (i.e., deviant responses) (Ronkainen et al., 2019). The benefit, however, is providing insight into the commonalities of trajectory and experiences within the journeys of those transitioning into a coach tutor role, whilst also ethically protecting individual identities through reducing identifying information (Douglas et al., 2016; Shinke et al., 2016).. The vignettes, in the section that follows, invite readers to identify resonating details and consider naturalistic generalisability (Smith, 2013). The subsequent discussion section utilises the Model of Expertise Redevelopment as an organising framework, that was introduced during the data

analysis stage (Partington et al., 2021), as themes (vignettes) were applied to the *territories* of expertise (Grenier & Kehrhahn, 2008) to provide explanation that makes sense of the data.

Results

This research aimed to explore the biographies of novice tutors within the context of formal coach education following calls for further examination of who influences coach learning (Dempsey et al., 2021). The study also explored key features of novice tutors' biographies as a starting point in evidencing the development of expertise (Abraham, 2016). Key moments in stories are often told as episodes (Riessman, 2008), and are presented here in a chronological order through a sequential relationship of events. The themes generated following analysis were: Early Sport Exposure; Influence of Others; Taking Opportunities; Transferable Skills; Natural Next Step and Identity. Each is presented in the form of a composite vignette that, in combination, illustrates that developing tutor expertise is a lifelong process of unstructured, episodic experiences and social interactions.

Early Sport Exposure

My journey has always been a physical one. I've always been into sport, as early as I can possibly remember I've always enjoyed it, any kind of sport as well and I certainly can't imagine life without me personally keeping fit and being healthy. Getting into athletics was through school sports day. As well as playing all the team sports or learning about sport at school, I went and joined a junior club when it first formed and was I was their first junior captain, which is a great honour.

I did cross country in the district schools, finished sixth and qualified to run in the county championships. It went on from there. I really enjoyed it, was good fun so I started running a bit more seriously. At one point, I was about fifth on the UK list for an event so I got to a reasonable level. I think it helped me in my coaching because people were seeing me running at various athletics events and various leagues. It was a case of "this guy can

actually do it, he's coaching us and he knows how to do it and he's actually done it" so that helps build rapport with the athletes.

Influence of Others

My parents were both sporty. At school, my mates said "come along to cross country and give it a go" and my teacher suggested to my parents about me joining a running club. That was a whole different experience going out and running with other people and chatting while we run. When I was a bit older, a guy at the club kind of coerced me into helping him coach. He suggested that I go on the coaching course, so I did and got involved in helping out. I worked closely with him for a number of years and there was an application that we both noticed to join the National Coach Development Programme. So, we both applied and got accepted.

After talking to people at the running club, I thought it's about time I renewed my coaching qualifications. Whilst doing that course, I got talking to some other coaches who were doing it and they said, "you've obviously done this before, you would make a good coach education tutor". Back at the club, we had a visiting coach one night and it was great to work alongside another coach. At the end he said, "you know England Athletics are looking for tutors?" and signposted me to apply.

Ever since I started coaching, I don't think I've ever coached on my own. I've always worked with others to share ideas and things. But also, as a tutor when we go out and deliver courses, we chat to each other about how it went, what went well, what didn't go well, we do a bit of reflection with other tutors who understand that environment. Having a bank of people to call with their experience and their knowledge and being able to share that with them is going to be really valuable in my development.

Taking Opportunities

I enjoyed participating but our coach was leaving, it meant that the group would be left without a coach. I loved the environment, I loved being around the sport and the people. I ended up taking on more and more responsibilities. I think it was an element of being organised. So I just kept the group alive and not fizzle out. I felt like if I didn't do it, no one else would.

I started educating myself on how to be a better runner and how I can help myself to actually start running properly. That got me interested in learning more about the sport and how to coach through reading and chatting to people. Someone at the club then said “do you want to do this coaching qualification?” and I don't like to say no to opportunities. I'm not the perfect coach. I'm always learning. I think somebody described me as having a “high cognitive need”, I just needed to know more and more and more. I am always someone who is thirsting after knowledge.

During a coaching course, I remember saying to the tutors, “how do I do this? I've really enjoyed this, how do I get out the front with you?”. When I saw the opportunity to become a tutor I thought “give it a go”, because if nothing else, at least you'll know what's expected of you when you have been coaching for a bit longer. And you might meet some people that know more than you that you can learn from today.

Transferable Skills

I think the whole life experience of coaching, mentoring and delivering, actually did help me to become a tutor because I've done so much standing in front of big groups of people and talking. I've also worked in other roles training and educating staff in smaller groups and with individuals which allowed me to hone my skills in communicating with different audiences. I'm very conscious in being sure in what you are asking, facilitating the coaches to share their experience and not give them solutions which is what you had to do in teaching because you weren't just filling a bucket.

In terms of getting the tutoring position and those couple of days where you were being judged for your performance, in industry you get used to reviewing strengths and areas for development, acting on them and being held accountable. You understand that you have to reflect and improve in order to get to the standards required.

I went through the same process as everybody else but in some ways some of the things I brought from my own personal experience were beneficial and maybe one or two other things where I had to be careful that they didn't become a disadvantage. They [EA] actually signed me off as completing the process straight away, I didn't need to go through anything else. I almost felt like I was a victim of my own success being signed off so soon. I delivered my first proper course and it just went really well and then it was, "right you're done now". Well, should I have had another practice? Was I really ready?

Natural Next Step

From the experience of working in my day job and running an athletics club, it seemed a natural route to go into tutoring. I probably always had an inkling towards teaching and helping people to understanding things. The coaches that I've come across have always helped me in everything I've done so I thought that maybe it's time I helped other coaches in their development as well. This is a way that I can affect more people - I've got more reach. That was one of my reasons for joining the tutor workforce. So, yeah, saw the opportunity and decided to give it a go.

I applied and was amazed to get through the interview if I'm absolutely truthful because I didn't think I've been coaching long enough to have the knowledge that was required to be a coach tutor. I just thought I needed more experience and to know a bit more about coaching.

I would certainly be interested in going forward, learning more and progressing. As always, I'd like to move up the levels once I've done enough, and they've seen enough of me. I'd love to be able to do more if that's feasible. I just want to initially be and feel really competent at delivering. Now that I'm out in the field having completed the initial training process, I just think maybe there's a missed opportunity. I don't expect to be signed off as a lead tutor tomorrow, but what I would like is to know which bits I need to work on, what I need to do and what the pathway is for me now. If there's something I can do in my next delivery that's going to take me a step closer to that goal, it would be nice to have that information so that I can take the steps to develop myself and work my way up the ladder as it were.

Identity

Being a tutor means that I am very keen. Of all the things that were lost during the pandemic, losing the ability to kick on with that tutoring was actually one of the most disappointing. I have to say there's an immense amount of pride in representing England Athletics, pulling on the kit with the logo on my chest. Walking into that room representing England Athletics is a huge honour for me and that is something that I really do value. I feel a bit more recognition. It pushes me to learn more.

It's definitely become a part of who I am, certainly within athletics circles. It's made me think a lot more about my coaching that I'm delivering on a day to day basis because when you're teaching people to coach, there's an element of practising what you preach as well. I am acutely aware that some people know that I am an England Athletics tutor. I prefer to demonstrate my knowledge and experience from the quality of my coaching rather than by shouting about it. People do look at me as a coach educator and come to ask me questions or ask if I'll be their mentor.

When I gave up teaching I really struggled when people say ‘what do you do?’ And I say ‘I’m a bit of this and a bit of that’. So I feel it’s given me a bit of an identity. I just love the sport, I coach, I officiate, I compete. And now I tutor as well. I’m definitely proud of being one and that’s who I am.

Discussion

While each novice tutor’s journey was unique, recurrent biographical themes were evident across all participants to a more or lesser extent, highlighted by the six composite vignettes. Linear, outcome-focused models do not aid understanding of complexity within expertise development (Grenier & Kahrhahn, 2008; Turner et al., 2012), so the purpose here is to highlight commonalities rather than generalised prescriptions. The MER has been applied in this context to assess what state of expertise exists amongst the novice tutors as they begin their new role and what aspects may require redevelopment. It was evident that despite possessing multiple transferable skills, tutors were in a dependent state of expertise in the early stages of training. The MER aims to generate ideas about how to best support the learning and development of individuals, particularly those who face frequent changes in territories of practice (Grenier & Kehrhahn, 2008), as expertise is a continuous process (Frie et al., 2019; Turner et al. 2012). The following sections interpret the findings with regards to each territory of expertise.

Content

Participants were exposed to sport from a young age, often participating in multiple sports. They followed similar initial milestones to that of high performance coaches (Erickson et al., 2007; Watts & Cushion, 2017), successful coaches (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016), expert coaches (Christensen, 2014), or mentors (Koh et al., 2017). Brasil et al. (2018) similarly found value in previously being an athlete, coach, observer and interacting with others as part of Brazilian surf coach developers’ journeys into coach development. The level of sport participation ranged from recreational to international amongst the participants in this study. The level and accumulated years

of coaching practice also varied. The ICCE (2014) state that tutors should have “significant and successful coaching experience” (p. 27) but warn that “assumptions are easily made about long-standing service, expertise and coaching” (p. 34). There is a difference between experienced coaches and those with a transcendent state of expertise in learning with the potential skills and qualities to optimise coach education (Stodter & Cushion, 2019). Putting an arbitrary number on years of experience is less appropriate than valuing expertise in learning and desire for personal growth, which is evident amongst the participants here. These participant tutors evidently went through a process of redevelopment from being an athlete into coaching roles, for example a change in the constituency territory when the audience (athletes) seek to recognise and are interested in the specific expertise of the coach or continually seeking opportunities to gain coaching knowledge in the content territory.

Amongst all participants, there was a commonly reported need to be curious and introspective, consistent with recommendations that tutors seek personal growth and development (ICCE, 2014). They took opportunities to develop content expertise in coaching through observing others, completing qualifications and workshops, gaining practical experience and mentoring others. Even though tutors would have experienced the course (or a previous similar version) that they will be asked to deliver through obtaining coach qualifications, attending as a coach learner is different to observing as a trainee tutor through different biographical and contextual filters. Access to an ever-increasing number of potential sources of learning via the internet, e.g., webinars, blogs, and e-books, provided multiple non-formal learning opportunities for tutors to actively engage with, similar to coaches (Bloom 2013; Callary et al., 2018; Werthner & Trudel, 2009). However, a lack of tutor-specific content was highlighted as an issue, leading to a reliance on tutors having the desire and ability to learn, make sense of, and apply knowledge.

Tutors all demonstrated a thirst for gaining knowledge and acquiring new skills through an active willingness to take opportunities, accept challenges and risks (Frie et al., 2019; Mallet & Lara-

Bercial, 2016). This is particularly useful when exposed to frequent constituency domain changes (Grenier & Kahrhahn, 2008), leading to a need to be a '*flexpert*' with the ability to meet changing expertise requirements (Frie et al., 2019). This ability to maximise chances and opportunities ultimately lead to the participants being successful in tutor recruitment. Continuous learning and improvement in practice is a central tenet of 'good' coaching and occurs through exploring different experiences to gain new knowledge (Douglas et al., 2016). Watts et al. (2022) extended this notion to professional coach educators and the participants in this study demonstrated their commitment to continuing professional development (CPD). Frie et al. (2019) identify growth and flexibility as an integral domain within changing expertise demands.

Research on pathways of high-performance or successful coaches does not always acknowledge that "a lot of learning takes place in everyday life" (Tsang, 2013, p. 33). Learning from experiences outside of sport to positively impact coaching and tutoring should be maximised and "celebrated" (Callary et al., 2018, p. 56). The current tutor recruitment and selection process purposively identified those with existing coaching qualifications and experience of facilitating learning. Tutors tended to have some content expertise due to prior experience of presenting, education delivery, and an ability to reflect, as a result of work experience in education, staff development roles, and/or through mentoring. Having a background in teaching or education was a useful asset, exposing tutors to different individual learners and requiring the ability to adapt to varied needs which is indicative of excellent coaching (Côté et al., 2007). The attainment of expertise is the result of considerable experiences over several years in a specific domain (Grenier & Kahrhahn 2008). However, it cannot be assumed that expertise transfers to new roles or territories and existing knowledge and skills may be unusable (Grenier & Kehrhahn, 2008). Whilst there are many transferable skills derived from experiences working in education, the majority of participants' experiences derived from the context of educating children in a school setting, which is different to facilitating learning with adults in a formal coach education setting (Callary et al., 2018). Rather than

simply a selection criteria for recruitment, tutor biographies should be factored into the planning and preparation of initial tutor training that responds to this new state of expertise.

Constituency

Tutors highlighted the role of others in supporting their journey to become a coach education tutor, seeing value in collaborating and learning from others. Callary et al. (2018) found that masters coaches rarely engaged with others outside of their own club and few made use of mentors. The tutors in this current study were heavily influenced by, often collaborated with, or sometimes even were coerced by other people at different milestones along the journey. When transitioning to a new context, e.g., moving from athlete to coach or coach to tutor, it is evident that the influence of others was important in that dependence state (Grenier & Kahrhahn, 2008), but participants frequently remained connected with others as expertise was developed. The achievements of the tutors were inseparably linked to their social interactions and practices with others (Allanson et al., 2019). This is supported by Hallqvist (2014) who suggests that it is “impossible to create meaning in one’s life history without including the social world” (p. 12). Despite redevelopment of expertise being individual to the learner, the influence and support of others remained a valuable commodity throughout the journey.

Deliberate professionals and practitioners (Trede & McEwan, 2016) show aspirations to continually learn more and recognise the value of interdependency by interacting with others to receive and share information (Milistetd et al., 2018). They deliberately interact with others to co-create knowledge through developing extended networks (Sawiuk et al., 2017). Being mentored (formally and/or informally) was a commonly cited source of learning for participants within their own coaching. For some, this later led to becoming a mentor and this process of mentoring can improve learning for both parties (e.g., Brasil et al., 2018; Fairhurst et al., 2017). The motivation for mentoring was driven from a sense of “giving back” (Koh et al., 2017, p. 529), having been supported by others previously in a sport heavily reliant on volunteers. The motivation to become a tutor was

often a mixture of agency (doing things for their own benefit) and communion (trying to benefit others), demonstrating elements of *driven benevolence* (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016), i.e., having an enduring and balanced desire to support self and others. Participants' keenness to learn was driven by a need for improvement – as athletes asking themselves “how do I do it right?”; guiding athletes to the next level; and problem-solving when coaching or mentoring, for example when initially thrust into the role or through experiential practice alongside formal education. As resourceful individuals (Ronkainen et al., 2019) and active agents in pursuit of their own continuous development, tutors' positive experiences of working with and learning from others were a motivator to continue those interactions

Environment

Participants were aware of the need to conform to norms, processes and expected behaviours as they acknowledged a change in identity, which will continue to evolve as expertise continues to (re)develop. As tutors' identity becomes intertwined with the organisation, they were influenced by social, cultural and political forces at play (Allanson et al., 2019). They are now also subject to a sense of obligation to the organisational culture and expectations (e.g., a standardised approach to course delivery), and relationships with new colleagues including tutor developers and coach learners on course. Participants could not be detached from their personal histories, experiences, and goals, facing obligations from multiple and intersecting boundary crossings (Gunckel, 2013). Therefore, they may choose to accept, reject and or modify tools, frameworks or models that do not resonate with their identity (Gunckel, 2013; Stodter & Cushion, 2017). Future research would benefit from considering the impact of this developing identity on tutors' learning and course delivery.

From an organisational perspective, the selection and continuing education of tutors are important, as there is a skillset involved in supporting, nurturing, and challenging professional learning (Makopoulou, 2018). Anyone involved in coach development should be carefully selected

(ICCE, 2014) but tutors have traditionally been selected on an ad-hoc basis, generally consisting of 'good' coaches who want to help (Cushion et al., 2019; Horgan & Daly 2015). Despite tutors idiosyncratically developing relevant skills prior to tutoring, there was no structured path, and the tutors here suggested that recruitment was the result of personal ambition and about being in the right place at the right time. The ICCE (2014) state that "whilst every coach has responsibility for developing less experienced coaches, coaches with appropriate motivation and sufficient experience and a genuine desire to develop coaches, may wish to cross over onto the long-term coach developer pathway" (p17). Whilst many sports governing bodies provide a coach development pathway, and the ICCE (2014) suggest something similar for coach developers, the transition between pathways remains unclear. Similar to the route into tutoring, the structure and pathway beyond initial training was not well understood by novice tutors in this research.

Stability in contextual changes is important, as when contexts are altered there is a need for redevelopment (Grenier & Kehrhahn, 2008). Initially, individuals who are redeveloping in a dependent state must learn or relearn, at least temporarily, to conform to the norms, processes, and expectations of the organisation (Grenier & Kahrhahn, 2008). However, the aim of the tutor recruitment and training process in this study was to fast-track participants to meet operational and financial needs. Identifying individuals who were able to reach at least the independence state, where existing knowledge and skills are supplemented with new information and punctuated by experimentation and practice that tests new learning, appears to have achieved this aim. Future research would benefit from investigating tutor training and development longitudinally to track the key features that contribute to expertise redevelopment. Participants highlighting that they may have been a "victim of my own success" suggests that the perceived state of expertise was organisation rather than individual-lead. This can contribute to an uncertainty about levels of expertise not yet reached (Frie et al., 2019), of particular concern when considering expectations of colleagues and coach learners (i.e., the constituency territory of expertise).

One's sense of expertise is not a fixed condition but develops when exposed to experiences framed by biography (Christensen, 2014). Participant tutors reported holding themselves to a higher standard as they felt that they were representing the governing body, with beliefs around the need to sustain that new desired professional identity (Allanson et al., 2019). There was no evidence to suggest that participants had a fulfilled ambition (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016), suggesting that becoming a tutor continues to be a logical next step, part of the journey rather than a destination to be arrived at (Turner et al., 2012).

Practical Implications

The findings suggest there could be greater recognition of tutoring as an option for coaches' future development. The current participants showed a desire to know about their next steps, both before becoming a tutor and once initial training was complete. National sports governing bodies could create clear pathways that integrate coaching and coach development to highlight the role and consider development opportunities acknowledging expertise redevelopment. Evidence could be integrated to identify potential tutors through a more systematic recruitment process (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016), with tutor training taking biography into account as a useful starting point. In this research, exploring the biographies of novice coach education tutors underlined that training which incorporates learning how to become self-reflexive and critically aware of the social context in practice would be useful, particularly where there are potential conflicts between obligations of self from existing and developing identity, coach learners and the governing body, and exploration of how to address these (Gunckel, 2013). This would require initial tutor training that includes exposure to authentic coach development environments (i.e., training in context) and support from skilled tutor developers. It is recommended that initial tutor training is cohort-based, providing the opportunity to interact with others through a learning community (see Hunuk et al., 2019; Vinson et al., 2022). Subsequently, providing ongoing CPD through formal and informal learning opportunities, including interactions with colleagues and/or mentorship would be valuable.

Conclusion

This research adds to the emerging body of literature regarding coach developers, specifically the importance of the various experiences of coach education tutors in understanding their development. The purpose was to explore the shared biography of novice tutors at England Athletics, as understanding career pathways and experiences provide potentially rich insight as a starting point for the (re)development of expertise (Purdy & Potrac, 2016). Although tutors' biographies are not the same, recurrent themes were evident. A combination of various learning situations from a lifelong and cumulative learning process should be valued in contributing to the redevelopment of tutors (Mallett et al., 2009). The MER can be a useful framework to consider tutors' states of expertise and potential instability in the future. For example, the model helps to acknowledge the different requirements between school teaching and coach education within the constituency territory or how the creation of a new identity shapes future behaviours within the environment territory. Understanding tutors' biographies is a useful starting point for understanding how coach education tutors (re)develop expertise.

It is hoped that this research provides catalytic authenticity (Blodgett et al., 2011) by encouraging further research through continuing to foreground the crucial role, biography and development of the tutor in developing coaches through formal education. The evidence-informed features of the vignettes could serve as reference points for the selection and development of future cohorts of tutors in similar contexts. This is the first step in analysing the role of the tutor in the process of preparing coaches, as it has been widely noted that biography impacts on learning, attitudes and behaviour (e.g., Brasil et al., 2018; Callary et al., 2012; de Jong, 2000; Morgan & Hansen 2008; Watts & Cushion, 2017). Having explored the shared biographies of novice tutors, useful future research would include longitudinally assessing the impact of tutors' biography and the effectiveness of tutor training programmes in redeveloping expertise, as there remains an absence of evidence to inform coach developer training (Stodter & Cushion 2019). Tutors play a significant

role in coaches' development (Dohme et al., 2019). As a result, it is important to ensure that they are effectively identified, trained and supported to provide a more fulfilling and impactful learning experience for coaches.

Notes

¹ The terms *coach developer* and *tutor* are both used throughout this article, which reflects the state of literature currently (see Jones, Allen & Macdonald, 2023). Where *coach developer* is used, it refers to the broader workforce and/or relate to how they are termed in the cited literature.

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