

Sport coaching concepts: a framework for coaching practice (2nd ed), by John Lyle and Chris Cushion, Abingdon, Routledge, 2017, 353 pp., £115.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-415-67576-5 / £43.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-415-67577-2 / £39.59 (ebook), ISBN 978-0-203-12642-4

The first edition of this book in 2002 was a success by being one of the first textbooks in the U.K., in this field, to put together a non-sport-specific analysis of the coaching process (Lyle, 2002). Not only widely distributed, it became established reading in almost all undergraduate and postgraduate courses, and well received by academic peers. A recent citation network analysis found the 2002 edition could be considered the biggest “hub” in the coaching science field (Rangeon, Gilbert, & Bruner, 2012). Naturally, it is the authors’ intention that the second edition of *Sport Coaching Concepts* should continue to make this contribution. In this regard, they have significantly revised and updated this edition, by drawing on more than a decade’s worth of research reflecting the profound changes that have transformed coach education and development. For me, it certainly captures the significant theoretical issues that underpin contemporary sport-coaching practice.

As I initially glanced over the book, the first notable change was that the authors have adopted the use of the term “sport coaching” rather than the more familiar “sports coaching”. It may appear insignificant or even accidental. However, the authors contend that the use of the latter is simply a taken-for-granted term that implies a more generalisable process than they believe it to be. Their view is that the emphasis should be on the “coaching process in a sport context” to distinguish it from other coaching realms, such as business or drama, or specific sports examples such as badminton, boxing or basketball. As such, the authors imply this is an example of conceptual thinking applied to the discourse and specificity of language necessary to delineate appropriately to the field of study (Lyle & Cushion, 2017).

It is important to note that the new edition has not simply undergone an “updating process” of the content and existing chapters. Extensive changes have been adopted to reflect the recognised developments in the academic landscape of coaching science since the first edition. The authors recognised this need, due to the length of time since the first edition, the changes in academic discourse, and the developments in their own thinking surrounding sport coaching. The authors outline that one of the primary reasons for this edition was the significant expansion of academic writing since the first edition in 2002. This has been reflected in the number of “academic departments and staff in universities, the range of disciplinary lenses being applied to the subject, the number of dissemination avenues open to the researcher, the number of postgraduate programmes, PhD completions and peer-reviewed publications” (Lyle & Cushion, 2017, p. 6).

While they have continued to place emphasis and build upon on the text and the ideas that were novel at the time in the first book (the creation of a conceptual framework that will help understand sport coaching), this edition includes six new chapters focusing on the evolution of coaching theory, coaching expertise, decision-making, social perspectives

on the coach-athlete relationship, social inclusion and principles of coach development. Increased attention has also been given to coaching domains, coaching expertise, professionalisation, operationalising coaching practice and social context. It could be contended that the evolution of this book is representative of the field more widely. Another significant change was the collaboration of Professor Chris Cushion on the new edition. This complementary blend of expertise and insight certainly offers the reader a catalyst to think more deeply and critically about sport coaching.

The book begins with an introduction to the second edition, outlining six key, insightful, reasons why they decided upon a new edition. This is followed by 15 chapters that cover rich insights into key topics of the sport-coaching curriculum. Each chapter takes a similar engaging format of introducing the reader to a specific outline, an introductory insight into the topic, key concepts, questions, and summary and project sections. Chapter 1 begins by providing an overview of the significant expansion of the literature on coaching, specifically charting the principle developments in academic “thinking” about sport coaching during the past 15 years. The purpose here is to identify the major schools of thought as they apply to sport coaching (behavioural, cognitive, complexity, social, conceptual), and to offer a critical interpretation of their positioning in relation to the conceptual framework. The issues raised in this chapter relate to definitions, boundaries, domains, modelling, key questions, the place of performance objectives, and the role of the coach. Chapter 2 identifies a set of conceptual principles about sport coaching, and configures these into a framework that allows the reader to address more effectively basic issues such as the purpose of coaching and if a coherent coaching terminology and language exists. They argue that the subtlety of conceptual distinctions about sport coaching is often lost in the academic literature. Despite appearing to be a little detached from the everyday concerns of the practitioner, they stress that conceptual analysis of what is a social entity is a necessary step to a complete exploration and understanding of the activity.

Chapter 3 gives thought to what coaching is about, and what makes it distinctive from other roles and processes such as teaching. This also explores the ways in which coaching may be conceptualised. Identifying the meaning, scope and boundaries of sport coaching is the task in this chapter, in an attempt to address the significant confusion and ambiguity that surrounds roles in sports coaching. The purpose of chapter 4 is to provide a conceptual basis for understanding why and how coaches behave differently. To do this, the authors continue with the development of a conceptual framework that illuminates the relationship between the individual (the coach), the coaching process, the athlete and the coaching environment. To highlight this, they introduce the concept of a coaching domain to illustrate how the particular combination of the sporting context and participants’ requirements affects the coach’s expertise and practice. For each coach, this produces a “role frame”, a perceptual filter that influences how coaches make sense of the world around them and define their responsibilities. Useful criteria and examples are provided.

The next chapter, 5, focuses on expertise in sport coaching. This uses a paper John Lyle conducted for U.K. Sport, which examined the concept of expertise as it applied to performance coaching, and as a precursor to identifying coach development principles. The discussion paper was compiled by distilling the views of a group of experienced coach developers, bringing a degree of experienced interpretation and order to this corpus of opinion, and informing the process by evaluating the contribution of the academic literature to date. Using this report, the chapter examines the developers’ views and then presents an interpretive summary, followed by a series of questions and issues for discussion. This approach is certainly stimulating for the reader. Chapter 6 turns its attention to modelling the coaching process. Interestingly, this chapter shows that “modelling” is far from easy, and is made more difficult by the “processual” and multi-variable nature

of sport coaching, and that no consensual model of the coaching process has emerged in recent years. Specifically, they explain what a model, means, problems in model building, an evaluation of existing models, and application, constraint and implementation considerations.

Chapter 7 is the longest within the book. It includes of an updated version of a proposed model “for” sport coaching. This is based on the concept of an “ideal model” which is intended to act as a catalyst to further exploration of model building in this academic field of study. The proposed model both builds on the conceptual framework elaborated so far, and is a key part of the complete framework. Also located in this chapter are the building blocks of the model, a graphical representation of the model, and a discussion on how to extend it. The authors conclude with an overview of the strengths and weaknesses the model exhibits. Despite presenting this as an “ideal model”, in chapter 8, they acknowledge the approach as being divorced from the “actuality of practice” which disregards features such as the layers of socio-cultural complexity and the dynamic goal environment coaches operate within. Such thought formed a basis for a number of question to be raised. For example, how do coaches operationalise their practice? How do coaches decide what should constitute performer activity, and when and how they should intervene in delivery? Is it difficult to be prepared for all eventualities? How do coaches cope with this complexity and ever-changing circumstances? Chapter 9 deals with an examination of theory-practice relations more closely, in order to develop a more sophisticated and intellectual understanding of coaching practice. The authors advocate that to provide a theoretical grounding or foundation to coaching practice it is important to have “sharper boundaries” between theoretical categories to help inform designers of coach education. In this way, consideration is given to the nature of coaching theory, paradigms and assumptions of different philosophical approaches (ontology and epistemology). Some of the broad categories of theories that underpin coaching practice (behaviourism, cognitivism, cognitive constructivism and social constructionism) are noted. This is followed by a discussion of what coaching practice looks like when informed by each and provides thought in terms of how they connect theoretically, with the potential to generate debates and discussions among practitioners.

Chapter 10 demonstrates the increasing recognition of coaching as a social process. Initially, the chapter discusses coaching from a sociological perspective and charts the increase of sociological theorists applied to coaching (e.g. Foucault; Bourdieu; Goffman; Giddens; Garfinkel). Attention then turns to how different theoretical lenses from sociology (functionalism, interpretive sociology, conflict theory, postmodernism / poststructuralism, feminism) have provided a more nuanced understanding, and can further inform conceptual development. An interesting overview of social issues that currently influence sport coaching (power, inequality and inclusion) is included, followed by a closing commentary from the authors. To accompany the perspectives covered in this chapter, I would have liked to of seen the inclusion of other social aspects that are suggested to be part of everyday practice (i.e. micro-political and emotional encounters) (Ives, Gale, Nelson, & Potrac, 2016; Nelson et al., 2013). I would argue such research contributes to the view that sport coaching is a multifaceted social endeavour. In chapter 11, the authors consider the current understanding of the term “coaching philosophy”. Attention then turns to current research on coaching (e.g. coaching philosophy, coaching rhetoric, ideology and discourse) where an insightful, critical, perspective is captured for the reader. This includes a section on the benefits of philosophic enquiry to developing coaching practice, which is definitely thought provoking.

In chapter 12, the authors revisit pedagogical practice. Although elements of such are evident in the 2002 edition of this book, it was deemed appropriate to provide a more

specific and in-depth focus on pedagogy. Although a substantial amount of supporting material for this topic has become available since the 2002 edition, the authors do not simply review this. Rather, they consider how pedagogy affects the development of the conceptual framework. In addition, they have also drawn on their own experiences as coaches and coach developers, while attempting to situate pedagogical practice within the coaching process. The chapter is given its character by (1) focusing on the implications of a coach's practice behaviour, and (2) providing a case study on creating a performance sport-learning environment. Chapter 13 examines the professionalisation of sport coaching. The first edition of this text provided an evaluation of the potential for the professionalisation of sport coaching. Since then, the issue has been a recurring theme in the United Kingdom in particular. With this in mind, the authors opt to offer a personal perspective on the issue, one drawn from extensive experience as coaches, coach educators, academics and policy makers. They contend such interpretation is not intended to be negative, but a realistic evaluation of the potential for moving the debate forward.

Coach education and coaching practice is the focus for chapter 14. It explores the potential impact of the conceptual framework on coach education and to examine the progress of coach education since the first edition of the book. It is less concerned with the ins and outs of coach education programmes, rather more, about how the principles on which coach education is based need to be informed by a conceptual understanding of the coaching process. A key strength of this chapter is the insight provided for delivery issues in terms of enhancing meaningful learning. Chapter 15 focuses on why research continues to have low impact when it comes to influencing and developing coach education and coaching practice. Here, the authors provide some insight to, and suggest possible reasons for, the current impotence of coaching research in generating impact on practice, which is very interesting. The chapter then outlines a research agenda for coaching.

When considering the book in its entirety, I regard *Sport Coaching Concepts* as a required or core text for undergraduate and postgraduate students studying in this academic field. I have already started to integrate a number of these chapters into the teaching of my own modules and these are proving to be an extremely valuable teaching and learning resources. Although a key strength to this book is its practice-orientated analysis embedded throughout to assist learning. I considered if some of the projects set, in places, as being perhaps too challenging to neophyte practitioners. That said, the book should be merited on its full range of pedagogical features to aid learning (discussion questions, practical projects, guides to further reading, case studies and insights from practising coaches). Taken as such I consider it an essential read for students of sports coaching and any serious coaches looking to develop their own coaching practice.

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