Chapter 16: Assessment in Coach Education

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Abstract

Building from previous chapters on curriculum and pedagogy in coach education programmes, the purpose of the present chapter is to shine a light on assessment as a feature of those programmes. Through this chapter, we outline and describe what coach education stakeholders stand to gain by considering the assessment of sport coaches in more detail. We introduce three principles of good assessment practice in coach education. We then share a case study of assessment on a coach education programme in England. While there is no suggestion that this is a model to be followed, we hope to stimulate dialogue about, and the development of, assessment practices in coach education.

Introduction

The extent to which coaching practice is high-quality (i.e., effective and ethical), is of paramount concern to all sport coaching stakeholders (e.g., participants, parents, and employers), as identified within the previous chapters of this book. In an attempt to promote high standards of practice, both governments and sport coaching organisations have invested significant resources (i.e., finance, personnel, and time) in developing systems to support the professional development of sports coaches; for example, the National Coaching Certification Program in Canada (Coaching Association of Canada, 2019), the Coach Development Framework in New Zealand (Kidman & Keelty, 2015), and the Coaching Plan for England (Sport England, 2016). As a result, many countries have developed large-scale coach education programmes and these programmes are part of many coaches' professional development journeys (for examples of research on this topic, see in Brazil- Milistetd et al., 2014; Canada- Paquette & Trudel, 2018; South Africa- Morris-Eyton & Roux, 2019; and the UK- North, 2010). Typically, these programmes require a period of compulsory attendance, the study of a pre-determined curriculum (with learning outcomes), and the successful completion of an assessment experience (Nelson et al., 2013). In this chapter, we refer to assessment experiences as moments where coaches are offered the opportunity to demonstrate the required skills, capabilities, knowledge, attitudes, and/or behaviours to successfully meet the objectives of a programme of study.

Despite the fact that most sport coaches will engage in these experiences as part of their professional development, we suggest that they have largely been overlooked in the published literature (Hay et al., 2012; McCarthy et al., 2021a). McCarthy and colleagues (2021a) noted: "very little attention has been paid to how coaches are assessed, how assessment contributes to coach learning, and the extent to which teaching, learning, and assessment strategies are congruent" (p. 2). Most commonly, assessment in coach education has been closely associated with the paradigm of measurement and judgement (McCarthy et al., 2021b); this is not dissimilar to broader educational

trends (Adams, 2006). Indeed, the purpose of assessment has largely been to quality assure coaching practice, certify coaches who meet a particular standard, and accredit/license coaches for work in a particular context or role. The subsequent certification/accreditation/license can lead to an increase in status within social groups (i.e., among other coaches), it can have the potential to improve opportunities for further gainful employment (i.e., greater remuneration, access to new professional fields), and attendance on further coach education programmes could be contingent upon it (i.e., access to the next 'level'). With this in mind, it could be argued (and is widely accepted) that the common core function and role of assessment in coach education is to act as the gatekeeper of standards; coaches who complete assessment opportunities successfully are deemed to meet the required standard.

Against this backdrop, it becomes understandable that assessment is most likely to be found at the end of a coach education programme, often adjunct to a learning experience, as a mechanism for examining (mostly) knowledge, understanding, skills, and behaviours. With the aim of making judgements on quality, a coach is likely to be seen performing a simulated/decontextualised coaching activity (i.e., perhaps with their peers), against a pre-determined brief, for a set amount of time. In some cases, this might be supplementary to an examination (Vangrunderbeek & Ponnet, 2020), professional conversation, or a presentation (Pearson Education, 2022). However, with greater thought, consideration, and dialogue, the assessment of sport coaches (in coach education programmes) can bring about additional desirable outcomes. For instance, within educational research, it has been demonstrated that assessment can *also* contribute to student learning in higher (adult) education (Carless, 2007); something which Carless (2015) conceptualises as 'double duty', where assessment is *both* a learning experience *and* a certification opportunity. The notion of learning-oriented assessment also features in the work of Boud and Falchikov (2006), who stated that "…assessment activities should not only address the immediate needs of certification or feedback to students on their current learning, but also contribute in some way to their prospective learning." (p. 400). Thus, the purpose of this

chapter is to raise awareness of the potential for assessment to both maintain the important function of quality assurance/certification/accreditation/licensing *and also* make a significant contribution to coach learning. The latter is a goal shared unanimously among the coach education and development community (International Council for Coaching Excellence, 2013), and therefore we expect this chapter to have broad appeal.

Problem Statement

Assessment as a feature of coach education has been overlooked in the published academic literature (Hay et al., 2012; McCarthy et al., 2021a). This is both a notable and concerning oversight, for a number of reasons. First, assessment is a feature of nearly all coach education programmes worldwide, therefore this is not a niche concern. Navigating an assessment opportunity is a common experience for millions of sports coaches across the globe, therefore developing a greater understanding of it is paramount. Second, any resultant accreditation, certification, or license communicates to sports coaching stakeholders (e.g., parents, participants, and employers) that a particular minimum standard of practice has been met. Indeed, in many cases access to gainful employment and/or further coach education opportunities are contingent upon successfully navigating assessment tasks. Third, by failing to give assessment practices empirical attention, opportunities might be missed to understand where and how assessment can contribute to coach learning (Hay et al., 2012), consistent with learning-oriented assessment principles (Carless, 2015). As a result, poorly considered assessment practices may limit coach learning, or at least lead to less-optimal learning experiences. Finally, where assessment practices are incongruent with the wider principles of the programme (i.e., the assessment strategy has been an afterthought or not considered at all), they may undermine any positive andragogical endeavours. This is particularly problematic, as coach education programmes have become increasingly ambitious, sophisticated, and coach-centred, and assessment has (in some cases) failed to reflect this (McCarthy, 2022).

While examining assessment in coach education has not been a priority for researchers, we argue, other important exploratory work *has* been undertaken (Campbell et al., 2022; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Rangeon et al., 2012). This has no doubt been integral to developing knowledge, understanding, and professional practice in the field (North, 2017). For example, considerable empirical and conceptual work has been carried out in relation to coach learning, the impact of educational programmes on practice, and how coaches experience these programmes. Yet, our view is that there has been a general failure to consider assessment within this. For example, in the large body of work concerned with the extent to which coach education programmes have contributed to coach learning (e.g., Erickson et al., 2008; Mallett et al., 2009; Williams & Bush, 2019), little is said about the role assessment plays within learning processes. Further, although research has been undertaken to examine the degree to which coach education programmes impact upon coaching practice (e.g., Griffiths et al., 2018; Stodter & Cushion, 2019), the extent to which meaningful and contextualised assessment activities can impact upon practice is barely discussed. Finally, despite a noteworthy contribution to the literature that explores the ways in which coaches experience coach education programmes (e.g., Chesterfield et al., 2010; Piggott, 2012; Vella et al., 2013; Vinson et al., 2016), there is little recognition that the assessment experiences of a coach (e.g., perceptions of relevance, fairness, and equity) are likely to colour their wider programme experiences.

As a result of the points made above, this chapter aims to increase awareness of the problem situation, foreground assessment in discussions of coach education, and propose practice-focused ways forward for the coach education community (by the broadest definition). Firstly, we explore "who stands to gain what?" by giving greater consideration to the assessment of sport coaches in coach education programmes. Second, we look to theories of adult learning to shine a light on the origins of some common approaches to assessment in coach education. By tracing the roots of assessment approaches in this way, we intend to promote the development of assessment literacy among the sport

coaching community. Third, we offer three principles of good assessment practice taken from the embryonic coach education assessment literature (e.g., Hay et al., 2012; McCarthy et al., 2022; McCarthy et al., 2021a; McCarthy et al., 2021b), wider education literature, and the adult learning theory research. Finally, we demonstrate how these principles might appear in practice. Closing out the chapter, the implications of these ideas are reviewed and a rallying call to action is made.

Why Give Greater Consideration to Assessment?

Coach assessment is arguably the most underexamined feature of coach education programmes, especially regarding its potential role in coach learning. Considerable discourse and resources are invested in issues pertaining to coach learning, yet assessment is rarely considered as part of the discussion. It is thus important that the strategies which are suggested in this chapter are also considered with particular attention to the pedagogical and curriculum design issues addressed in the previous two chapters. Indeed, the idea of quality coach development with Bernstein's (1977) conceptualization of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment as interacting message systems fundamental to quality coach development is introduced in Chapter 13. This chapter, therefore, should be read with a keen eye on how the messages herein can be applied in partnership with those from the other chapters in this section.

Bernstein (1977) referred to assessment as part of a message system. Thus, assessment *communicates.* In quality coach development, assessment opportunities communicate to the coaches what coach education programmes (or those who construct and deliver the programmes) value in coaching practice. Thus, it is extremely important to consider what and how assessment is influencing the coaches and, as one step removed from that process, how this, in turn, influences the athletes and other actors involved in the sport environment. Against this backdrop, *what* is assessed matters (we assume that coaches will think that this is what is considered *most* valuable). Typically, an episode of assessment (a concept which we later challenge in favour of a more ongoing and embedded approach)

will constitute the measurement and judgement of a set of 'observables'. These are often observable coaching behaviours or planned and/or written reflective accounts (Collins et al., 2014). In less common cases, coaches can be assessed by examination, which seeks to check/test knowledge (Vangrunderbeek & Ponnet, 2020).

While these are valid assessment mechanisms, the reader might notice that there is an emphasis placed on behaviours and knowledge. Thus, following the logic outlined above, coaching *knowledge* and appropriate/positive *behaviours* are assumed to be the most important features of coaching practice. Yet, there is evidence to suggest that *skills* (e.g., self-regulation) and *attitudes* (e.g., an affective process, such as a healthy relationship with learning and development) are also valued and increasingly considered important for successfully completing coach education programmes (McCarthy et al., 2021a). How might skills and attitudes be assessed? When is the most opportune time to assess these? We suggest that oftentimes the act of the assessment itself demands a specific skill set or attitude towards the work at hand. For example, if coaches are asked to complete a portfolio, they typically self-monitor progress, likely make decisions about what should be included in a portfolio, and this requires perseverance to complete the assessment task. Usually, none of these skills and attitudes are outlined in the success criteria or competencies of the assessment. Thus, if assessment is viewed as a message system, then including the skills and attitudes necessary to complete the tasks may be required for clear communication about what the coach is learning.

One way of creating clear communication is in the development stages of the coach education programme. Gearity and Callary (2020) suggest that when curriculum developers organize learning objectives and goals of a coach education programme, they can build their programmes by simultaneously ensuring that assessment activities are constructively aligned to these objectives (see also Biggs, 1996). In other words, creating assessments goes hand-in-hand with creating objectives. Thus, the verbs used to develop objectives (i.e., to design, to identify, to apply) should match the

behaviours, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that coaches are being asked to demonstrate during their assessment. Callary and Gearity (2021) ask coaches to consider course design in choosing their formal learning pathways: "How do course designers… know that learning has occurred? How do assessments capture what coaches know or can do?" (p. 157). They go on to suggest that if the assessment does not match the intended objectives of the coach education course, then this sends mixed messages to coaches, likely thwarting learning and, in turn, resulting in less satisfaction with the coach education programme. Indeed, Gearity and Callary (2020) also note that assessment should not only be summative (happening at the end of the programme). Formative assessment (happening throughout the programme and used as a learning benchmark) is an essential way that coaches can reflect on what and how they are learning and adapt as needed throughout the programme. In all cases, high-quality assessment has the potential to promote learning (McCarthy et al., 2021b); therefore, by focusing resources and discourse more deliberately in this area, there is an opportunity to improve coach education provision considerably.

Locating Assessment in the Adult Learning Literature

To start this section, we introduce three main theories that dominate explanations of adult learning (behavioural, cognitive, and social) and outline their respective position on assessment (see Table 1) (modified from McCarthy et al., 2021b).

Table 1

Theories of adult learning and position on assessment (modified from McCarthy et al., 2021b).

Theories of adult learning	Position on learning	Position on assessment
Behavioural	Learning requires shaping and modifying behaviours to mimic and replicate those which are said to be desirable. Learners are active within the process and learning is observable. Learning is often sequential and driven by pre-determined outcomes.	Central to assessment, is the explicit observation of behaviour change. Assessment practice is concerned with making judgements about the extent to which behaviours now conform to those that are said to be desirable.

Cognitive	Learning is an internal cognitive process and therefore asocial in nature. The learner organises information and resolves discrepancies in a process of cognitive reorganisation.	Assessment is concerned with knowledge and the extent to which knowledge has been developed and applied. Assessment may include individual activities such as planning and critical reflection.
Social	Learning requires active participation in real-world tasks, as knowledge and understanding is co-constructed with others. This approach to understanding learning emphasises the role of others and environment.	Assessment is collaborative, situated, and reflects the dynamic nature of the learners' circumstances. There is a central role for the assessment of problem-solving experiences, and as such assessment is typically a long-term activity.

Adult education theorists have long noted that educators need to consider adults' learning approaches as different than children and youth. Knowles and colleagues (2012) proposed that andragogy, or the art and science of adult learning, includes six principles that take into account individual and situational variables as well as the adult learners' goals and motivation for learning. The six principles suggest that adults: 1) seek to understand why the content they are learning is important; 2) have a matured self-concept and are capable of self-directed learning; 3) have a rich background of prior experiences that shape how they learn; 4) have a readiness to learn when they recognize that they have a gap in knowledge; 5) learn effectively when that learning is oriented towards helping them solve tasks or problems, and 6) have an intrinsic motivation to learn.

Andragogy has been explored in the context of coach education. Callary and Young (2020) noted: "Coaches learn effectively when their learning is facilitated by a coach developer who employs adult learning principles" (p. 217). These principles include being learner-centred, relating new knowledge to prior learning, matching coaches' abilities, motivation, and readiness to learn the content being delivered, and supporting self-directed learning (Knowles, 1980; International Council for Coaching Excellence, 2013; Nippon Sport Science University, 2017). Callary and Young (2020) referred to the creation of a coach education programme geared towards learning adult-oriented psychosocial

coaching approaches for coaches of Masters Athletes. The programme was built by firstly assessing the coaches to determine where there were the gaps in their knowledge and practice, in order to take a learner-centred approach to the creation of the programme. Thus, the coach developer's observations of the coaches in their natural setting (coaching athletes, interacting with other coaches, etc.) was a primary assessment task. The coach developer was systematic in this approach by meeting with the Head Coach and developing a list of coaching characteristics, behaviours, and attitudes that were connected to the six adult learning principles and the Head Coach's expectations. The list was developed into a survey that also included space for notes about general reflections and the coach developer could fill out the survey after each observation (Callary & Young, 2020). The assessment then formed the basis for programme content objectives. This is an example of assessment occurring *before* the start of a coach education programme, as a means to identify learning needs that are largely behavioural and social.

Similar observation "check-lists" are used by coach developers in large-scale coach education organisations *after* course delivery to see how coaches are using the knowledge that they were supposed to have learned in the course and to debrief on their actions as part of the certification process (Kloos, 2020). Indeed, the end of coach education programmes is the most popular/common time to engage coaches in (summative) assessment. Yet, while serving an important function for certification (checking that competence is established), these check-lists may be more bureaucratic than they are oriented towards promoting coach learning. Callary and colleagues (2014) indicated that summative assessments were conducted by various national high performance coach education programmes, that included the submission of portfolios and logbooks for formal, endpoint, assessment as well as formal testing/examinations. These same programmes *also* offered formative assessments by way of reflections on their practices, debriefing discussions with instructors or intern supervisors, and observations of practice (Callary et al., 2014). Many large-scale coach education organisations also offer

mentoring programmes, such as the Coaching Association of Canada's (2021) female mentorship programs, in which the coach mentee is assessed by the mentor typically both through observation and through discussions about coaching practice. Indeed, we argue that mentorship builds assessment into the everyday learning environment as a mentee coach is in a vulnerable but hopefully safe and respectful position to both self-assess and be assessed in experiential learning by a more experienced coach (the mentor), while adopting a more collaborative partnership in assessment. All of these assessment methods are also used to various degrees in coach education programmes in higher education, through course-based work, work placements, and experiential, project-based assignments (Gearity & Callary, 2020).

By tracing the roots of assessment approaches through coach learning and coach education research, and specifically tying these to adult learning theories and principles, we seek to promote the development of assessment literacy among the sports coaching community. We now turn to the discussion of principles of good assessment practice to further develop and extend these ideas.

Principles of Good Assessment Practice

In the absence of explicit guidance related to assessment design on coach education programmes, we intend to propose three principles that we believe could be useful to coach educators and coach education programme designers. By adopting these principles, inspired by the work of McCarthy (2022) and McCarthy et al. (2021b), many of the desirable outcomes outlined earlier in the chapter (e.g., assessment can contribute to coach learning) could be realized. These principles have been chosen on the basis that they are consistent with an emerging consensus on educational philosophy, principles, and practices at the present time (McCarthy et al., 2021b).

Principle 1: Clear and Shared Success Criteria

We argue that high-quality assessment opportunities require clear criteria for achieving success, which are shared with the coach from the start of the learning opportunity. Further, we suggest that the

success criteria remain central and foregrounded within programme activities. As a result, the coach will be encouraged to internalise the success criteria and move toward managing their own progress. While these ideas are common across the wider education literature (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2009; Hawe & Dixon, 2014; Sadler, 1989), they have received only limited attention by coach education scholars. For example, Ciampolini et al. (2019) offer light-touch recognition of the importance of explicit guidance for coaches on coach education programmes, while McCarthy et al. (2021b) provide a single example of these ideas in use on a coach education programme in Flanders, Belgium.

In coach education programmes that are relatively open-ended and individualised, and where a large amount of autonomy is offered, it seems even more important for coaches to be aware of what is required to succeed (Sadler, 2010). We suggest a number of ways in which success criteria can be clearly shared[1]. First, the use of rubrics offers huge value; an explicit representation of what are often tacit views on both requirements and quality can be achieved using a rubric (Bearman & Ajjawi, 2021; Jonsson, 2014). Rubrics can be defined as "artefacts that outline expectations for student work, especially characteristics that denote attainment of standards or describe aspirational quality" (Bearman & Ajjawi, 2021, p. 360). Rubrics can be used by coach educators to design activities and give structure to their feedback, while they can also be used by the coach to self-monitor progress and become familiar with what 'good' looks like. For these reasons, rubrics are thought to reduce learner anxiety and improve self-efficacy (Bearman & Ajjawi, 2021).

According to Jonsson (2014), there is evidence to suggest that the impact of using criteria and standards rubrics, on learning, are enhanced when combined with other means of clearly sharing with learners what is required to succeed, and learn, through assessment. As such, we posit that using exemplar pieces of work to represent what is expected, could bring about positive outcomes. This is a

[1] Remembering back to earlier in this chapter, if particular skills and attitudes are of high value (and we suggest there are many which are), they should be included within the success criteria and mechanisms for assessing those should be well-considered.

principle which could be adopted irrespective of assessment mode; for instance, it is possible to share exemplar practical performances, portfolios, projects, and presentations. Exemplars, according to Carless and Chan (2017), can be defined as "carefully chosen samples of student work which are used to illustrate dimensions of quality and clarify assessment expectations" (p. 930). Hawe and Dixon (2017) argue similarly that they "play a key role in furthering students' understanding about task criteria and standards… This understanding places students in a position to target their efforts more effectively" (p. 1189). Research suggests that exemplars are particularly effective when combined with rubrics, and where learners are engaged in back-and-forth between the exemplar and the rubric (Handley & Williams, 2011; Smyth & Carless, 2021). By doing this, coaches are encouraged to form a view on the quality of other work that, in turn, would aid them in critically appraising their own work. An unhelpful heuristic in this scenario is that coaches may view exemplars as model responses that they can copy. While this is acknowledged in the research (Carless & Chan, 2017; Smyth & Carless, 2021), there is little evidence to suggest that this is the case for motivated adult learners (McCarthy, 2022). In sum, not only does sharing and understanding success criteria and standards increase opportunities for coaches to succeed (among other things), but it also provides an opportunity to enhance coach learning through skill development.

Principle 2: Assessment as Skill Development

As coaches are increasingly invited to participate in assessment opportunities that may include projects, portfolios, and presentations (McCarthy et al., 2021a; McCarthy et al., 2021b), they are required to demonstrate and develop a relatively sophisticated set of adult learning skills (McCarthy, 2022). These skills can include self-regulation (e.g., goal setting and goal-orientation) (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013), self-directedness (Papanikolaou & Boubouka; 2010), and self-monitoring/self-evaluation (Bell, 2010; Sart, 2014; Sheppard, 2000). As a result, coaches must be supported to develop the skills required to successfully complete the assessment activity. For example, if a coach is required to semi-

independently complete a coaching project over the full duration of their season, they should be supported to develop the necessary self-regulatory skills. Indeed, this can be promoted by encouraging coaches to establish the goals of their project and facilitate opportunities for them to orient their efforts towards those goals ("what to do and when?") (Baeten et al., 2008). This may necessitate the coach to seek, sift, and manage information as it is required, which may include engaging in collaboration ("who knows what?") to make progress. A focus on processes is particularly important where assessment is used as a skill development tool.

In another example, if a coach is required to curate a professional development portfolio evidencing their learning over a period of time, the programme should deliberately seek to support the coach in learning self-monitoring skills so that that they are able to make judgements about what to include and why. Further, as a condition of completing the portfolio, the coach developer could support the coach's self-monitoring skills by asking them to periodically present their work and outline what they believe to be areas of strength (and why), and areas of weakness (with suggestions as to how they might address those). Of course, in this way, the coach developer is supporting the coach to self-monitor, but not necessarily supporting the coach to learn how to self-monitor on their own without the coach developer's help. For this reason, we suggest this approach might be most useful with more novice learners (not necessarily novice coaches), to scaffold self-monitoring skills.

While it is of course possible that just by engaging with the task there is an element of incidental skill development over time (Baeten et al., 2008; Bell, 2010; Cornford, 2002; Sart, 2014; Shepard, 2000), we would argue that coach developers should not leave this to chance, but instead spend some time purposefully cultivating and discussing these skills so that coaches know how to continue using them beyond the present learning opportunity. Indeed, according to Cornford (2002): "the most sensible approach is not to assume the automatic development of learning skills but to teach them quite explicitly" (p. 361).

Principle 3: Recognising the Role of Others

The final principle of high-quality assessment practice in coach education, we posit, is recognising the important role of coaches' networks of support and collaborators. Indeed, when coaches work with, and draw support from, others, their progress towards successfully completing an assessment activity can be enhanced or accelerated (McCarthy et al., 2021b; McCarthy, 2022). At this stage, it is important to note that the role of others in assessment is interconnected with the other two principles. For example, where coaches and the coach educator can establish a clear and shared conception of success, they are also obligated to possess the necessary skills to manage progress toward achieving the success criteria. This might include self-monitoring progress, making judgements on the quality of their work with reference to the success criteria, and deciding who to ask for support and why. Regarding the latter, coaches may be required to use their skills and be resourceful in network-building or drawing upon existing networks of support to enhance their assessment experience and output.

More broadly, education scholars have long discussed the notion that peers are a valuable instructional resource, and that scaffolding one's learning through guided discovery can lead to higher achievement (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2009; Boud & Soler, 2016; Van den Bergh et al., 2006). However, *coach education and assessment* discourse has largely failed to recognise this, which is ironic, since coaching is considered a relational activity (International Council for Coaching Excellence, 2013). As a principle of high-quality assessment opportunities, coaches can both learn *from* other coaches while contributing to the learning *of* other coaches during their assessment activities. According to Papanikolaou and Boubouka (2010) working in groups "cultivates positive attitudes toward the task and stronger task motivation compared to individual work" (p. 138). Furthermore, by engaging in activities such as reviewing the work of another coach to offer feedback and guidance, coaches are then better

able to make judgments about the quality of their own work (Hargreaves, 1997). In this case, assessment activities can be learning activities in and of themselves.

While desirable outcomes can be achieved where coaches are encouraged to draw upon immediate networks of support as they navigate assessment opportunities, research demonstrates that coaches who are offered the opportunity to locate their assessment task in context, which has also been called 'authentic assessment' (Baeten et al., 2008), achieve further positive outcomes (McCarthy, 2022). As sites for learning, workplaces are unpredictable, dynamic, and imbued with the idiosyncrasies inherent in sports coaching. They also present opportunities to actively seek counsel from, and learn with, colleagues and others (Occhino et al., 2013). For instance, the workplace presents opportunities to test, adjust, and refine ideas. This can be particularly helpful when developing an assessed piece of work, such as a portfolio or project, over an extended piece of time. This builds on the work of North et al. (2020), who report that while most coaches do seek support and advice from other coaches (in their immediate network of support and in the workplace), there is an opportunity to leverage this through assessment opportunities to enhance coach learning.

In the following section, we aim to demonstrate how these three principles are being adopted to inform the assessment of football coaches in a coach education programme in England. The intention here is not to present (or claim) any gold standard, but to stimulate further ideas about how assessment might be used to contribute to coach learning.

An example from the English Football Association: Principles in Action

The English Football Association (FA) is the national governing body for football in England. Among many other responsibilities, the FA play a prominent role in the education and training of over 30,000 football coaches across England each year (Dempsey et al., 2020). The FA Level 3 (UEFA B) in coaching football programme is part of this offering and is positioned to meet the needs of both

grassroots coaches (e.g., community children's coaches) and those coaches entering the professional game (e.g., coaching young people in a professional football academy).

The Level 3 (UEFA B) coaching football programme was relaunched in 2017, following a broader rethink of how coach education would be designed and delivered at the FA (Dempsey et al., 2021, Chapman et al., 2020). Previously, coaches were required to complete a simulated, decontextualised, peer-peer practical coaching assessment at the end of the programme. Now, they are tasked with curating evidence of their learning (as a coach, with their team, supported by ideas shared through the programme) over a nine-month period (the duration of an entire football season in England, from August to May), into an assessed coaching project (McCarthy, 2022).

This example follows coaches in the 2017-18 cohort, who attended nine days of face-to-face workshops and received three visits to their coaching context from a coach developer[2], which was known as in-situ support. The coaching projects, also known as their assessment activity, included 18 linked training sessions and games, as a minimum, along with evidence that they had considered each of five explicit features of football coaching that are deemed important by the FA (who we are, how we play, how we coach, how we support, and the future player; The Football Association, n.d.). Supplementary to this loose but prescribed structure, coaches' effort and attention was directed by a set of success criteria (the FA Coach Competency Framework). This document takes the form of 19 competency statements that clearly articulate what is required and what a good project looks like. Coach developers use these competencies to make decisions on whether the coach meets a specific standard. For example:

[2] At the FA, the coach developer is a person responsible for the planning and delivery of a coach education programme. Their role extends to supporting coaches both in the classroom and in on-field programme activities, including in-situ support (working with the coach in their authentic coaching environment). This is a commonly used role descriptor in England and is defined by a set of professional standards. See: https://www.cimspa.co.uk/globalassets/document-downloads-library-all/education-and-training/prof-standards-and-mts/cimspa-ps-coach-developer-v1.0.pdf

- "Applies a range of coaching and learning methods to tailor learning to players' needs" (how we coach)
- "Challenges individual players to take responsibility for their own development" (the future player)
- "Demonstrates safe, ethical and supportive working relationships with players in a well-constructed coaching environment" (how we support)

A succinct overview of project-based assessment on of the FA Level 3 (UEFA B) in coaching football programme is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Features of project-based assessment on the FA Level 3 (UEFA B) in coaching football programme (from McCarthy, 2022)

Feature (what)	Explanation (how)
A clear brief (requirements)	Coaches will curate evidence of their learning over a nine-month period of time which must include 18 linked training sessions and games, as a minimum.
A loose prescribed structure	Coaches will organise their evidence against each of the five England DNA strands.
Success criteria (competences)	Coaches' work will be considered against a set of 19 competence statements (the FA Coach Competency Framework/success criteria).
In-situ support	Coaches will be supported by the coach developer to develop their project in their authentic coaching setting, on at least three occasions (between each face-to-face delivery block).
Face-to-face workshops	Coaches must attend four face-to-face blocks of learning, aligned to the England DNA and therefore the assessed coaching project. This equates to nine days of mandatory in-person attendance for the coach.
Sharing	On the final day of the programme there is an opportunity for

	coaches to share an abridged version of their project, with peers, as a presentation.
Intend to develop lifelong learners	There is a recognition that for many coaches, this will be their final engagement with a programme of study of this kind with the FA. Therefore, there is an acknowledgement that coaches will be required to take greater responsibility for their own learning and professional development.

McCarthy (2022) found that many coaches benefitted from establishing, with the coach developer, a clear and shared conception of what was required and what a good coaching project looked like. This was achieved in many ways, but mostly through foregrounding the success criteria (The Coach Competency Framework), dialogic use of historic exemplars, and through coaches seeking support from networks and collaborators. Coaches on the programme responded particularly well to being invited to consider what was required of the project from the earliest point in the programme (Bearman & Ajjawi, 2021). Further, they also valued regular exposure to exemplar projects from past programme participants, who were invited to share their work as part of a face-to-face workshop. This seemed to be particularly important in a relatively open-ended assessment opportunity with high levels of autonomy. One coach commented:

> Having coaches coming in who have completed the course last season to present their journeys has really helped to process what is required… seeing how they pieced their project together… All have been fairly different and it gives you a bit more detail or ideas on what relates to your own journey. (pp. 191-192)

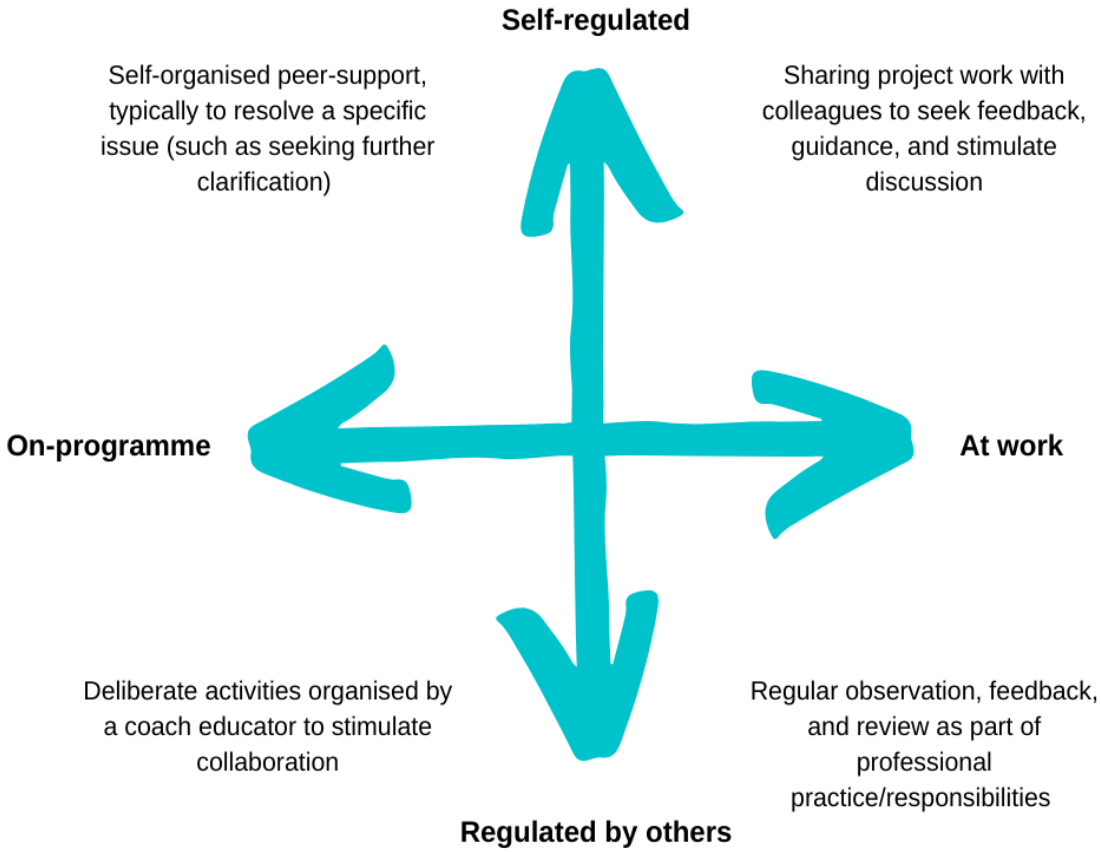
By making quality judgements on the work of others, coaches became more proficient at making judgements about their own work. This demonstrates the integrated nature of principles one and two; by using both success criteria and exemplars to guide progress with the assessed coaching project, coaches had the opportunity to become more skilled learners as a result. Coach developers recognised

the importance of developing these skills and reported: “Self-monitoring is an essential skill” (p. 194), and “the ability to self-manage is definitely something which is having an impact [on coaches’ success in the assessment]” (p. 209).

Finally, and most relevant to principle three, coaches appreciated the way in which they were able to collaborate as they developed their assessed coaching projects. This happened in several ways, illustrated in Figure 1 that highlights where and how coaches typically collaborated to complete their season-long FA Level 3 (UEFA B) in coaching football applied coaching project. Broadly, four approaches are identified spanning on- and off-programme environments, by either self- or other-regulated means; examples of each are provided. “It benefits me to have a great network of coaches” (p. 252), suggested one coach on the programme, referring to the way in which they were able to regularly share their assessed coaching project with peers and colleagues, for support and guidance. More locally, coaches were afforded the opportunity to collaborate on the programme; one coach developer described scenarios where coaches engaged in “co-coaching and reflecting with peers” (p. 188) and “pushed each other and collaborated which was a huge benefit for them” (p. 188). While much of this emerged naturally, in other instances it was much more deliberate. In one case, a coach developer described how they determined which coaches were paired together for collaborative project-focused activities: “We didn’t draw it out of hat…It was more to do with how we think people could help” (p. 187).

Figure 1

A representation of the ways in which coaches accessed networks of support and utilised collaborators (McCarthy, 2022)



Future Directions

The assessment in the Level 3 (UEFA B) coaching football programme described above utilized a project-based approach to assessment that is authentic, embedded, and learning-oriented. In our view, this offers a positive learning experience through coach assessment activities. Where coach education programmes have modernised (Chapman et al., 2020; Paquette et al., 2019; Paquette & Trudel, 2018), assessment as an integral component has sometimes been backgrounded, relative to other facets (i.e., curriculum design). However, within this chapter, we make the argument that high-quality assessment activities are also opportunities to contribute to coach learning.

We hope to stimulate much needed dialogue in an area of coach education that has received scant attention. Within this chapter are the beginnings of a lexicon for assessment in coach education

and it is proposed that with this emergent vocabulary, conversations about assessment at the interpersonal, organisational, and/or socio-cultural level will be more productive. Indeed, already some organizations around the world are turning their attention to coach assessment. The International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) have committed resources to exploring assessment in coach education by establishing a working group to focus on this important element associated with coach learning and development. Beginning with a worldwide consultative webinar in September 2020, the ICCE working group intends to create meaningful materials for the coach education community to move forward with. At the ICCE Global Coaching Conference in 2021, the working group shared endeavours undertaken so far and further consulted with the coach education community on additional work to be explored in the future. Moreover, other international sport organisations are contributing to increasing knowledge and understanding in this area, too. For example, in 2021, at the United States Center for Coaching Excellence (USCCE) North American Coach Developer Summit, the programme included a specific strand aimed at inviting attendees to consider assessment as a feature of coach education with guidance from an expert panel. We are also seeing a very small number of peer-reviewed research articles where the assessment of coaches is the sole focus of study, many of which have been cited within this chapter (e.g., Hay et al., 2012; McCarthy, 2022; McCarthy et al., 2021a; McCarthy et al; 2021b). Nevertheless, we invite coach education researchers to continue to view assessment as a prominent part of an evolving coach education research agenda.

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