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Introduction

Coach behaviour heavily influences skill development and therefore is important within strength and conditioning (S&C) (Dorgo et al., 2009; Massey et al., 2002). Yet it has been suggested that S&C coaches focus on physiological adaptations over pedagogical approaches (Janz, 2009). Such a stance could lead to sub-optimal coaching, therefore this warrants further investigation. It has been suggested that researchers should investigate the complexity of coaching. Yet most research into S&C coaching has only focused on what coaches do. Therefore the purpose of this study was to explore coaching approaches and associated rationales in a specific S&C youth sport setting.

Method

After ethical approval a mixed method, grounded theory design was used. The case under investigation was an S&C unit at a school of sport consisting of 3 UKSCA accredited coaches 3-9 years in post. Each coach was observed across three sessions using the ASUOI observation tool with individual interviews conducted pre and post observation. Data collection was ended due to data saturation being achieved. A constant comparative approach was utilised alongside the process of open, axial and selective coding until a grounded theory was reached.

Results

The ASUOI revealed instruction (35.4%, s 5.7%) and feedback (24.4%, s 5.8%) accounted for 59.8% (s 11.5%) of behaviours. Session management (15.9%, s 2.5%) and silent monitoring (12.8%, s 3.4%) accounted for the majority of other behaviours. Although individual differences were apparent all coaches consciously tried to build rapport. The perceived importance of rapport was exemplified by 69.2% of feedback being praise. From the interviews it was apparent that time constraints and pupil preference led to the adoption of instructional approaches the pupils were familiar with (see Figure 1). This was at odds with two of the coaches' preferred style to promote self-correction and discovery; both of these coaches were sport science graduates. But the coaches did alter their approach, giving less prescriptive activity to experienced groups. The importance of developing functional over perfect technique was highlighted as a compromise to promote fitness development.

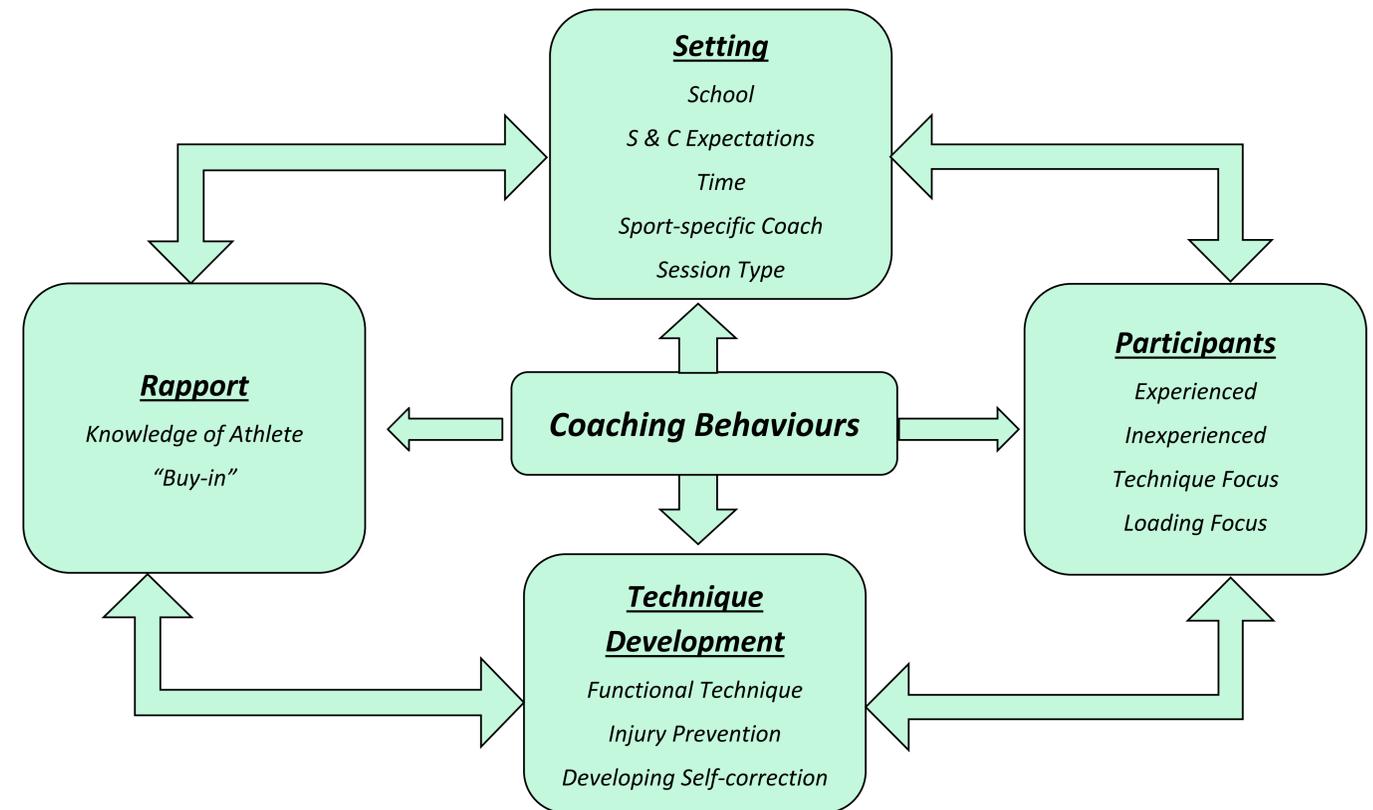


Figure 1. Key themes that affect strength and conditioning coaches

Summary and Conclusion

Coaching background (experiential vs. university) would appear to explain some of the differences between individual coaching rationales. Similarities between this study and wider coaching literature are apparent; specifically the relevance of complex coaching, coach-athlete relationships, self-determination theory and constraints-led perspectives. Finally S&C coaches may benefit from exploring such coaching and skill acquisition paradigms to support alongside more physiological education.

References

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