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“THE S&C FRAMEWORK”

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Introduction:

S&C Coaching is a relatively young but growing discipline and its development over time, a greater need for a more systematic approach to Coach Education has become evident (Massey 2010, Tod et al. 2012). Massey (2010) proposed the “Program for Effective Teaching” (PET). This model was seen as an effort to “incorporate those behaviours and skills identified as constituting to effective teaching” (p.79). Whilst this is a positive move to focus on the pedagogical skills required of a S&C coach rather than the usual focus on physiology, anatomy, periodisation/learning theories and strength training techniques, it failed to take into account such things as knowledge of the sport and performance analysis, and the different emphasis on kinetic versus kinematic needs of the athlete, or need to maintain inter-professional relationships.

Dorgo (2009) and Tod et al (2012), noted that currently, S&C coaches build their knowledge and skill base through some formal learning but primarily through experience in the work-place and communities of practice created between fellow, and usually more senior S&C coaches. This gap between formal education and the informal education that coaches tend to rely on is mirrored in sports coaching amongst other fields (Cushn & Lyke 2010). Phillips et al (2012) demonstrated the value in the use of experts’ experiential knowledge to add to the current academic field. A framework for S&C coaching has been created based on the authors’ experience both as a S&C coach and as a Coach Educator (see figure 1). As well as knowledge gained from communities of practice, with the hope of creating a better model for Coach Educators to use.

Methodology:

Autoethnography is an auto-ethnographical approach to research that allows the researcher to explore personal experiences and cognitions in order to better understand a socially constructed phenomenon or role (Dorgo et al. 2012). The process requires the researcher to critically reflect upon their experiences and knowledge bases, to unpack the influence of the socially constructed world and to then tell a ‘story’ of what there is to be known (Fleming & Fullagar, 2011). Autoethnography thus allows a means for the particular intuitive ontological knowledge, often claimed by coaches, to be expressed, access that is denied by the current discursive structure (Jones 2009; p.379). For a further discussion of this methodology see Jones (2009) and Sparks (2000).

Discussion: The Beginning:

The initial “S&C Framework” was created based on the authors experiences of twenty years in the field and consultation with other colleagues, past and present.

The field of S&C has a number of key influences/agents, all forging the approaches taken in the field. Olympic weightlifting and its coaches have been heavily influenced in their development through the socially constructed world and personal experiences and cognitions in order to explore the influence of the socially constructed series of interactions that both the coach and athlete must negotiate in order to meet their needs and objectives.

The ability to actually be able to “coach” your athletes has long been considered key to those in the field. Human beings work well when motivated, but may use many forms of sabotage if they are not, even if that means making themselves suffer as a consequence. A coach who has the ability to get the best out of their athletes in a week on week basis will see the one who gains the best results (Dorgo 2009). This therefore means the ability to deliver what many call the “soft skills”, or interpersonal skills is a prerequisite skills base for the expert S&C Coach.

Therefore, any coach education programme must focus on this. This then led to two further skills and knowledge bases, namely “Sport pedagogy” and “inter-personal and inter-professional skills”.

The Framework

Although this framework was being constantly tested and challenged through my professional practice as an S&C coach, and via Coach Educator, external interrogation was required. The model was used as the structural content for a Masters’Level Module in S&C. While scrutiny of this kind was needed, due to the social relationships of all the ‘social agents’ meant that complacency to rather than challenge of the Framework was the most likely outcome.

Four experienced S&C coaches, who were not involved in the original framework, were then surveyed to ascertain the knowledge and skill bases they perceived as being required of a S&C coach in the line of their role. They were asked about pre-requisite knowledge required for the role; knowledge and skills required during the function of the S&C coach role, and finally, if they felt that anything was missing from formal S&C Coach Education that they had attended over the years.

Their responses were as expected by the researcher and replacated in content if not completely in emphasis. The pre-requisite knowledge and skill base included training technical knowledge, sport specific knowledge (skills), assessment tools, an ability to interpret baseline data, and the function of programming. This falls in line with the findings of Dorgo (2009) and Tod et al (2012). When discussing the skills required for the role, there was a great emphasis on both interpersonal skills and inter-professional skills; again matching the framework and in line with the academic literature (Dorgo 2009; Massey 2010; Tod et al. 2012).

The final question about what maybe missing was one of emphasis rather than content, to build stronger ‘soft skills’ to get the best from the (S&C) coach-athlete relationship. This certainly has implications for coach education providers and mirrors closely Tod et al (2012)’s outline of learning resources used by expert S&C coaches.

The one area not really mentioned was that of the key element’s of what may be classified as ‘technical knowledge’, i.e. the central part of the framework. This is an area of further study scheduled later.

Conclusion

A robust Framework for S&C education and S&C coach development has been created based on the lived experiences of myself (professional and academically), and the inter-professional communities of practice that I have had access to over the years, the academic literature, and finally indirect content analysis through opinion survey. This is the first part of the journey in developing my ‘S&C Framework’, that can be used across the industry in the future to enhance the development of the field.

References:


“Sport Pedagogy & Interpersonal & Interprofessional Skills”

Sport Personal Knowledge: Skill Athlete Context

Factors of S&C

Knowledge:

Sport

Planning Process

Kinetic

Kinematic

Energetic

Structure/Shape

Mobility

Means/Mode of Training & Assessment

Interpersonal and Interprofessional Skills

The Future

Figure 1 - The S&C Framework