Examining How NCCP Competition-Development Modules Contribute to Coach Learning

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to explore the influence of an NCCP coach education module on coaches’ ongoing learning. Using the theoretical framework of Jarvis (2006) and Moon (2004) to guide the research, this study consisted of three phases: an interview with each of the 10 coaches prior to attending a module to understand their biographies as well as various learning situations they had already experienced; attendance at one of three potential Competition-Development modules, Managing Conflict, Coaching and Leading Effectively, or Psychology of Performance, and an interview with each of the 10 coaches immediately following the module to explore their thoughts, reflections and possible learning within the module; and a third and final interview with each of the 10 coaches three months following the module to explore how they implemented learning from the module, as well as other learning situations that may have occurred within that 3 month timeframe. The findings indicated that the biographies of each of the coaches varied considerably. For example, the coaches’ athletic experiences ranged from recreational to national level and several of the coaches were still active in sport at a master’s level. Their formal education levels ranged from high school to completion of a university masters degree, and their ages varied from 21-45. As well, each of the coaches said they learned something from the NCCP coaching module they attended such as a more effective method for communicating with their athletes, strategies to cope better with conflict, and the importance of setting a variety of goals. The findings also indicated that a number of the coaches were open to on-going learning and stated that they would continue to enrol in formal coach education modules.
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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

The European Coaching Council defines coaching as “the guided improvement, lead by a coach, of sports participants and teams in a single sport and at identifiable stages of the athlete/sportsperson pathway” (Duffy, 2010, p. vii). Coaching is a complex and challenging profession. Coaches are responsible for technical and tactical training, yearly planning, periodization of training, injury prevention, mental/psychological training, and strength, endurance, and speed training. They are also expected to be continuously learning throughout their careers in order to improve as coaches and effectively develop their athletes (Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald & Cote, 2008; Lyle, 2007).

Over the last decade, researchers in coach learning have begun to understand that learning takes place in a number of different settings such as informal and nonformal situations, as well as formal coach education programs (Erickson, Cote, & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Gilbert, Cote, & Mallett, 2006; Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007; Lynch & Mallett, 2006; Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009; Werthner & Trudel, 2006, 2009). Trudel and Gilbert (2006) have examined recent changes in large-scale coaching education programs, where program developers are moving away from a novice-to-expert continuum to an approach that recognizes the necessity to develop coach-specific competencies depending on coaches’ contexts.

The large-scale coach education program in Canada is the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP). The NCCP is governed by the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC), which has the mandate to assist National Sport Organizations (NSOs) in the development of their coaches. The CAC, through the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), provides the framework and standards for coach certification in Canada. The NCCP is a coach training and certification program offered to sixty-seven different sports in both official
languages across Canada. The NCCP courses are designed to meet the needs of all types of coaches, from novice to the national level. The NCCP is the recognized national standard for coach training and certification in Canada, ensuring that coaches are certified in order to deliver quality experiences for all levels of Canadian athletes. (CAC, 2009) The NCCP is an example of the shift to developing coach-specific competencies within specific coaching contexts as it moves to a competency-based learning program where coaches are assessed on what they can ‘do’ rather than on what they ‘know’ (CAC, 2009). (See Figure 1)
Coaches can be trained in any of the eight coaching contexts, which are specific to the type of athlete they are working with, and can progress through to a “Master Coach” level in any context.

**National Coaching Certification Program**

**THE GOAL:** Coaches who can demonstrate their competence

**Figure 1:** The new NCCP model diagram

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**Coach Certification**

The National Coaching Certification Program certifies coaches who have demonstrated their ability to apply virtually all competencies in coaching situations relevant to the athletes they coach. This means that coaches must not only know about coaching but be able to demonstrate their ability to apply this knowledge to the coaching situation.

Certification is valid for no longer than 5 years and professional development is required to maintain certification.

**Community Sport stream**

Initiation (Clp-Og)

New participants are encouraged to participate in the sport and introduced to sport basics in a fun, safe, and self-esteem building environment regardless of their ability.

Ongoing participation (Clp-Og)

Participants are encouraged to continue participating in the sport for fun, fitness, skill development, and social interaction.

**Competition stream**

Introduction (Clmp-Og)

New sport participants are taught basic sport skills and athletic abilities in a fun and safe environment and are equally prepared for local and/or regional level competitions.

Development (Clmp-Og)

Developmental programs are offered to refine basic sport skills, introduce more advanced skills and tactics, and are generally prepared for performance at provincial and/or national level competitions.

High performance (Clmp-Ph)

High performance athletes are coached to refine advanced skills and tactics and are typically prepared for performance at national or international level competitions.

**Instruction stream**

Beginners (Intr-Bg)

Participants of all ages, with little or no sport experience, are taught basic sport skills.

Intermediate performers (Intr-Md)

Participants who already have some experience and proficiency in the sport, are taught to refine basic skills and introduced to more complex techniques.

Advanced performers (Intr-Ac)

Participants who are experienced and ideally proficient in the sport, are taught to refine advanced skills and techniques.
Research on coach learning is continually growing as it is seen as an essential component for both athlete and coach development. Some research studies indicate that coach education programs are an undervalued source of coach learning, while others cite it as one of the most important sources of learning (Erickson, Cote, & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Gilbert, Cote, & Mallet; Gilbert & Trudel, 1999; Malete & Feltz, 2000; Trudel, Gilbert, & Werthner, 2010) Certainly, with these varying research findings, beginning to research coaching education programs with the intention of exploring how such a formal learning situation may influence ongoing learning, has the potential to contribute to our understanding of coach learning. Athletes undoubtedly benefit from coaches who can translate and incorporate theoretical models and relevant research findings into their day-to-day coaching. With that in mind, the purpose of this research study was to understand how the NCCP Competition-Development modules contribute to coaches’ ongoing learning. The main research question that guided the present study was: “What role does an NCCP Competition-Development module play in influencing coaches’ ongoing learning?” A secondary research question was also utilized: “What other learning situations did the coaches in the study experience prior to attendance at a module and in the three months following a module?” The main contribution of this project has been to continue to advance our understanding of coach learning and contribute further to the literature on coach learning and, more specifically, coach education.

The remainder of this paper is divided into four chapters: (a) a review of literature, (b) the methodology utilized in the study, (c) the results, and (d) the discussion, limitations, and conclusion. The review of literature section examines the literature on learning, coach learning, and coach education. The methodology section contains a) epistemology, b) research design, and c) methods. The results section is divided into 3 phases: Phase one, the first set of interviews;
Phase two: attendance at one of the three modules and second set of interviews; and Phase three:
the third and final set of interviews.
The literature on learning, coach learning, and coach education continues to grow. In the area of how coaches learn, researchers in sport across Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom are attempting to understand different aspects of coach learning and there is an on-going discussion concerning the proper methods of educating coaches (Bowes & Jones, 2006; Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2004; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Gould, Giannini, Krane, & Hodge, 1990; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003, 2004; Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007; Werthner & Trudel, 2006). The research in coaching has contributed to the understanding of coaches’ knowledge acquisition by suggesting that coaches gain knowledge through various processes including: mentorship by other coaches (Gould, Giannini, Krane, & Hodge, 1990; Bloom, Durand-Bush, Schinke, & Salmela, 1998; Salmela, 1995), experience as athletes (Irwin, Hanton, & Kerwin, 2004; Cote, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995; Gilbert, Cote, & Mallett, 2006; Rodgers, Reade, & Hall, 2007), reflection (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001, 2006) and formal and nonformal coach education opportunities (Gilbert, Cote, & Mallett; Gilbert & Trudel, 1999; Malete & Feltz, 2000; Trudel, Gilbert, & Werthner, 2010). The following three sections discuss research on learning, coach learning, and coach education, specifically in relation to the Coaching Association of Canada’s National Coaching Certification Program.

A constructivist view of learning

Individuals experience learning situations throughout their life and learning is a complex process that incorporates both mind and body. The conceptual framework used to guide the present study comes from two learning theories - Moon’s (2004) network view of learning and Jarvis’ (2006) lifelong learning perspective.
Moon’s work on learning encompasses a number of key concepts: one’s cognitive structure, different types of learning situations (mediated, unmediated, and internal), and deep versus surface approaches to learning. To understand her view of learning, it is important to start with the distinction she makes between two views: the ‘building a brick wall’ and the ‘network’.

From the viewpoint of ‘building a brick wall’, the “teacher provides for the learner the ‘bricks of knowledge’. It is assumed that the teacher knows how these will fit the pattern of the wall. The wall – knowledge – is thus built up” (Moon, 2004, p. 16). The ‘network’ view is that learning is a “vast but flexible network of ideas and feelings with groups of more tightly associated linked ideas and feelings” (p. 16). This network of ideas forms an individual’s cognitive structure, which in turn guides their noticing and perception. An individual’s cognitive structure, what is known by the learner at any one point in time, will change and adapt as the person learns in various mediated, unmediated, and internal learning situations. New material of learning can change the cognitive structure or can be changed by the cognitive structure (Moon, 2004).

According to Moon (2004), in mediated learning situations, such as formalized coaching courses and coaching conferences, another person designs and directs the learning. The individual learner is often more of a passive recipient of the information. In unmediated learning situations, there is no instructor and the learner takes the initiative and is responsible for choosing what to learn. For example, in sport, this could include coaches talking with other coaches, interacting and listening to their own athletes, and searching the Internet for information on training, nutrition, or psychology. The third type of learning situation, according to Moon (2004), is internal learning where there is no new material of learning but rather a reconsideration of existing ideas in an individual’s cognitive structure.

Moon (2004) also discusses two different approaches an individual may take to learning,
‘surface learning’ and ‘deep learning’. Surface learning occurs when an individual memorizes material presented to her simply in order to pass an exam. In contrast, taking a deep approach to learning is “characterized by an intention in the learner to understand the material of learning, seeking the meaning and understanding the ideas in it” (p. 59).

Peter Jarvis (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009), an author who has written extensively on learning, proposes a theory of human learning, which includes a lifelong learning perspective. His theory is useful in exploring the in-depth learning process of an individual. Jarvis (2006) offers the following definition of lifelong learning:

**The combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person’s biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person.** (p. 134; italics in original)

In Jarvis’ (2006) view, learning is lifelong, across a time-space continuum that begins at birth and continues throughout an individual’s lifetime, encompassing learning in many spheres of life (family, school, work, sport), and occurring in and outside of the educational system. An individual’s life experiences, social networks, and identity all have an impact on how and what one learns.

Two key concepts presented in Jarvis’ (2006) human learning theory are the concepts of biography and disjuncture. Biography, according to Jarvis (2006), is who we are at any point in time, and is the outcome of a lifetime of experiences. He argues that human beings are constantly being exposed to different learning opportunities and experiences and these experiences, which
are usually conscious, lead to learning: “Our experience occurs at the intersection of the inner
self and the outer world and so learning always occurs at this point or interaction” (Jarvis, 2006, p. 7). In his most recent work, Jarvis (2009) stated that we are constructing our biography
whenever we learn, and “whilst we live our biography is an unfinished product constantly
undergoing change and development” (p. 25).
Jarvis (2009) also contends that we learn when we are faced with a ‘disjuncture’, which
occurs “when our biographical repertoire is no longer sufficient to cope automatically with our
perception of the situation, so that our unthinking harmony with our world is disturbed and we
feel unease. We have a tension within our environment” (p. 21). A disjuncture, or ‘disharmony’,
according to Jarvis (2006) creates the possibility for learning. It is at these points in life when we
may choose to learn or not to learn. If we choose to learn either cognitively, emotively, or
practically, a sense of harmony is restored to our lives.
Jarvis (2007) also writes that learning always occurs within a social context. Human beings
are social and a fundamental aspect of learning is “that we always learn in a social context and
that the learning processes are themselves affected by the relationships within which we
function” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 20). Jarvis explains that individuals may find answers to questions by
interaction with a family member in childhood, with a coach, during everyday living, or self-
directed learning. Answers tend to be social constructs and individuals begin to internalise the
social world through learning these social constructs. In his more recent work, Jarvis (2009)
suggests that we must recognize the paradox that learning is both an individual process and a
process that takes place within the wider context of society.
In summary, we can see that two key authors in the field of learning, Jarvis (2006, 2007,
2008, 2009) and Moon (2001, 2004) share a similar perspective on learning. Similarities include
concepts such as cognitive structure or biography, the variety of learning situations that might be termed mediated, unmediated and internal, or formal, nonformal and informal, as well as their respective concepts of deep versus surface learning and the notion of disjuncture as a catalyst for potential learning. It is these two theorists and their conceptual frameworks that guide the present study.

Coach Learning

Coaches play a crucial role in an athlete or team’s preparation, performance, and overall well-being. Understanding how coaches learn and develop their knowledge is a growing area of research and we are beginning to see that coaches learn in a wide variety of situations such as through personal reflection, from formal and informal mentorships, from formal education courses and specific coaching courses and clinics, from their experiences as athletes, and from interactions with other coaches, their own athletes, and with experts in sport science (Erickson, Cote, & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Irwin, Hanton, & Kerwin, 2004; Jones, 2006; Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007; Reade, Rodgers, & Spriggs, 2008; Werthner & Trudel, 2006, 2009).

To date, only a few studies have looked at the process of reflection and its relationship to coach learning (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001, 2006; Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie, & Nevill, 2001). For example, Gilbert and Trudel (2001) interviewed six youth model coaches, in the sports of hockey and soccer, about how they were developing their coaching skills. The coaches spoke of the processes they used to identify particular issues, how they articulated and experimented with various strategies to resolve the issues they faced, and how they evaluated their actions, often utilizing a process of reflection. The coaches indicated that the skill of reflection helped them throughout the process. The authors discussed these findings in relationship to Schon’s (1983) concepts of reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and coined an additional phrase,
retrospective reflection-on-action. They cautioned that the six coaches in the study were
identified as ‘model’ coaches by their peers, and all coaches might not reflect in the same way,
or indeed, might not reflect at all.

Irwin, Hanton, & Kerwin (2004) interviewed 16 elite male gymnastics coaches to establish
how coaching skills and methods were learned to increase their knowledge base. The authors
noted that these coaches showed a high level of individuality in how they developed their
coaching skills. The 16 coaches identified a number of sources of learning such as mentor
coaches, trial and error experimentation, past experiences as an athlete, attending coaching
courses, regional and national squad sessions, observation, use of coaching manuals, and
interactions with foreign coaches, although the most common source identified in this study was
mentor coaches. The coaches reported that being mentored “allowed them to transcend from an
initial level of understanding to a higher level of competence” (p. 437).

Lemyre, Trudel, and Durand-Bush (2007) examined ways that youth sport coaches
learned within formal, mediated settings, and informal learning situations. Thirty-six youth-sport
coaches in ice hockey, soccer, and baseball agreed that information was acquired and learning
took place through the formal NCCP coach-education program, but these coaches also indicated
that their prior experiences as players or coaches provided them with sport specific knowledge.
In general, the coaches in the study said that the theoretical courses had limited relevance
because too much information was given in too short of a time period. However, it was found
that the coaches with less experience as athletes or coaches said the coach education programs
were beneficial because the courses provided them with the concrete information necessary for
beginning to coach.
A study by Wright, Trudel and Culver (2007) interviewed 35 volunteer youth ice hockey coaches from minor hockey associations. The coaches were asked questions regarding their different learning contexts such as formal large-scale coach education programs, personal learning experiences outside of these programs beginning when they were young athletes until their actual head coaching positions, and their use of the Internet. Findings indicated seven different learning situations which included the following: large-scale coach education programs, coaching clinics/seminars, formal mentoring, books/videotapes, personal experiences related to sport, family, and work, face-to-face interactions with other coaches, and the Internet. The authors conclude that coaches learn to coach through a variety of different learning situations and coach education should include a combination of all seven learning situations, rather than focusing on one, since each situation plays a unique role in a coach’s development.

Two recent studies have examined how university level coaches develop and learn (Erickson, Cote, & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Reade, Rodgers, & Spriggs, 2008). Erickson et al., (2007) interviewed ten team sport and nine individual sport coaches at the Canadian interuniversity level and found that the 19 coaches utilized their experiences as former athletes in the sport that they were currently coaching, as well as formal coaching education programs and mentorships in helping them develop as varsity coaches. Reade et al., (2008) explored how 20 high performance university level coaches utilized interactions with other coaches and sport scientists, as well as their own previous athletic experiences, in order to learn. Overall, the findings showed that most of the coaches learned from a variety of coach education programs, from coaching clinics and seminars, and their athletic experience. The coaches in this study indicated that, while they felt interactions with sport scientists could contribute to new ideas for
their coaching, they said, in fact, that they did not learn from sport scientists or from reading scientific articles.

Two studies by Werthner and Trudel (2006, 2009) have taken a rather new approach to looking at coach learning. In the first study, Werthner & Trudel, (2006) using Moon’s (1999, 2004) generic view of learning, present a new theoretical model for understanding how coaches learn, using a case study of an elite coach to illustrate Moon’s three different learning situations: mediated, unmediated and internal. The authors suggest that “rather than continuing to search for differences between coaching contexts it is becoming evident that it is more important to begin to understand the differences between coaches in a similar coaching context” (Werthner & Trudel, 2006, p. 18). They also argue that we should recognize the importance of internal learning situations for coaches as a complement to mediated and unmediated learning situations.

In the second study (Werthner and Trudel, 2009), 15 Canadian Olympic coaches were interviewed about the ways they learned throughout their coaching careers. This study found that even within such a similar coaching context, in this case at the Olympic level of sport, coaches learned across a variety of different situations and indeed, their individual learning paths were rather idiosyncratic. The coaches in this study shared five common learning situations: their experiences as athletes, learning from mentors, learning from their university or college degrees, participating in the NCCP courses or the National Coaching Institutes (NCI), and from ‘always thinking about’ or reflecting on their coaching work. However, the emphasis each of the coaches placed on these different learning situations varied widely. For example, while we know from previous research and the current study, that most coaches have been athletes themselves, one of the coaches in this study had not participated in any sport. Therefore he placed great emphasis on learning from a number of other coaches at the national level. All of the coaches did view
learning as a crucial component to their development and saw it as a lifelong, on-going process. As a result, the authors concluded that there is not one specific way elite Canadian coaches learn and that their paths of learning were idiosyncratic.

From these more recent studies, it is clear that coaches learn in a variety of different situations. Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne (2009) classified coach learning as happening in formal, nonformal and informal manner which has similarities to Moon’s (2004) three learning situations. A formal learning situation occurs usually within an institution where teachers follow a curriculum and the supervised learning is recognized with grades and certifications. Learning is intended to occur in formal situations within coach education programs where the learning is mediated or guided by a knowledgeable individual. Nonformal learning tends to be voluntary and shorter-term. For example, coaches may attend conferences or workshops over a week or weekend, which will contribute to their ongoing learning and allow them to apply what they have learned without being graded or supervised. Informal learning is described as learning opportunities outside of those provided under the formal coach education system and is “without the direct guidance of others” (Mallett et al., 2009, p. 328). The authors conclude that all three types of learning situations contribute to coach development and that time would be better spent working on ways to incorporate these various ways of learning into a coach’s lifelong perspective and coaching education programs.

In summary, the current research on coach learning has shown that coaches learn to coach in a variety of different learning situations such as experiences as athletes, use of mentors, on-going reflection, formal coach education courses, nonformal coaching clinics, and dialogue with and observation of other coaches. It is clear that coaches value all these learning situations
and coach educators need to consider what this means in terms of their formal and nonformal coach education settings.

Coach Education

The term education has gained a meaning that differentiates it from the concept of learning. “Traditionally education has been regarded as the institutionalisation of learning – learning is the process which occurs in individuals and education is the social provision of the opportunities to learn (and be taught) formally” (Jarvis, 2006, p. 63). In agreement with Jarvis’ separate terminologies, Mallett et al. (2009) state that coach education is any planned or recognized teaching activity by an institution or organization that contributes to the coach’s development.

There has been a growth in research in coach education and indeed there is a relatively new international organization, International Council for Coach Education (ICCE) devoted to ensuring that coaches are well educated in many different parts of the world (ICCE, 2010). The ICCE is a not-for-profit, international organization whose mission is to promote coaching as an accepted profession internationally. Members of the ICCE seek to enhance the quality of coaching at every level of sport (ICCE, 2010).

Coach education research has primarily focused the impact and influence coach education courses have on a coach’s development (Campbell & Sullivan, 2005; Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Gould, Krane, Giannini, & Hodge, 1990; Lyle, 2007; Trudel et al., 2010; Vargas-Tonsing, 2007). For example, an early empirical study by Gould and colleagues (1990) surveyed 130 national team, Pan American, and Olympic coaches representing more than 30 American Olympic level sports. The study focused on profiling the educational backgrounds of elite coaches and their perceived educational needs. While the findings revealed the importance of experiential knowledge and informal education in the development of these
coaches, the authors argued that formal coach education might facilitate the development of key coaching concepts and principles. They suggested that a comprehensive, unified coaching education system be developed in collaboration with university-based physical education programs.

Cushion and colleagues (2003) wrote a position paper examining the current state of coach education and assessment by drawing on research within the educational field. The article explored how coach education and continuing professional development could utilize mentoring and critical reflection to situate learning within the practical circumstances of coaching. The authors considered how coaches’ experiences (both in formal and informal learning situations) could impact their professional development and practice. The paper concluded that, while coaching experience out on the field, rink, or water plays the central role in coaches’ learning, without formal training provision novices would have little to no structured initiation into coaching.

Vargas-Tonsing (2007), investigated the opinions and preferences of 366 youth sport coaches attending an introductory coaching clinic to understand their preferences for continuing coaching education. Of the 366 coaches interviewed, 97% believed that coaching education was important, 87% felt that it should be mandatory, 84% believed coaching certification should be required, and 67% of the coaches indicated that they would pursue coach education if it were offered online. The study concluded that continuing coaching education would need to address topics such as communicating with parents and athletes, motivation, and character building in addition to standard drills; that creating more relevant topics and online availability might increase the percentage of coaches pursuing further education; and that the coaches appeared to value coaching education and certification.
Trudel and colleagues (2010), in a recent chapter on coach education effectiveness, examined six American and Canadian studies that investigated the impact of large-scale coach education programs. Three of the six studies focused on the development of coaching efficacy, and one of these (Campbell & Sullivan, 2005) examined Canadian coach education programming. These authors had Canadian coaches complete the Coaching Efficacy Scale (CES) before and after completing NCCP Level 1 and found that there was a significant increase in all of the four dimensions of coaching efficacy: game strategy, teaching technique, motivation, and character building. One of the studies developed a comprehensive evaluation strategy that the authors applied with one ice hockey coach (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999). Data was collected using participant observation, interviews, a knowledge test and video analysis, across practices and games and the attendance at a 22 hour level two course. The findings indicated that while the course was not delivered as designed the coach still appeared to use some of the course content in his coaching.

As a result of the analysis of these six studies, Trudel and colleagues (2010) state first that there is a paucity of research in this area, and second, suggest that there is another way to think about the relevance of coach education programs and the ways to effectively measure their ‘impact.’ The authors argue that Jarvis’ (2006, 2009) human learning approach would enable coach educators to begin to view learning from the learner’s, or coach’s perspective. They emphasize that coach education courses consist, at best, of only a few hours and days in a coach’s entire life of coaching and learning, and that coach educators must become aware of the many other non-formal and informal ways that coaches are learning. The authors also stress that this does not mean that formal courses are useless – indeed they suggest that the course should still be well-designed and implemented – but they do strongly advocate that a life-long
learning approach would help in understanding what can and cannot be evaluated in a formal coaching course or program.

In relationship to the recent work of Trudel and colleagues (2010) on the effectiveness of coach education programs, Moon (2001), in her book, Short Courses and Workshops, examines the ways that the impact of short courses can be improved and argues that, “unless a short course has impact on what a learner can and does do after it, there is little point in its existence (p. 124).

As we saw in the first section on the literature in learning, she discusses two metaphors of the brick wall view of learning and the network view of learning and states: “In the constructivist view of learning, a more useful metaphor than the brick wall is a vast but flexible network of ideas and feelings with groups of closely linked ideas/feelings” (p. 66). Moon sees the material of learning in a short course ideally as not just the accumulation of knowledge but an actual change in a participant’s cognitive structure.

Moon also discusses the importance of the social environment in relation to learning and suggests that, within a short course, other participants in the course may influence learning during discussions. Moon notes that learning from discussion is extremely valuable, because talking about a topic enables a learner to check his/her understanding of the topic, but also notes that discussion can be challenging and that is an example of what she calls ‘messy’ learning (p. 51). She does go on to say that this sense of messiness is nevertheless a necessary and important part of learning and professional development.

In her book, Moon (2001) proposes five stages of learning. The first stage is noticing and is the beginning step of five that lead to deeper learning. At this stage, the facilitator of a short course would be bringing attention to the content and what the learner might want to be interested in learning. The second stage Moon calls ‘making sense’ and it is the stage where the
learner becomes aware of how things may start to fit together. The third stage, ‘making meaning’, is “the first of the three stages that represent deep learning” (p. 73). Finally, Moon’s latter 2 stages are ‘working with meaning’ and ‘transformative learning’ and she views transformative learning as “a more comprehensive accommodation of the cognitive structure and an ability in the learner to step outside her own and others’ processes of reasoning” (p. 75).

Moon’s argument for increasing the possibility for learning within a short course is based on a four-phase framework. She argues that the course or workshop should be trying to ensure that learners, or participants in a course, build from what they know presently to what they can do differently, and she calls that “building from existing practice to the new practice” (2001, p. 127). The four phases are developing awareness of a learner’s current practice; clarifying new learning and how it relates to what the learner currently understands; integration of the new learning to what the learner is already doing; and imagining how the learner will actually change something and improve his or her practice.

In summary, it is clear that while there has been some research conducted in the area of coach education and the effectiveness of that education, there is still much work to be done. The work of Moon (2001) on the design for best impact of short courses and Trudel and colleagues (2010) on the usefulness of the lifelong learning perspective in reflecting on coaches’ learning provide us with strong perspectives to reflect more deeply on the coach learning within a formal coach education program.

Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) and the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP)

In this section, the new Canadian coach education program will be briefly described, as well as the process of coach certification and the role of the learning facilitator. The Coaching
Association of Canada (CAC) is responsible for coach education in Canada and its mission is “to enhance the experiences of all Canadian athletes through quality coaching” (CAC, 2009, ¶ 2). In 1974, the CAC created a nationwide coach education program, the National Coaching Certification Program. Recently the NCCP has been revised and moved to a competency-based approach where the focus is on what a coach can do rather than what a coach knows. The core competencies of coaching that are integrated into all NCCP training and evaluation activities are valuing, interacting, leading, problem solving, and critical thinking.

The new NCCP model is made up of three streams and a total of eight contexts, each with its own coaching requirements. The three streams in the NCCP include the Community sport stream, the Competition sport stream, and the Instruction stream. These contexts reflect the stages of athlete development. Within the Competition stream, there are three contexts that are called Introduction, Development and High Performance. Competition-Introduction provides coaches with knowledge about basic sport skills and how to create a fun and safe environment for athletes competing at the local and regional level of competition. Competition-High-Performance provides coaches who are working with national or international level athletes with knowledge about advanced skills and tactics.

Coaches participating in the Competition-Development context are working to develop athletes to help refine their basic sport skills and move forward to the more advanced skills and tactics. Coaches in this stream often have previous coaching experience or are former athletes in the sport and tend to work with athletes over the long term to improve performance, often in preparation for provincial or national level competitions (CAC, 2009). There are six multisport modules in the newly developed Competition-Development: leading drug-free sport, managing
conflict, coaching and leading effectively, psychology of performance, developing athletic
abilities, and prevention and recovery. It is this stream that will be the focus of the present study.

The process of certifying a coach within the competency-based approach consists of three
stages. The CAC website states that coaches receive NCCP coaching cards at different stages of
their development. The initial status achieved by coaches who participate in any NCCP
workshop will be an ‘In Training’ status and they will receive a card which reflects this status in
a specific sport, stream, and context. When all of the requirements for training in a given sport,
stream, and context are completed, coaches will receive a card indicating ‘Trained’, and this
status will not expire. The next time coaches will receive a card is when they become ‘Certified’,
indicating that the coach has successfully participated in a formal evaluation process and is able
to demonstrate competence to the required standard level. This certification will last up to five
years and in order to maintain certification, coaches will be required to participate in ongoing
professional development throughout their coaching careers. If status is not maintained, coaches
will be required to re-certify. Coaches have the opportunity to work in multiple sports and more
than one stream and context. As well, if coaches feel they are competent, they may advance to
the evaluation stage without additional training (CAC, 2009).

A final key component of the newly revised NCCP program is the learning facilitator
(LF) who plays an important role in the teaching of the new NCCP material. Each province
identifies key individuals to become LFs by the CAC selected national MLFs and they are
subsequently trained to deliver the six modules at the Competition-Development level.

In summary, in this review of literature we have looked at the research on learning using
the two perspectives of Moon (2004) and Jarvis (2006), the more recent research on how coaches
learn, the research on coach education and the current format of the Canadian National Coaching
Certification Program (NCCP). From the more recent research in sport and coach learning, it is apparent that coaches learn in a wide variety of learning situations, ranging from formal and nonformal (mediated), informal (unmediated), and internal. Clearly, learning to coach is a complex and lifelong process. Given that lifelong learning is about being and becoming (Jarvis, 2006, 2009), and a coach’s involvement in a formal coach education program may be only a few days or weeks of learning, the present study considers not only the course content and episodic learning experience of the module, and what the coaches felt they learned or did not learn within the module, but also considers who the coaches were prior to taking a course (their cognitive structure), the social aspects of learning that are almost inevitably part of any coach education module, as well as any learning experiences the coaches encountered over the three months following the module.

**Personal Interest**

While completing a Bachelor of Science in Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa, my courses focused on anatomy, physiology, and social sciences as well as sport psychology, coaching, and sociology of sport and exercise. During my studies, I competed as a high performance athlete in the sport of canoe/kayak and in the last two years I have been coaching provincial level sprint kayak athletes. I have learned that coaching entails more than simply working with athletes on kayak technique. A considerable amount of planning, preparation, reflection, adaptability and learning takes place to be an effective coach. Reflection and listening are critical tools I am learning to use to be an effective coach. As a coach, I understand the importance and benefit of ongoing, lifelong learning and through that I am creating a wider skill set not only for myself, but also for the athletes I work with. From my personal experience, I
know that each athlete learns differently, and as they develop, it is important, as a coach, to be open to learning, so that I can meet their individual needs.

After exploring this topic in my Master’s classes and through discussions with my advisor and our coaching group meetings with peers and professors, I have become fascinated with the topic and in continuing my own exploration of understanding how coaches learn and apply their knowledge when working with their athletes.
CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY

Epistemology

Constructivism

The epistemology that was used in this study is constructivism. Upon reading the literature on how coaches learn, it is clear that the past experiences of a coach significantly influence the way he or she chooses to learn. Constructivism is “an approach that posits that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work by developing subjective meanings of their experiences” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). Constructivism is the perspective through which “most contemporary qualitative researchers nourish the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered” (Stake, 1995, p. 100). When put into practice, constructivism describes the process individuals undertake to create meaning. It also acknowledges the uniqueness of these constructed experiences and it is suggested, “each one’s way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other” (Crotty, 2003, p. 58).

This research explored the influence a formal coach education module had on coaches’ ongoing learning. A series of in-depth interviews were conducted with ten NCCP Competition-Development coaches prior to, immediately following, and three months after completion of a module.

Research Design

Case study

This research used a multiple case study approach, where the “one issue or concern is selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue” (Creswell, 2007, p.74). Stake (2005) states that case study research is not a methodology, but a choice of what is to be studied. By examining multiple cases, the uniqueness and commonality of each case can be
illustrated and reveal the different viewpoints of each case (Stake, 1995). This study garnered input, through in-depth interviews with 10 coaches, on their various ways of learning prior to, during, and after completion of a NCCP Competition-development module.

Methods

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to understand how the NCCP Competition-Development modules contribute to coaches’ ongoing learning. The main research question that guided the present study was: “What role does an NCCP Competition-Development module play in influencing a coach’s ongoing learning?” A secondary research question was also utilized: “What other learning situations did the coaches in the study experience prior to attendance at a module and in the three months following a module?”

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used in this study, meaning that the inquirer selected individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research study (Creswell, 2007). Ten coaches were selected to participate in this study. The criteria were as follows: the coach needed to be a) working with developing level athletes and (b) eligible to take part in a Competition-Development module.

Recruitment and Consent

The researcher provided the Coaches Association of Ontario (CAO) with a letter of recruitment, detailing the purpose and procedures of the study. With the help of the CAO, a list of possible modules was obtained. A list of names of coaches who were registered for each of the three modules was provided to the researcher by an organizer within the COA. Once a coach
agreed to be part of the study, confidentiality procedures were explained and a consent form was signed in accordance with the University of Ottawa Standard Research Ethics procedures.

Data Collection

The study encompassed three phases: Phase one was a first interview with each coach prior to taking part in a module; Phase two was attending the module and a second interview upon completion of the module; Phase three was a third interview three months after completion of the module. The interviews were semi-structured in order to create dialogue between the participant and the researcher and allowed the participants to share their thoughts and experiences regarding both their ongoing learning and learning within the module. Some of the questions asked in the first interview were: “Tell me about who you coach?” “Tell me about your experiences as an athlete” “How do you think you have learned to be a good coach?” Some of the questions asked upon completion of the module were: “What, if anything, did you learn from the module?” and “What do you think you can take and apply with your athletes?” “Was there anything you did not understand?” Some of the questions asked three months after completion of the module were: “What, if anything, have you used or done differently, as a result of the module?” and “What other ways have you been learning, or working on improving your coaching?”

Data Analysis

Case study analysis consists of creating a detailed description of the case and it’s setting (Creswell, 2007). Participant interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim resulting in approximately 20 single spaced pages, on average, over the course of the three phases of interviews for each of the ten coaches. During the transcription process notes were taken to begin to identify potential codes emerging from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Upon completion of
the three phases of interviews, each participant was asked if they wanted to review their interview transcript. Only one coach made minor changes to their transcript.

The next phase of analysis used Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis method, which is a “method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis is comprised of six-phases, which include becoming familiar with the data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming themes, and finally, producing the report. The first phase involved transcribing each interview verbatim. Each transcript was read and reread to ensure the researcher was immersed in the data and familiar with the content, making notes of any ideas or themes that emerged from the transcripts.

The second phase involved generating initial codes and coding as many potential patterns as possible and to “code extracts of data inclusively – i.e., keep a little of the surrounding data if relevant” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 89). The third phase entailed searching for themes once all of the data had been coded. This allowed the researcher to “start thinking about the relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes (i.e., main overarching themes and sub-themes within them)” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 89–90). Reviewing the themes, (such as formal, informal, and nonformal learning situations the ten coaches had experienced), was the next phase of analysis, which involved evaluating each theme to determine if it should be broken down to form a new theme. The fifth phase involves defining and naming themes, and further refining the themes to be generated. The final phase of thematic analysis requires the researcher to illustrate the findings in a manner that “convinces the reader of the merit and validity” of the analysis (p. 93), providing a “concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and
interesting account” (p. 93) of the data within each theme by using quotations from each participant.
CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

The purpose of this research study was to understand how the NCCP Competition-Development modules contribute to coaches’ ongoing learning. A qualitative approach was taken in an attempt to create an in-depth understanding of who the coaches were prior to attending a module, what they thought they learned from the particular module, and what learning situations they experienced and changes they made to their coaching approach three months after attending the module.

The results are divided into three sections, based on the phases of the study. Each of the participants underwent three in-depth interviews for this study. The first section presents the findings from the first set of interviews, which focused on who the coaches were in this study, and how they felt they had, to that point in time in their life, learned to coach. The second section presents the findings from the second set of interviews, delineating how the coaches experienced the NCCP module and what they felt they had learned from the module. The third section presents the findings from the third interview that took place approximately three months after completion of one of the modules. This third and final set of interviews explored what the coaches may have changed in their coaching approach as the result of the formal NCCP module or other learning situations they may have experienced over the three-month period following completion of the module.

Phase One: First Set of Interviews

In the first set of interviews, the questions explored who the coaches were: their formal education, their gender and age, their past athletic experiences, their experiences in coaching, and how they felt they had learned to coach (See Tables 1 and 2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Personal athletic experience</th>
<th>Career (inside/outside of coaching)</th>
<th>Years of coaching</th>
<th>Volunteer or paid</th>
<th>Sport coached</th>
<th>Level of athletes currently coaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-High School basketball</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>volunteer</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>-11 year old boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Recreational soccer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-old timers men’s soccer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-High school football</td>
<td>IT/Home Depot associate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>volunteer</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>-10 year old girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Recreational soccer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>premier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>-National and Pan American field hockey</td>
<td>Federal Government</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>volunteer</td>
<td>Field Hockey</td>
<td>-U14, U16 Provincial girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-National and international ringette</td>
<td>School teacher</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>volunteer</td>
<td>Ringette</td>
<td>-AAA Canada Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-University Rugby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-AA Jr. U16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-National and international sailing</td>
<td>Provincial sailing coach (Ontario)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>paid</td>
<td>Sailing</td>
<td>-Provincial level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-Recreational soccer</td>
<td>Hotel server</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>volunteer</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>-old timers rec. league</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-National, Pan American, international canoe kayak</td>
<td>Canoe Club coach</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>paid</td>
<td>Canoe Kayak</td>
<td>-provincial level athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-Canada Games team, national level canoe kayak</td>
<td>Canoe Club coach</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>paid</td>
<td>Canoe Kayak</td>
<td>-U14 boys and girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-National level canoe kayak</td>
<td>Canoe club coach/student</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>paid</td>
<td>Canoe Kayak</td>
<td>-novice masters (25+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-Professional soccer</td>
<td>Soccer coach</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>paid</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>6-18 year old boys and girls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Coaches’ learning situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Formal Education</th>
<th>Informal learning situations</th>
<th>Nonformal learning situations</th>
<th>Competition Development module attended</th>
<th>Other NCCP courses attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Electrical Engineer, Carleton University</td>
<td>subscription to Success in Soccer magazine, articles on coaching, Internet, mentor</td>
<td>weekly coaching clinics</td>
<td>Managing Conflict</td>
<td>-Competition Introduction Part A and B, -Competition-Development module Developing Athletic Ability, -various other courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Sports Medicine, Springfield College</td>
<td>pamphlets on coaching</td>
<td>coaching clinics</td>
<td>Managing Conflict</td>
<td>-no NCCP courses prior to MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science in Food and Nutrition, University of Alberta</td>
<td>mentor, field hockey coach, books on leadership, Internet websites on drills, reflection on athletic experience</td>
<td>-no nonformal courses</td>
<td>Coaching and Leading Effectively</td>
<td>-old level 1, 2, 3, -Competition-Development modules DAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science in Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, Bachelor of Education, Brock University</td>
<td>mentor, reflection on athletic experience</td>
<td>-courses</td>
<td>Coaching and Leading Effectively</td>
<td>-level 1, 2, -Competition Development modules: DAA, MC, CLE, LDFS, PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>Kinesiology and Business, University of Western</td>
<td>mentors, virtual coach online, reflection on leadership, observing national and international coaches, reflection on athletic experience</td>
<td>-no nonformal learning</td>
<td>Coaching and Leading Effectively</td>
<td>-level 1, -Competition Development modules: DAA, PAI, -first level for Ontario Yatching Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>highschool in Poland, some university courses in Canada</td>
<td>2 mentors: national B license soccer coaches, books, coaching sessions</td>
<td>clinics and coaching sessions</td>
<td>Coaching and Leading Effectively</td>
<td>-level 1, 3, -Competition-Development modules DAA, MC, CLE, LDFS, PP, PAI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>Completing Bachelor of Sociology, McMaster University</td>
<td>mentor: father, reflection on athletic experience, reflection on previous coaching, Internet</td>
<td>coaching clinics</td>
<td>Psychology of Performance</td>
<td>-level 1, -pilot for Competition Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts, Carleton University, Bachelor of Education, Queen’s University</td>
<td>books, mentor: provincial canoe kayak coach</td>
<td>-no nonformal learning</td>
<td>Psychology of Performance</td>
<td>-level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9</td>
<td>Completing degree in Commerce with concentration in Accounting, Carleton University</td>
<td>mentor: provincial canoe kayak coach, books</td>
<td>-no nonformal learning</td>
<td>Psychology of Performance</td>
<td>-level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10</td>
<td>Psychology, minor in business and physical education, Houghton College, NY, Masters sport management, University of Ottawa</td>
<td>reading books, Internet looking for drills, talking to coaches and athletes</td>
<td>-soccer courses, A license Canadian Soccer Association</td>
<td>Psychology of Performance</td>
<td>-old level 1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MC = Managing Conflict  
*DAA = Developing Athletic Abilities  
*CLE = Coaching and Leading Effectively  
*LDFS = Leading Drug Free Sport  
*PAI = Prevention of Athletic Injuries  
*PP = Psychology of Performance
The coaches’ biographies

Ten coaches, from the sports of soccer, canoe/kayak, sailing, ringette, and field hockey participated in this study. There were seven male coaches and three female coaches, ranging in age from 21-45 years. Five of the coaches were paid while the other five were volunteer coaches. There were a number of different ways that the coaches became involved in coaching. Four of the ten coaches started coaching because their child began playing sport. As one coach said “I started coaching when my oldest son started playing soccer” (C1). Four coaches began coaching while they were still athletes. For example, the field hockey coach was asked to coach a local high school team while she was still a member of the national team. She and her husband took on the task of coaching that team together, and after the first year, she continued coaching on her own (C3). The other two coaches were inspired to coach because of great coaches they had worked with when they were athletes.

All of the coaches in this study had participated in sport, ranging from the recreational and high school level to the provincial and national level. In discussing their varying levels of athletic experiences, one coach, who competed up to the national level, said, “with kayaking, I’ve raced at the national level, and I have competed at the Pan Am Games and Pan Am Championships a few times” (C7). Another coach stated, “I played on the provincial team when I was 16 and I played university field hockey and was with the National Team for the Pan American Games” (C3). One of the four soccer coaches said, "I played basketball in high school and since then have played pick-up soccer” (C1). Interestingly, one of the coach participants was still active in sport: “I’m currently a member of the National team for ringette, and this is the third time I’ve been on the World Championships team” (C4). Another coach who was active in sports when he
was in high school said that he still “plays pick up hockey once in a while and goes to the gym
but not at a high level at all” (C2).

The coaches’ formal education ranged from a high school diploma to a university master’s
degree, and all but one coach had completed some of their NCCP levels. The undergraduate
degrees were in electrical engineering, sociology, human kinetics, psychology, arts, education,
nutrition, and sports medicine. Nine of the ten coaches had completed their level 1 certification
and coach training through the National Coaching Certification Program (see Table 3). For one
of the coaches, the Competition-Development module on Managing Conflict was his first formal
coaching course.

Learning situations prior to attendance at a NCCP Module

Each of the ten coaches was asked about the various ways they had learned to coach.

There was a wide range of learning situations discussed: formal, nonformal, and informal
learning. In terms of formal learning situations, the nine coaches who had attended previous
NCCP coaching courses spoke about what they had learned in those courses. For example, one
of the soccer coaches felt the coaching courses had a positive influence on his coaching
development:

Every one of the courses has taught me different things. At the beginning you’re just
learning drills when you first start your soccer license. You learn how to deal with
parents, and the role of a coach as a leader, as a teacher, as a counselor. You learn all of
these things because going in you don’t really realize that you have such a huge role to
play. When you’re coaching you start to think about the ways you speak to the kids, what
you should and shouldn’t say, how you approach a training session, how you prepare for
a training session. (C10)
The ringette coach explained how several of the coaching courses reinforced what she was doing:

I think one of the main things that you walk away with is the reassurance that other coaches are doing the same things as you are, and how it’s important that the goals of the young people you are developing are kept at the forefront - I think taking these courses helps to reinforce that message. (C4)

A sailing coach with a degree in kinesiology, spoke specifically of the module on Prevention of Athletic Injuries saying, “I think the biggest thing was learning how to taper training leading up to and after competition. We also talked about periodization which was a new thing for me” (C5).

Six of the ten coaches spoke about coaching clinics (nonformal) they had attended that they found useful in developing as a coach. Three of the coaches in this study were involved with the same soccer association that offered free coach development through weekly coaching clinics. One of the soccer coaches was actually in charge of running the weekly soccer coaching clinics. Another coach, who took one of the clinics run by a national level coach, felt he learned that it was important to keep things simple in terms of explaining the drills and evaluating performances. He added, “the clinics helps to deal with coaching issues between the coach and player. You need to spend time to learn, so I go to the clinics and practice with other coaches, and listen to what they have to say” (C6). Similarly, the third soccer coach who attended the same coaching clinics, said, “these are clinics that introduce coaches to basic fundamentals of soccer and even more importantly show us the best way to teach these skills to the kids” (C1).

The same coach continued by commenting on the benefit of completing a referee course:
It helped me in my coaching because I have a better understanding of the rules of the game now and the more I think of it, it’s a good conflict management tool so that I don’t get into so much conflict with the referees! Now I can see the side that they’re coming from. There were a bunch of rules that surprised me and I thought ‘wow I didn’t know that.’ (C1)

Each of the three soccer coaches also mentioned that they learned helpful warm up drills for soccer practices in the weekly soccer clinics. One coach explained:

I learned a great game warm up from one of these sessions that teaches the kids to open up and have their body always facing the field. There’s a game where you have 3 players and the middle guy always has to avoid having his back seen by the other 2 players and they have to move in certain areas. (C1)

In terms of informal learning situations, the coaches spoke of situations such as observing and talking with other coaches, their own athletic experiences, informal mentoring situations, and their use of reflection. For example, all of the coaches in this study spoke of the importance of observing and talking with other coaches. One of the canoe/kayak coaches explained that he observed other coaches and took the good and the bad from various coaches. He said, “along with my own experience, for example, I have seen one coach push athletes a lot - he would identify specific athletes he thought could improve their technique and push them during practice all the time” (C9). He added, from a reflection as an athlete:

The lesson for me has been identifying what your athlete can handle and listening to the athlete. I was an athlete for a long time myself and I’ve had a lot of different coaches who have had different philosophies and I’ve kind of absorbed the things I’ve liked from coaches, things I haven’t liked I let go. (C9)
The field hockey coach spoke of her university coach who had an influence on her learning to be a good coach:

She was probably the best coach I had. She let us think outside the box, while she still taught us all the skills. She let us be creative and yet she made sure that we were on the right track - she let us play with a free spirit on the field.

While these coaches talked about the relevance of observing and talking with other coaches, they also talked about how their own athletic experiences had influenced their coaching approach. A successful kayak athlete turned coach explained how his own experiences as an athlete helped with coaching decisions:

Some of my coaching is sort of reflecting on my experience as an athlete and what I went through. For example, when I’m writing a program, I can go through and read the manual on how much rest is recommended etc, but now I almost always reflect on how it worked for me. I can put myself in that situation doing that workout and project how that’s actually going to end up feeling on the water and make adjustments from there. (C7)

As we can see from the above quote, reflection also played a role in some of the coaches’ learning. Another example came from the ringette coach who talked about her process of reflecting on different individuals who had been influential in her life, and how they had instilled the passion she has for helping others, and ultimately directing her to teaching and coaching:

I’ve grown up with good leaders around me. I had some good teachers who were positive influences on me. I’ve certainly had not so good coaches, and you take important lessons out of those experiences and hopefully filter out the bad stuff. The national team coach has inspired me – watching how she works with the team and the players. That is
something I’d like to take on in my own coaching roles. One coach that I had in high school was so great and brought out all the good qualities and made you want to be a good leader and a strong performer. (C4)

In the course of this first interview, the coaches were asked if they had ever had anyone as either an informal or formal mentor, and eight of the ten coaches responded yes to having an informal mentor. For example, the provincial sailing coach said:

I’m just starting right now to work with some Olympic level athletes, and to go to some international competitions, and I have been spending time with one of the national coaches – and learning about training about being on the water as much as you can - fitness and nutrition are important but on the water – that is where the competition is going to happen- so that is one the biggest thing I think I’ve learned so far from him. (C5)

A club coach who works with canoe/kayak athletes training to compete at a national level explained how his father is a mentor for him:

My dad is a bit of a mentor for me. He was a huge coaching presence when I was developing and he sort of sets the model for the style of coaching that I’ve developed – not that I try to completely copy it, but it’s definitely the framework that I’m working from. (C7)

An elite ringette player and coach, who is also a school teacher, spoke of the importance of having a mentor:

I think I’ve had a few mentors. One of the coaches that I had when I was just coming out of my teenage years - she was the Canada Games coach with us, she taught me a lot about developing confidence in myself. I’m currently working with one coach now who been a positive influence in helping me and guiding me along in terms of coaching. We
talk through scenarios and now I have developed the confidence to make decisions on my own versus always saying ‘you make the decision.’ For a long time, I’d been preparing all the practices and developing the season plan but he was the head coach and I felt like I had to go to him and ask him. But now he has said ‘you’re the coach, you can make the decision.’ He’s been a mentor for sure. (C4)

In summary, the ten coaches each exhibited different biographies relating to their varying levels of formal education, their sport and coaching experiences, and the different learning situations they had experienced to date. The coaches spoke of learning in formal learning situations such as NCCP modules, in nonformal situations such as coaching clinics, and in informal learning situations such as talking with and observing other coaches, and reflecting on those and other experiences.

Phase Two: The NCCP Competition-Development Modules and the second set of interviews

The three NCCP Competition-Development modules that were part of the current study were Managing Conflict (4 ½ hour module attended by two of the coaches on February 24th, 2010), Leading Effectively (10 hour module attended by four coaches on March 27th and 28th, 2010), and Performance Psychology (7 hour module attended by four coaches on June 6th, 2010).

It was by chance that the same learning facilitator conducted all three modules.

Observation of the module being delivered

As the researcher I attended each of the three NCCP modules and observed the coaches’ interactions with each other, both during the actual course and at the breaks and lunch period. A few of the coaches came to the course with a fellow coach they worked with and, if that was the case, they tended to interact with them throughout the day.
Interestingly, by the end of each course, most of the coaches appeared comfortable with each other and talked freely to a variety of coaches in the module. Two of the coaches, the ringette coach and one of the soccer coaches, attended all three of the modules and became familiar with one another. During the lunch period, while some coaches were quiet, others spoke with each other about their sport and their athletes. In each of the modules, contact with the LF appeared to only take place during instructional time in the group setting.

The second interview

The purpose of this phase of the research was to gain an understanding of the learning that may or may not have taken place during the module, as well as to explore what learning might have taken place from social interactions during the module. This second set of interviews was conducted with each of the ten coaches in the week following the module. The questions centered on what occurred in the module – what they found useful, what they thought they might use in their coaching, what they might not have understood, and what they might have not found useful.

In reflecting on what they had learned in the Psychology of Performance module, the four coaches spoke about being reminded of doing better goal setting, more detailed race plans, better debriefs with their athletes, and learning more about the concept of focus. As one of the kayak coaches said:

One of the main things, again this is in the refresher vein, was I started reflecting about all the stuff we talked about and my post-competition review of goals probably wasn’t getting done well enough. Setting goals for long-term and for specific regattas was being done but the review of those goals immediately afterwards was probably lacking and not
where it should be. That was something I realized from the discussions that we were having, and I started thinking ‘ok, we should probably correct that.’ (C7)

Another canoe/kayak coach felt she learned strategies for getting her young athletes to talk more freely after races:

Debriefing is just a matter of getting the athlete to talk a little bit more after the race saying what was good, what they could have improved upon, making sure not to ask ‘yes or no’ questions, you have to probe a little bit. Even getting the athlete’s to write things down would be good. Having a discussion with them is important and getting them to be really clear and reflect on their race so that you can work on certain aspects - just listening to them. (C8)

A third canoe/kayak coach, whose athletes were beginner adults, felt he learned something about creating effective race plans. He had always adjusted his race plans on race day, but also thought it was ok for athletes to change their plan while in mid-race. After a long discussion with the facilitator and the group of coach participants, he noted that “it was discussed that you can never make good decisions when you’re exhausted and so changing a plan at mid-point in a race is not going to be a good idea. So, that was one thing that changed my mind a little bit” (C9). Another aspect of the course he found helpful was related to communicating with his athletes, and he added that part of this learning came from a coach in the course:

I think I see how I have to talk with the athletes in a different manner now. Instead of telling them that their top arm needs to be straight or they need to rotate more, I will ask them how it feels, and I will ask them to go through the motions. I want them to know what muscles they feel – I actually picked that up from the basketball coach – he said
they walk the athletes through and get them to analyse where their knee was, what foot they’re pushing off of. (C9)

A soccer coach with a Master’s degree in sport management and an A license certification in soccer said he learned about debriefing and a bit more about the skill of focus. He explained:

When you’re debriefing you want to figure out ‘what, when, where, how’ – that was good, and also the broad focus, I remember I was able to relate that to my players. I remember something about being focused internally… I’d like to talk to the defenders as a unit, and the strikers as a unit to make sure everyone was using a narrow focus, and individually there’s 11 players on the field and in the game if I give each player a task… I guess I learned a lot actually! (C10)

In the module on Coaching and Leading Effectively, the four coaches interviewed for this module spoke of learning about the importance of the skills of listening, being clear when speaking, and facilitation, and also about how they personally reacted when they found themselves in leadership positions. The provincial sailing coach felt he learned something about confidence and listening skills:

I felt it was really useful how the course went over how to be a good presenter of skills. The course drilled the confidence thing – you need to be confident when you speak and the way you approach people and hit on the point. And you need to be a good listener and you need to feel empathy at certain points, which I hadn’t been doing in the past. (C5)

The ringette coach said she enjoyed the communication section of this module:

Part of the course was about clear messages - how to speak to certain people so that you can communicate clearly what your ideas are so that there will be less problems later. Just
reviewing the difference between listening to someone and listening empathetically that
was one thing that came up. It wasn’t something I had never heard before but I thought it
was good, just practicing in an isolated situation. (C4)
This same coach also felt she learned about herself from attending a number of NCCP
modules. For example, in the Coaching and Leading Effectively module she felt she learned that,
while being passionate was still important, learning how to be calm was crucial to coaching
successfully:
I like to think that I’m pretty calm and collected, but here I learned I’m really not. The
other day, in another module, Leading Drug Free Sport module, I got pretty worked up. I
could see myself getting emotional and it was as if this other coach was egging me on. So
I see that I get very emotional about things and that’s something I should probably work
on. If I had the ‘I see, I hear, I feel’ strategy from Coaching and Leading Effectively it
would have helped - and I think it will. (C4)
She continued by saying that she wanted to work on being more confident when giving
instruction to others, whether players, parents or other coaches:
I want to be able to be vulnerable around them but to be honest; I think that it is
something that will take me a little bit more time as a coach. Some coaches just open up
to other players, I’m not like that – it takes me a while. So, if I see an opportunity,
hopefully I will recognize it, and I hope I’m sure of myself that I can just go and take
advantage of the situation. (C4)
One of the coaches who attended this module remembered that facilitation could be
helpful when working with athletes, and the course helped him understand how to do that:
When I went to several coaching clinics, the national coaches asked us to facilitate a little more, to step aside and let the players figure out how to handle certain situations on the field – and this course certainly added to how we might do that well. (C6)

In the module of Managing Conflict, the two coaches who attended spoke about strategic ways of preventing conflict and the importance of staying calm. For example, one of the coaches spoke of realizing the value of waiting 24 hours before reacting to what a parent or another coach may have said and was keen on applying that strategy to his coaching routine when necessary.

The coaches were also asked whether they learned anything from the group discussions that took place during the modules. A number of the coaches commented favorably on the value of the discussions. For example, one of the soccer coaches who attended the Managing Conflict module answered:

Yes, in one instance we were doing the role-playing and a question came up in terms of the communication and the way of speaking. There was a coach present who introduced us to something called the ‘WIN’ concept - when you’re talking to someone in a conflict situation you can use this concept saying ‘when I hear you doing this, then I feel this or think this, and the N stands for the ‘need’ and I need you to do this.’ (C1)

One of the canoe/kayak coaches said that he found a strategy for staying focused, suggested by another coach, as particularly useful:

In our discussion on focus she explained that if one of your athletes came to practice and was having a really bad day, rather than letting the athlete talk about it and it affecting her training, you get her to either write it down on a piece of paper and physically put it in a box, or just have her visualize putting away that bad day and knowing that you can come
back to it after practice but just thinking ‘you want to have another focus for the next 2
hours’. She said it was something that worked especially well with teenagers. (C8)
Several coaches claimed that the module content confirmed what they already knew. The
field hockey coach said that while she learned a couple of things, the main thing she learned is
that she knew more than she previously thought she did. Another coach explained that the
content of the Managing Conflict module was a good confirmation of what he already
instinctively knew, stating, “I had a gut feeling about a lot of the content presented so it’s good to
see that there’s some study behind it. It appears that I’ve been on the right course and it was good
to learn about some of the strategies for dealing with people in a conflict situation.” (C1)
The sailing coach stated, “one thing in particular the group discussed was the importance
of staying calm when dealing with an emotional athlete” (C5). One of the kayak coaches said:
I generally knew most of what was discussed and have applied the methods throughout
my coaching. Most of the areas discussed, like focus and goal setting, felt more like a
reminder of what I should be doing as a coach rather than new material. However, the
class itself was useful because being reminded of these things, things that are simple and
should be common sense, is necessary. (C8)
Four of the coaches commented on the course content of the modules, either mentioning
there were concepts they did not really understand, or making suggestions for improvement. For
example, one of the coaches said he did not understand the concept of intervention, as it was
used in the module on Coaching and Leading Effectively, saying, “I guess I still don’t have a
clear idea on what an intervention is, so maybe that part could have been explained better.” (C3)
Another coach suggested that there could have been more specific examples in the Psychology of
Performance module, on how to actually ensure athletes were well prepared:
I’d still like to see specific tactics or exercises that athletes could use to condition specific psychological responses in themselves. For example, how could athletes mentally deal with fatigue? Or under performance? Or performance pressure? Specific case examples would be really good, and a way to teach the athletes what they should be doing, and how to train themselves to do it. But perhaps this course does not have the time to devote to it.

(C7)

Finally, one of the coaches who was a volunteer and a parent, who had nearly completed all six Competition-Development modules, felt he had learned a great deal:

I would recommend Coaching and Leading Effectively to other coaches. There are a lot of things to learn and we have to appreciate that you can actually learn new things about leadership that will help you as a coach, and help your athletes to achieve their goals.

(C6)

This second set of interviews was conducted to gain a better understanding of the learning that took place during the module, as well as to understand what the coaches may have learned from other coaches in the group discussion, or informally, and to identify any areas of misunderstanding in terms of the content. As we have seen, the coaches spoke of a variety of different learning moments within the modules, as well as learning from other coaches. They also indicated a few moments where they had been confused by the content, and several offered suggestions for improvement of the module.

Learning facilitator of the modules

The three NCCP modules in the present study, Managing Conflict, Coaching and Leading Effectively, and Psychology of Performance, were all lead by the same learning facilitator (LF).

During the second interview following the module, each coach was asked if there was anything
the LF had done to help facilitate his or her learning. All ten coaches were positive about the LF.

One of the coaches felt the LF provided a perfect example on how to coach and lead effectively:

She spoke very clearly, and she was a very nice, open person, easy to approach. She never rejected anyone’s answers so I felt throughout the course it became easier to speak because you knew she would never say ‘that’s the wrong answer’ and shut you off. She projected herself very well and she was confident in what she was saying so it was easy to keep my attention. (C5)

Another coach reflected on the role of the LF, and tied her skill of facilitation into the topic of being an effective leader:

It was interesting that she kept reinforcing what her job was – that she was a facilitator. She kept saying ‘I’m here to facilitate, I’m not here to tell you what to do.’ As a coach you don’t necessarily tell the kids what to do but you let them do it. I mentioned it last time that one of the coaches I had, she let us be free spirits, and she would give us the tools and say ‘ok go do it’. That’s what the LF was doing. She was there to guide us and give us time to practice with drills but she would say ‘you are here to do it yourself’ - that was interesting for her to say that. (C3)

Another coach recognized that the way the course and activities were organized was to ensure coaches were conversing and sharing ideas with coaches from other sports. This coach also commented on ways the facilitator helped her think outside the box:

The learning facilitator asked questions and when you answered them she wouldn’t necessarily agree or disagree, she was just trying to get you to explain it and then try to repeat back to yourself. I thought that was a pretty good way. I like to think that I’m right
when I answer but I liked that she didn’t say ‘you’re right’ or ‘no, I don’t agree with you, you’re wrong.’ She didn’t judge. It was pretty free flowing ideas I think. (C4)

One of the canoe/kayak coaches stated that the LF was very helpful throughout the Psychology of Performance module particularly during the group discussions:

Coaches were organized into groups to practice visualization, and we felt quite uncomfortable doing it and she reassured us by saying ‘yes it’s going to be uncomfortable but if you don’t do it, how do you expect your athletes to do it? And when we were doing individual work, she would come around and listen to what we were saying and sometimes she would question us by asking ‘what did you mean by this concept’, or add a ‘that’s interesting’, and sometimes she would bring it up to the whole group but not in a way that was embarrassing or anything. She was very nice and she did a good job. (C8)

Phase Three: Third interview with the coaches

The third and final interviews were conducted with each of the coaches three months after their attendance at a Competition-Development module. The purpose of the final interview was twofold: first, to gain an understanding of what the coaches may have done differently, in terms of their coaching, particularly connected to the material of learning in the module, and second, to explore any other learning situations they may have encountered in that three-month time frame (See Table 3).
Table 3: Changes coaches made to their coaching practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>NCCP Competition-Development module attended</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Changes made to coaching practice as result of the module</th>
<th>Other learning situations, between second and third interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Managing Conflict</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Learned strategies for how to manage conflict when communicating with parents, other coaches: “one of the things that I learned in the course was to hold off a bit before responding in the passion of the moment”</td>
<td>Soccer coaching clinics: learned drills to use in coaching U11 boys soccer – fun and vocal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Managing Conflict</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>No change in coaching practice.</td>
<td>Found drills on the internet. Attended Parmar soccer ‘skill school’ - learned drills to control the soccer ball better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>Coaching and Leading Effectively</td>
<td>Field hockey</td>
<td>Learned effective communication skills: ensuring players understand the drills completely before going on the field to play. “I’m learning to understand how they learn best.” Learned how to delegate and manage her time - found a team manager immediately.</td>
<td>NCCP module: Psychology of Performance and Leading Drug Free Sport. Reading books, talking with other coaches – specifically about training programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4</td>
<td>Coaching and Leading Effectively</td>
<td>Ringette</td>
<td>Learned how to give effective feedback to athletes. Learned how to facilitate a discussion effectively “Asking more questions instead of just giving my opinion or advice, remembering to get them to open up as much as they can because that’s going to give you information you want”. Learned about myself: “well I know I get very emotional when I’m invested in something”.</td>
<td>NCCP Psychology of Performance module: what mental performance skills to use. Read papers on how to lead a team and integrate kids of all learning levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>Coaching and Leading Effectively</td>
<td>Sailing</td>
<td>Learned the importance of leading by example: having fun, giving short and concise feedback. The importance of “listening to parents and athletes, just being that set of ears”.</td>
<td>Informal mentoring - working closely with a past Olympian, Informal: learned video analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>Psychology of Performance Canoe kayak</td>
<td>Canoe kayak</td>
<td>Learned how to set goals and specifically assess in debriefing – “this was the biggest and most concrete addition to what I’ve been changing and doing – what goals were met, what weren’t and why.</td>
<td>Informal mentoring, learning the best sequence to develop athletes, key fundamental elements. Reflection on previous athletic experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8</td>
<td>Psychology of Performance Canoe kayak</td>
<td>Canoe kayak</td>
<td>Learning how to debrief. Learning how to delegate.</td>
<td>Informal discussions with other coaches about creative program ideas for next season.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9</td>
<td>Psychology of Performance Canoe kayak</td>
<td>Canoe kayak</td>
<td>No change in coaching practice - time constraints.</td>
<td>Talking with other coaches on technique. Gathering information from the Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10</td>
<td>Psychology of Performance Soccer</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>No change in coaching practice – currently not involved with a specific team. Some unanswered questions: how to get the most out of your players, when to push them and when not to.</td>
<td>Reflection on how to get the most out of the players without raising my voice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exploring what coaches changed in their coaching practice

In general the responses of the coaches were mixed in terms of what they had learned and changed in their coaching as a result of participating in a NCCP Competition-Development module. Three of the coaches made few, if any changes, while several coaches spoke of immediately incorporating new techniques and strategies into their practices with their athletes. Interestingly, all ten coaches noted that in each of the modules the topic of communicating effectively with parents was discussed and they all felt they learned strategies on how to cope with parents, or they confirmed their current interactions with parents were effective. For example, one of the coaches in canoe/kayak, who attended the Psychology of Performance module, spoke of learning about the importance of listening to the parents when dealing with a conflict.

It’s been a tough summer in terms of parent’s attitudes towards coaches and the selection process. Parents feel the need to be too involved with crew boat selection and their stress levels at regattas are way too high - we’ve noticed how it affects their children. I’ve had a couple of difficult conversations with some parents but I’ve managed to maintain a good relationship with them. I really just listen to them. I thank them for their input and I try to explain to them that although they have good ideas, it’s not up to them. The course really confirmed that what I was doing was good. (C8)

Similar to the canoe/kayak coach, a young provincial sailing coach who attended Coaching and Leading Effectively spoke of how the course confirmed his approach for dealing with parents:

Just being the extra set of ears and it is key to just listen to what the parents’ concerns are.

I think a lot of people don’t take the time to realize the parents’ side of it. I think that is
just one thing I’ve learned is to just listen before I speak – and that was confirmed in the module. (C5)

In looking first at some of the changes made by the coaches, seven of the coaches commented on changes they made to their coaching routine that was learned from the module. One of the coaches who attended the Psychology of Performance module began using the skill of debriefing with her provincial level athletes in canoe/kayak:

After every race, either myself or another coach debriefed the athletes. We would get them to talk about their races - that’s what we’ve been working on. The athletes are starting to get into the habit now and the parents have actually noticed it as well. (C8)

Another coach who attended the same module also made a concerted effort in providing feedback in a different way to her ringette athletes:

In the past, at training camps, I would be constantly cueing them all the time while they’re trying to learn a new skill and I remembered from the module that might not be the most effective way to help them retain the skill over a longer period of time. I still do that sometimes, but I have become much more aware of it and I am starting to phase that out, and give less feedback so they have think more. (C4)

A number of coaches mentioned communication as an area of change and improvement in their coaching approach. One coach in particular remembered the communication component from the Coaching and Leading Effectively module and explained:

Communication is a huge portion of explaining drills. Now I’m making sure the athletes understand the drills before they go out on the field and there is less time where they don’t know what’s going on. I think more now about my communication to them using different ways to explain - they need to see it and feel it. So I’ll show them with the ball
on the field and say ‘this is what we’re doing’ or I might have a few people try it, or do a
walk through. It seems to work. (C3)

As a result of the module on Coaching and Leading Effectively, four of the
coaches felt they had started to take more of a leadership role with their teams. For
example, the sailing coach said:

When coaching younger kids, leading by example is the biggest thing I’ve
taken away from that course, and I’ve actually implemented some of the
techniques. When you work with younger kids it’s important that they see
you having fun doing your job – it basically makes them have fun doing
their job of training or competing. (C8)

Another coach felt that, from the module on Managing Conflict, he improved on his
ability to manage conflict:

I was pretty familiar with the information on conflict but when I began preparing for the
season, I incorporated some strategies on conflict prevention. We had the pre-season
meeting going over the code of conduct. I also made note of my body language and my
eye contact – all of those things I think I do ok, but bringing it into a renewed focus in the
course reminded me that these things are important. (C1)

One of the soccer coaches also felt he had begun to implement several specific strategies
on how to better manage conflict:

There was one instance where a player didn’t make the team, and a complaint went to the
technical director and the head coach, and I was copied on some of the emails and was
asked to respond to the club’s executive members, the technical director, and the head
coach. One of the things that I used, that I learned and used from the course, was to hold
off a bit before responding immediately, because some of the comments that were made
by the parent got me a bit upset. I was ready to fire off a reply but I held off and replied
the next day with a more sober thought and controlled response. So rather than escalating
the conflict, I learned to take the time to present some more controlled response that
focused on the facts of the situation, not necessarily on the emotions. Those are some of
the things that we learned in the course. (C1)

In addition to the specific changes made to their coaching approaches, each of the
coaches spoke of how the various modules helped them become more aware of their actions with
athletes and parents even if they were still not capable of consistently incorporating the changes
into their coaching. For example, one coach told the story of encountering a difficult selection
issue with a parent:

I was probably a bit more curt with them than I should have been. I realize that now,
more so after the course. I should have introduced myself, number 1. It’s my
responsibility as the coach to communicate these things to the parent when they show up.
I should have been a bit more understanding of their situation and see where they’re
coming from. That one I took back with me and I need to anticipate those situations and
be ready for them. (C1)

One of the soccer coaches, who, in his second interview, had mentioned a particular
communication strategy to deal effectively with conflict, brought it back up again in the third
interview saying: “I actually used ‘I see, I think, I feel, I need’ when I was talking with parents. I
didn’t judge and just said what it was and my communication was much clearer. So this is
something I will continue implement in the future.” (C6)
In turning to the three coaches who did not change their coaching approaches as a result of the modules, a number of reasons were offered, such as time constraints, wrong time in the season to introduce something new, and the suggested approaches did not apply to their coaching situation. For example, the canoe kayak coach who attended Psychology of Performance said:

I’ve had time constraints because the people I work with are predominantly adults and they have to get to their jobs in the mornings so in order to organize a time to meet with them is very difficult. I’m trying to coordinate with them a little bit of time to teach them about the quality focus tool I learned from the module. And as for debriefing, we have a set of races coming up this weekend and that’s going to be where I’ll get into proper debriefing after races. (C9)

Another coach explained that the material he was provided with from the module on Psychology of Performance had not been forgotten and he still planned on incorporating it into his training with his high performance athletes:

I haven’t really used a lot of the visualization material yet because I haven’t figured out how I want to incorporate it. I don’t want to throw too many curve balls during the season so I’m trying to think about how to set that up in the fall so we can get it structured - so by time we get to competitive season next year it’s not something new, it’s something routine to them. I think it’ll be more productive that way, to introduce it to them when they’re not trying to focus on too many other things at the same time. (C7)

Finally, an experienced coach working with soccer players stated that the Psychology of Performance module had not influenced his coaching routine, primarily because his role was head of a soccer school and his job was to help the players improve their technical skills and they did not play in a game setting, “I’m unable to apply any of the longer term goal setting with the
players. Kids only come to train for an hour a week and our focus is mostly based upon getting as much technique done as possible.” (C10)

*Other learning situations*

The second objective of the third interview was to ask the coaches about other possible learning situations they might have participated in during the three-month time period following a module. All ten coaches mentioned at least one other learning situation, such as attending another NCCP courses, engaging with other coaches, and attending coaching clinics.

One of the soccer coaches, who attended the Coaching and Leading Effectively module for this research, had nearly completed all his Competition-Development modules and was keen to continue his learning. “I have taken three modules, plan to complete them all, but in the meantime I have been going back to the course books and reviewing the coaching materials that I have and there is a lot. It is adding to my tool box of coaching resources” (C6).

Most of the learning situations that the coaches spoke about were informal learning situations, such as speaking with and observing other coaches. For example, one of the canoe kayak coaches stated:

In the past 3 months I have talked a lot to my dad, who is a national coach about the best process for developing athletes. For example, what’s going to be the most fundamental elements that we have to hammer into them? It’s largely a technical issue. (C7)

Similarly, another canoe kayak coach spoke of seeking out other coaches for advice on specific technical aspects of the kayak stroke and how to give constructive feedback as he was having difficulty communicating with one of his athletes:

There’s an athlete I coach regularly and he had problems with his rotation and getting his hands to a consistent height. I’ve been asking another coach for some drills and ways to
correct that and the drills that the coach provided me with seem to be working better than
the ones I was using, so I’m adapting my coaching style to better suit this particular
athlete. (C9)

Another coach said he was always open to learning and regularly sought out new ideas
from other coaches:

For example, I met with the Ottawa South United coaches and they have a different
program, it’s more European, but we discussed what they’re doing this summer for their
program, how they’re doing it, what’s happening in our region. I have to keep an open
mind in order to learn more. The moment that you say ‘stop I don’t need to learn
anything’ – you’re going to fall behind. I find it challenging. So I study the material, talk
with other coaches, watch other team’s games – the hours are there! I’m doing something
I think. (C6)

Finally, the sailing coach felt he had improved his own coaching by mentoring club level
coaches:

I think that the biggest key to success is not creating a difference between a club level
coach and a provincial level coach. Not only can they learn something from you but also
you can obviously learn something from them. I think that makes a better coach dynamic
and it’s worked so far for me. (C5)

He also felt he learned from a number of different coaches:

I’m learning a lot from a lot of different people. I had the opportunity to work for 2
months with a past Olympian. He definitely brought a different side of coaching to the
table. He was more skill focused and driven and was kind of a ‘cut throat’ coach. I guess
in order to be successful you need to be very focused and he conveyed that message to
his athletes and it’s paying off in terms of results. I got to work a lot with him and I think that the more people that you get to work with, the more tools you can throw in your toolbox. (C5)

One coach also learned how to use video analysis by doing research on his own as well as speaking with another coach:

We tend to use a lot of video analysis in our sport and I wasn’t too familiar with it, or perhaps I just didn’t realize how important it was to get quality video. So I’ve been doing a bit of research, been talking to other coaches about that and its actually helped in debriefings. So learning how to do video analysis has been important. (C5)

Along with learning from others, many coaches mentioned other informal learning situations such as reading books and information obtained from the Internet. For example, one of the kayak coaches said he did a bit of research online regarding technique surrounding the kayak stroke: “The information didn’t go into too much detail but it was enough to get me starting to think about it and how to apply it into my own program.” (C8) Four of the coaches in the present study found online drills and techniques that were helpful in their coaching routine.

Finally, coaches mentioned they had been learning by attending coaching clinics. Three of the coaches who participated in this research project were a part of a soccer academy that partnered up with a soccer-training center that offered coaching sessions. At these weekly sessions, coaches were exposed to effective ways to teach specific exercises or drills to their players. In speaking about the benefits of the sessions, one of the coaches said:

At some of the sessions they had, one of the elite coaches would coach a team in front of you and explain what they were doing and why they were doing it and the way they were doing it. That was pretty helpful. Around the same time, I completed a referee course,
which I think will help me in my coaching because it will help me understand the rules of
the game better. Now that I think of it, it’s a good conflict management tool that I learned
in the course, so that I don’t get into so much conflict with the referees! There were a
bunch of rules that surprised me and I thought ‘wow I didn’t know that’. (C1)
In summary, seven of the ten coaches spoke of how they had changed some aspect of
their coaching approach as a result of participating in one of the NCCP Competition-
Development modules. Three of the coaches indicated that they had not changed their coaching
approach as a result of one of the modules, either due to time constraints, seasonal issues, or the
lack of ‘fit’ of the material with their current coaching role. Nevertheless, all ten of the coaches
spoke of and provided examples of the various ways they felt they were continuing to learn and
develop as coaches.
CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research study was to understand how the NCCP Competition-Development modules contribute to coaches’ ongoing learning. In-depth interviews were conducted with ten coaches taking part in one of three different Competition-Development modules: Managing Conflict, Coaching and Leading Effectively, and Performance Psychology.

There were three phases of interviews: the first was an interview with each of the ten coaches prior to attending a module to understand each coach’s biography as well as the various learning situations they had already experienced; the second phase was attendance at a Competition-Development module and an interview with each of the ten coaches immediately following the module to explore the coach’s thoughts, reflections and possible learning within the module; and the third phase was a final interview with each of the ten coaches three months following the module to explore how they implemented learning from the module, as well as other learning situations that may have occurred within that three month time frame. The main research question that guided the present study was: “What role does an NCCP Competition-Development module play in influencing a coach’s ongoing learning?” A secondary research question was: “What other learning situations did the coaches in the study experience prior to attendance at a module and in the three months following a module?”

In this study, the biographies of the seven male and three female coaches varied widely. Formal education levels ranged from a high school diploma to a master’s degree, athletic experience ranged from recreational level to the international level, and the coaching contexts ranged from recreational youth sport to coaching at the Pan American Championships. It is quite important to note the range in coaching contexts primarily because the NCCP Competition-Development level is intended to be for coaches coaching athletes at the provincial or emerging
national level. It is therefore interesting to note that three coaches in the present study were coaching young athletes at a recreational level. Coaches working with such a range of coaching contexts can certainly impact the learning environment of a module, particularly for the built-in discussion portions of a problem-based or competency-based program design. Moon (2001) has commented that discussion “must be one of the most widely used processes in education but is at the same time one of the most difficult of teaching procedures to use effectively” (p. 146). Given that inherent difficulty with discussion, and then understanding the potential difficulty in attempting to analyze a ‘problem’ or critical scenario that might exist in coaching provincial or national level athletes when part of the group is not coaching at that level, highlights the difficulty a learning facilitator might face in leading a meaningful discussion with coaches in very different coaching contexts.

Jarvis’ (2006) lifelong learning theory states that an individual’s biography influences his or her learning and that “learners bring their lifetime experience to the learning situation” (p. 73). The findings indicated several clear examples of how the coaches’ biographies influenced how and what they chose to learn. For example, one of the canoe kayak coaches had raced at a national and international level and his father was a current national coach in the same sport. As a result, he said that while he learned a number of valuable pieces of information in the module he attended, he said that he also learned a great deal from informal discussions about training and technique with his father. Another coach in the study was still competing in the sport she coached, and this meant she was keen to learn aspects of effective communication during the Coaching and Leading Effectively module that would help her both as an athlete and as a coach. A final example to illustrate the strong influence of one’s biography on what one chooses to learn was the soccer coach who was already very highly qualified technically in his sport, yet
knew little about sport psychology, so in that module he was eager to understand the topic to help him decide what he should do within his soccer school.

One of the key findings of this study was that seven of the ten coaches made changes to their coaching routine after taking one of the modules, and reported that the material provided was helpful in the coaching context they were working in. These seven coaches took a deep approach to their learning and found meaningful learning that transferred to an actual change in coaching practice (Moon, 2001, 2004). They spoke specifically of how they incorporated various skills, such as debriefing after performances, into their coaching practice. Certainly for these seven coaches the modules had a positive impact.

Another key finding was that four of the ten coaches, as a result of the module on Coaching and Leading Effectively, said they developed a greater sense of awareness and understanding of their role as a coach. One of the coaches spoke of how she became more aware of how she handled interactions, feedback, and confrontation. She realized that she became excessively emotional and reacted poorly in a number of different circumstances and indicated this was something she had not been aware of prior to the module. Jarvis (2009) writes that self-awareness is at the heart of many learning experiences and because it is the whole person who learns, it is important to also understand our emotional connection to our learning experiences. For this coach, the realization of her tendency to become too emotional is one step in the process of learning. She will certainly need to remain conscious of this realization until she learns to control those emotions appropriately.

Another finding was the wide variety of learning situations that all ten of the coaches experienced prior to coming to the module, as well as within the three months following the module. For example, three of the soccer coaches were fortunate to be involved in a sport that
held weekly clinics and they each said the clinics were valuable learning opportunities, primarily enabling them to learn specific soccer skills and techniques, although they spoke of several sessions that dealt with creating a fun environment for learning and ways to manage parents. This finding lends support to the value of nonformal learning situations for coaches (Mallett, et al., 2009; Reade, et al., 2008).

A number of the other learning situations mentioned were similar to earlier research in that the coaches spoke of learning from informal conversations with other coaches, reading books on coaching, and the use of the Internet as a tool for finding drills and technical strategies. These findings support much of the earlier research on ‘sources’ of learning (Erickson, et al., 2007; Gilbert, et al., 2006; Lemyre, et al., 2007; Lynch & Mallett, 2006; Mallett, et al., 2009; Werthner & Trudel, 2006, 2009). As Mallett et al., (2009) have suggested, it is useful for sport coaches to participate in a number of different kinds of learning opportunities that will contribute to their development, and that these learning situations will likely be a combination of formal, nonformal and informal learning situations.

Several of the coaches also spoke about the value they saw in other NCCP coaching courses both at the Competition-Introduction level, or in other modules at the Competition-Development level. For example, one of the coaches with a kinesiology degree found that in the module on Developing Athletic Abilities he obtained a greater understanding of the concept of periodization and its relevance to creating a training program for his sailing athletes.

Several coaches also spoke about the benefit of the group discussions that are an integral part of the revised NCCP modules. For example, one coach learned about a new way to maintain focus with his players, a strategy suggested by another coach, and another coach, spoke of the benefit of discussing how to incorporate goal-setting sessions into his training plan. These
findings support both Moon’s (2001, 2004) and Jarvis’ (2006, 2007) theories of the importance of the social environment in relation to learning. Talking about a topic, being able to check one’s understanding, and being able to ask questions of other participants, are all part of a valuable learning environment (Moon, 2001).

There were three coaches who did not change their coaching approaches as a result of the modules, at least within the three-month time frame. A variety of reasons were offered, such as time constraints, lack of understanding of the concept, confirmation of what they already knew, or little application to their personal coaching situation. In terms of lack of time, Jarvis (2006) notes that learning takes time and integrating new knowledge from a particular module may take longer than the three months allowed for in the present study.

When several of the coaches spoke of not understanding a specific concept, such as focus or an intervention, time could also have played a role, in that there is not always enough time in a module to have the level of in-depth discussion and reflection necessary for deep understanding. Moon (2001) notes that the skill of reflection deepens learning and yet not all participants in a course may actually know how to reflect. Teaching both the skill of reflection and teaching the content of a module may not be possible in the time allowed. It is also not specifically or explicitly part of the course content in any of the NCCP modules. For a new concept such as effective interventions, it is possible that the learning facilitator did not have ample time to provide an opportunity for the participants to practice the skill during the module.

The third reason cited for not changing was that the module merely confirmed what the coaches already knew. This can be seen as learning nevertheless. Jarvis (2006) has said that throughout one’s life, learning experiences are numerous, but some will have a major impact while others will simply confirm what one already knows.
The fourth reason cited for not making a change, due to the content not currently fitting their own coaching situation, can be explained by one coach’s experiences. He ran a sports program that focused on teaching soccer players how to improve their soccer skills and not on playing actual games. During the second and third interview, this coach said that he learned some valuable information in the Performance Psychology module, but rather than integrating those changes himself, he was in the process of hiring an individual to teach sport psychology skills to the players in his soccer academy.

Jarvis’ (2006) notion of lifelong learning advocates that individuals learn through a variety of learning situations across their lifetime. Each of the ten coaches in the present study expressed an openness to learning and an interest in continuing that learning. As one of the soccer coaches stated, “I think that learning is consistently an ongoing process and the modules help. I am constantly learning and looking to learn any chance I get.” Adopting the lifelong learner perspective may not make coaches’ development any easier but it will ensure that coaches are in a continual state of becoming better coaches (Jarvis, 2009).

Limitations

Every study has limitations and this study is no exception. The first limitation is that a small number of coaches were interviewed in this study. With a larger number of coach participants, the findings may have varied more widely. The second limitation is that the three Competition-Development modules used in this study focused on coaching skills related to managing conflict, psychology, and leading effectively. Perhaps if the three other Competition-Development modules had been part of this study, which are focused on injury prevention, drug-free sport, and physiology, the findings on coach learning might have been different. A third limitation is that the third and final interview was conducted only three months after completion.
of the module. This is perhaps a short period of time to expect to see changes in coaching behaviors, although, in this study, we did see seven coaches make changes to their coaching practice as a result of the modules. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial for future research to consider interviewing the coaches after a six month to one-year time frame. A fourth limitation to consider is the multisport versus sport specific modules. This study consisted of ten coach participants attending multisport Competition-Development modules. Future research should take into consideration how results might vary depending on whether the module was being conducted in a sport specific context, individual versus team sports, or in a multisport setting.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to understand how the NCCP Competition-Development modules contribute to coaches’ ongoing learning. The findings of the present study indicated that seven of the ten coaches did indeed change their coaching practice as a result of attendance at one of the Competition-Development modules. This should be encouraging news for coach educators and CAC in particular. In reflecting on Moon’s (2001) map of learning and the representation of learning, it would appear that these coaches moved beyond noticing and making sense of the material of the module to beginning to integrate new ideas into their coaching practice. This should certainly be the intention for every course, for every coach.

Nevertheless, the findings also indicated that three coaches did not change their coaching approach, at least within the three-month time frame. The reasons cited, such as lack of time or lack of a link to their own coaching situation, is something that will need to be looked at more closely in future research. Coach educators will need to consider coaching contexts, the nature of the multisport versus sport specific modules, and the biographies of coaches coming to
Competition-Development modules. Clearly all these factors have potential to affect the learning environment.

In the present study, the coaches noted that the learning facilitator, who was the same for all three modules, was well prepared, clear in her instruction, and created a positive climate for discussion and learning. This may indeed have been a factor in the number of coaches who actually made a change to their coaching practice. Moon (2001) argues that “good instruction takes account of the learning of learners” (p. 172), and notes that instructors who take such an approach encourage a deep approach to learning. Examining the role of learning facilitators is clearly an area for future research.

Finally, the Coaching Association of Canada could create an online coach profile which could include a coach’s formal coach education certification, formal education, sports coached, and experience as an athlete. This would be regularly updated based on the coach’s NCCP certification. Such a profile would enable NCCP learning facilitators and the CAC to clearly understand, at any point in time, who their coaches are across Canada.
References


APPENDIX A

Phase 1: Interview Guide – Interview prior to attending Competition-Development module

Tell me about yourself, your background, your journey to where you are today.
- Where did you grow up? Where do you live now?
- Age? Gender?
- Education level? (High School, University, College degrees)

Tell me about your sport experience as an athlete.
- What sports have you participated in?
- At what levels? (recreation, provincial, national, international)
- How did you get involved in sport?
- How long have you been involved in sport?

Tell me about your coaching.
- Who do you coach? (Team, individual sport?)
- Do you coach full time or part time?
- Level? (Club, novice, provincial, national)
- What sports have you coached in the past? (More than one sport?)

Tell me about your coach education, and learning as a coach?
- What level do you have? When did you complete it?
- How do you think you have learned to be a good coach? (Shadow? Books? Internet? Mentors? Athletes? Experience as an athlete?)

The Competition Development module
- What brings you to attend the Competition Development module?
- What do you presently know about this topic?
- Is there anything specific you want to learn? (Probe for an example)
- What other Comp-Dev modules have you already taken?
APPENDIX B

Phase 2: Interview Guide – Interview immediately upon completion of Competition-Development module

Tell me about the module.
- What was useful/what did you learn? Please give an example.
- Was there anything that was not useful? Why? How? Please give an example.
- Was there anything you disagreed with/did not fit with your own experience?
(Did you learn anything from the other coaches? from the group discussions?)
- What do you think you can take and apply with your athletes? Is there anything you’ll do differently?
Phase 3: Interview Guide for the third set of interviews – 3 months after completion of the Competition-Development module

Learning from Module:
I’m following up on the module on X. In our previous 2 interviews, as well as during the module, we had talked about what you felt you had learned in the module. What has happened in this three-month time frame, in terms of your coaching, (post module)?

-Did you do anything differently? Please explain, give an eg.

-If it was learning from the module, what have you used? Please give some examples. (Dealing with an athlete/player, dealing with a parent, dealing with the association?)

-If you have not used anything from the module, why not? Please explain.
  -If no, did you not encounter any conflict, everything was great?

Other learning situations:
-What other ways have you been working on improving your coaching? - if it was from some other learning situation, please explain. (Other coaches, a conversation, other courses, athletes, a book, a conference...)

-Is there anything else you’d like to add, in terms of your ‘learning to be a better, more skilled coach?”
APPENDIX D

Consent Form

Advancing Our Understanding of the Learning Processes of Coaches: Examining How NCCP Competition-Development Modules Influence Learning

Researcher: Diana Deek                             Supervisor: Dr. Penny Werthner
Institution: University of Ottawa                  University of Ottawa
Faculty of Health Sciences                          Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics                             School of Human Kinetics

I, ____________________________________________________, have been invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Diana Deek under the supervision of Dr. Penny Werthner, from the School of Human Kinetics of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Ottawa.

The purpose of this research study was to understand how the NCCP Competition-Development modules contribute to coaches’ ongoing learning.

My participation will consist of an interview lasting about 60 minutes, and two follow-up interviews, one in the two weeks following my participation at a Competition-Development Multisport module (about 20-30 minutes); and a final interview three months later (about 40 minutes). I understand that my participation in this study will entail that I volunteer personal information about my life in sport and coaching.

I understand that the information that I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the analysis of the quality and impact of the National Coaching Certification Program New Competition-Development Multisport Modules and that my confidentiality will be protected in the following manner: A pseudonym will be used in place of my name in the transcription and I understand that only the researchers involved in this study will have access to the codes. The recorded data and written data will be kept at the University of Ottawa.

My participation in this research is voluntary and I am free to withdraw or refuse to answer any questions at any time and without any negative consequences.

If I choose to withdraw from the study, I give my permission for the researchers to analyse the data related to me collected up until that moment.

I will have the opportunity to re-examine and modify, if necessary, the information that I have given.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher.
If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant’s signature: ________________________________ Date: __________________

Participants contact information

Email address: ________________________________

Phone number: ________________________________
Dear Researchers,  
February 12, 2010

The Health Sciences and Science Research Ethics Board has examined your request for ethics approval of the following modifications to your research project:

The researchers have expanded the data collection to include a second and third interview with a purposive, convenience sample of eight of the coaches who are attending a competition-Development module.

Ms. Diana Deek, a master’s student, is joining the research team. She will use the data from interviews with 6 to 9 coaches for her thesis. Professor Penny Werthner, a member of the research team, is her supervisor.

Your request has been accepted. The certification of ethical approval renewed on November 24, 2009 and valid until November 23, 2010 covers these modifications.

During the course of the study, any further modifications to the protocol or forms may not be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. You must also promptly notify the REB of any adverse events that may occur.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at extension 5387.

Sincerely yours,

Protocol Officer for Research Ethics
For Daniel Lagarec, Chair of the Health Sciences and Sciences REB