

An exploration of the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated community of practice in a voluntary sport setting

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the
Requirements for
The Degree of Master of Science by Research

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Submitted to Munster Technological University, 2022

Abstract

In coaching terms, a coaches' community of practice (CCoP) is a way to support coach learning through collaboration (Culver and Trudel, 2006). The value creation framework (VCF) was applied to promote and assess the value gained from participation in a CCoP (Wenger, Trayner, and De Laat, 2011). To date, limited studies have investigated the impact of a multiple peer facilitated CCoP and the support network provided in its implementation. This study, explored the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated CCoP in a voluntary sport setting.

Inspired by an interpretivist approach, a qualitative design was employed. The identification of the coach facilitators, from among the twelve interested coaches (11 male, 1 female), was a key focus'. The five-month intervention, involved a coaches' induction, coach facilitator orientation and five simultaneous CCoP sessions. To determine the value gained from the intervention, participants completed self-reflective check point surveys as well as participated in semi-structured interviews and a focus group.

This novel research demonstrated the role a multiple peer facilitated CCoP can play in supporting voluntary coaches in their coaching journey. The findings revealed that the coaches' created value within all cycles of the VCF. The coach facilitators valued the early experiences and ongoing support provided by the external support and their peers, respectively. Furthermore, a strong leader within the coach facilitator group was necessary to motivate and lead the community for future seasons.

The findings also suggest that some factors require further consideration when looking to develop and sustain a CCoP in a voluntary sport setting, the support role of the National Governing Body (NGB) and the level of readiness of a club just being two of those.

Declaration

An exploration of the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated community of practice in a voluntary sport setting

Research Supervisors:

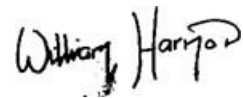
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"This Project is presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Science by Research. It is entirely my own work and has not been submitted to any other university or higher education institution, or for any other academic award in this University. Where use has been made of the work of other people it has been fully acknowledged and fully referenced"

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Tuesday, 9th August 2022

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the guidance and support of several people. I would like to express my gratitude and thank you to my supervisors Dr. Mary Beades, Mr. Niall O Mahony and Ms. Eimear Foley, not only for their knowledge and wisdom, but for their patience and unwavering support throughout all stages of this research journey. It was a pleasure to be able to work with people who strive for excellence in everything they do. I am very grateful to everyone who provided advice in the early stages of this research. I offer my thanks to Munster Technological University for providing the opportunity to conduct this research as part of a scholarship. I would like to thank all the participants who participated in the study, for giving time out of their already busy lives and for their cooperation throughout the research. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to my wife and my two sons, for their unconditional support, guidance, patience and being a constant source of motivation throughout this process. Without your support, I would not have been able to avail of this opportunity.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	viii
List of Tables	ix
List of Appendices	x
List of Abbreviation's	xi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Introduction	2
1.1 Background	2
1.2 Rationale	3
1.3 Aim and Objectives	5
1.4 Study Limitations	5
1.5 Thesis Structure	6
1.6 Chapter Summary	6
Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework	7
Introduction	8
2.1 Social Learning Theory	8
2.2 Situated Learning	9
2.3 Value Creation Framework	9
2.4 Chapter Summary	14
Chapter Three: Literature Review	15
Introduction	16
3.1 Coaching Science	17
3.2 Coach Development	17

3.2.1 Formal Learning	18
3.2.2 Non-Formal Learning	19
3.2.3 In Formal Learning	19
3.3 Community of Practice	19
3.4 Community of Practice in Sport	21
3.4.1 Facilitator	22
3.4.2 Peer Facilitator	22
3.5 Chapter Summary	24
Chapter Four: Methodology	25
Introduction	26
4.1 Research Paradigm	26
4.1.1 Ontology	27
4.1.2 Epistemology	27
4.1.3 Methodology	28
4.2 Recruitment and Selection of Participants	28
4.3 Role of the Researcher	29
4.4 Identification of the Coach Developer	29
4.5 Identification of the Club	31
4.6 Identification of the Coaches	33
4.7 Identification of the Peer Coach Facilitators	35
4.8 Ethical Considerations	37
4.9 Confidentiality	38
4.10 Research Design	38
4.11 Protocol	41
4.12 Coaches Community of Practice (CCoP)	43
4.13 Coach Facilitator Community of Practice (CFCoP)	44
4.14 Data Generation	45
4.14.1 Semi Structured Interviews	45
4.14.2 Focus Groups	46
4.14.3 Check Point Surveys	47
4.15 Data Analysis	50
4.15.1 Reflective Thematic Analysis	50

4.15.2 Researcher Background	51
4.15.3 Flexibility / Variation	51
4.15.4 Novice Researcher	51
4.15.5 Reflective Thematic Analysis Process	52
4.15.6 Supplementary Data	55
4.15.7 Research Quality / Rigor	56
4.15.7.1 Researcher Positionality	56
4.15.7.2 Strategies to support Research Quality / Rigor	56
4.16 Chapter Summary	59
Chapter Five: Findings	61
Introduction	62
5.1 Immediate Value	62
5.1.1 Activities and Interactions	62
5.2 Potential Value	64
5.2.1 Personal (Human Capital)	64
5.2.2 Relationships and Connections (Social Capital)	65
5.2.3 Resources (Tangible Capital)	67
5.2.4 Collective Intangible Assets (Reputational Capital)	67
5.2.5 Transformed Ability to Learn (Learning Capital)	68
5.3 Applied Value	68
5.3.1 Changes to Coach Facilitator Practice	68
5.3.2 Coach Facilitator Personal Development	69
5.3.3 Changes to Coaching Practice	70
5.3.4 Coaches Personal Development	71
5.4 Realized Value	71
5.4.1 Facilitation Skills	71
5.4.2 Support Network	72
5.4.3 Improvement in Coaching Practice	72
5.5 Transformative Value	73
5.6 Enabling Value	74
5.6.1 Peer Coach Facilitator	74
5.6.2 Multiple Coach Facilitators	76

5.6.3 Timing	77
5.6.4 Technology	78
5.7 Strategic Value	78
5.7.1 Constituencies	78
5.7.2 Strategic Content	79
5.7.3 External Stakeholders	79
5.7.4 Alliances	80
5.7.5 Co Creation of Solutions	81
5.8 Orienting Value	82
5.8.1 Personal Network	82
5.8.2 Biographies and Identities	82
5.8.3 Levels of Scale	82
5.9 Chapter Summary	83
Chapter Six: Discussion	84
Introduction	85
6.1 Value Creation Framework Dominance and Critique	85
6.2 Value of a Peer Coach Facilitator for the Coaches in a Voluntary Sport Setting	87
6.3 Value of Multiple Peer Coach Facilitators as a Support Network in a Voluntary Sport Setting	89
6.4 Value of Training and Supporting the Peer Coach Facilitator in a Voluntary Sport Setting	91
6.5 Chapter Summary	94
Chapter Seven: Conclusions / Recommendations	95
Introduction	96
7.1 Key Observations	96
7.2 Recommendations for Future Practice	97
7.3 Recommendations for Future Research	100
7.4 Limitations	100
7.5 Chapter Summary	101
Bibliography	102

List of Figures

Figure 1.	Value-creation framework (VCF) cycles	10
Figure 2.	The key questions, orientation, and dimensions to distinguish between VCF cycles	13
Figure 3.	Overview of research design	36
Figure 4.	The level of coach facilitator agreement relating to their perceptions of CFCoP	55
Figure 5.	Overview of main action points and timeline of the study	60
Figure 6.	Visual representation of future practice	99

List of Tables

Table 1	Inclusion criteria for Coach Developer	30
Table 2	Details of the Coach Developer	31
Table 3	Inclusion criteria for the Club	32
Table 4	Criteria for the Coaches	33
Table 5	Details of the Coaches	34
Table 6	Details of Coach Facilitators	36
Table 7	Overview of dates of CCoP sessions	43
Table 8	Overview of dates of Coach Facilitator gatherings	44
Table 9	Overview of the time points that the check point surveys were distributed	48
Table 10	Overview of when the ‘check points’ took place, with whom & response rate	49
Table 11	Example of the analysis process from raw meaning to value cycle of the value creation framework	54

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Coach Developer Information Sheet	123
Appendix B	Participant Consent Form	129
Appendix C	Club Information Sheet	130
Appendix D	Club Consent Form	136
Appendix E	Coach Information Sheet	138
Appendix F	Ethics Approval Letter	146
Appendix G	Club Meeting (Pre-CoP Presentation)	147
Appendix H	Format of Club Coaches Induction	153
Appendix I	Format of Coach Facilitator Orientation	155
Appendix J	Support Document for Coach Facilitators	157
Appendix K	Semi Structured Interview Guide – Coach Facilitator	160
Appendix L	Semi Structure Interview Guide – Coach Developer	162
Appendix M	Interview Guide for Coaches Focus Group	164
Appendix N	Sample Check Point Survey	166
Appendix O	Sample Reflective Journal Entry	170

List of Abbreviation's

CoP	Community of Practice
CCoP	Coaches Community of Practice
CFCoP	Coach Facilitator Community of Practice
CD	Coach Developer
C	Coach
CF	Coach Facilitator
IKN	Informal Knowledge Network
VCF	Value Creation Framework
NGB	National Governing Body
ICCE	International Council for Coaching Excellence
CAC	Coaching Association Canada
NCCP	National Coaching Certificate Program

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

This chapter will define the art of coaching and provide an overview on the role of an effective coach. Furthermore, the assessment framework utilized in this study to evaluate the perceptions of value gained (or not) by community members' in a social learning space will be introduced. The motivation for the study and the challenges that needed to be overcome will also be portrayed.

1.1 Background – Art of Coaching

Coaching is complex, challenging and an undertaking that has many aspects requiring a variety of skills (Lyle, 2002; Cushion, 2007; Mallett, 2007). Coaching is a process that is focused and involves achieving context specific outcomes based on two separate but equally valuable approaches: sports participation and sports performance coaching (Lyle, 2002). This difference does not indicate that one is more significant than the other but more one approach may require different needs, demands, aspirations and expectations than the other (Lyle, 2002). To be an effective coach requires coaches to be able to perform in complex and diverse settings that involves a coach's ability to work through a range of coaching issues including: how to improve performance, develop and maintain morale, manage personal, physical, and emotional challenges. (Saury and Durand, 1998; Rynne and Mallett, 2014).

As coaching is a social venture that requires interpersonal skills, it is important coach education platforms provide a variety of opportunities for coaches to solve real life coaching issues, for example how to deal with players, communicating with parents and working with peer coaches who have alternative coaching philosophies (Coté and Gilbert, 2009). Furthermore, it is important that a coach experiences an environment that allows the coach to gain a better understanding of their own philosophy, values and approach. Wenger (1998) identified an alternative approach to learning and advocated that learning could be enhanced through social interaction i.e., community of practice. This involves coaches meeting on a regular basis (mutual engagement), sharing common coaching issues (joint enterprise) and producing shared artefacts (shared repertoire), for example, coaching strategies and tools, thereby improving their coaching practice and knowledge.

Wenger, Trayner and De Laat (2011) developed an assessment framework titled 'Value Creation Framework (VCF)' specific for communities and networks. This framework

provides a way to assess community members' perceptions of value gained (or not) in a social learning space. The learning for the participants can come in many forms, concepts, tools, stories. The initial framework indicates that value can be created within five value cycles – immediate, potential, applied, realised and transformative. Later, three value cycles were added to the framework; enabling, strategic and orientation (Wenger- Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Success within the framework is not linear nor hierarchal in nature, you do not need to achieve one cycle before being able to progress to the next. Wenger and colleagues continue to highlight that how you learn, and the application of the knowledge gained is a dynamic process and that participants will move back and forth between goals and conditions that may support learning within a given cycle. In this study, the VCF was used to explore the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated CCoP in a voluntary sport setting.

1.1 Rationale

Within a Gaelic Games voluntary coaching context, the McCullick report (2012) promoted the notion of creating more informal sources of learning outside of the traditional formal learning opportunities e.g. in person certified coaching courses. Horgan, et al., (2021), commissioned a baseline coaching and coach education report for the Gaelic Athletic Association involving all members of the Gaelic games family (Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) and Camogie Association), which resulted in 11,569 coach responses.

The study reinforced the popularity of traditional coaching courses (61.6%) as a source of learning and development for coaches across all levels of experience (Coaching and Coach Education in Games Gaelic: A Baseline Report, Horgan, et al., 2021, p.58). However, and in line with the McCullick report recommendations, coaches also reported a desire to engage in a wide range of informal and non-formal learning opportunities and experiences, including communities of learning (19.7%). Indeed, coaches valued the importance of reflecting on their own and other coaches coaching practice (78.4%), where coaches engage with and learn from other coaches regarding complex social coaching issues in real life situations (Coaching and Coach Education in Games Gaelic: A Baseline Report, Horgan, et al., 2021, p.51). Furthermore, coaches highlighted the role of other actors in this complex system (coach developer) in providing support to active coaches in

clubs. Coaches felt that the development and implementation of such a scheme would be a positive contribution to their coach development.

One key component linked to the successful delivery and sustainment of a community of practice in a coaching context is the role of a coach facilitator. Culver and Trudel (2006) emphasized that without a facilitator, or someone interested in fostering learning in the community of practice, the effectiveness of group meetings is highly compromised. Meetings without a facilitator could become organisational in nature and does not resemble a community of practice. In addition, Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel (2009) suggested that the effectiveness of the community of practice may be enhanced if the coach facilitator is selected from the group of coaches. Identification of a peer coach facilitator encourages 'buy-in' from coaches, sustains momentum throughout the year (Bertram, Culver and Gilbert, 2016), and may ensure full participation of all community of practice members in the generation of solutions. The peer coach facilitator is embedded in the same context as the participants (Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009), where the coaching of technical skills is addressed. A peer coach is ideally placed to act as a facilitator to gain instant credibility with other group members, will be able to relate well to the real problems of practice, and perhaps most importantly will be able to participate in the testing of community generated strategies.

However, a peer coach facilitator requires support to effectively sustain a CoP hence the adoption of multiple coach facilitators, a novel aspect of this study. This enabled more than one CCoP to take place simultaneously in the club, resulting in members engaging in deep coaching conversations specific to their coaching needs. In addition, having more than one coach facilitator meant the coach facilitators formed their own internal support network, in essence a coach facilitator CoP, where they discussed common facilitation issues and were a constant support for each other throughout the process. The provision of basic training for the coach facilitators is advocated by someone who is competent in the area of CoP (Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009). In this study, an external source provided guidance on how to structure and facilitate a CCoP. For many coaches in a voluntary sport setting, the focus on a CCoP is new and would be viewed as a challenge, hence the need to provide support, especially in the initial stages of the setup and implementation of the CCoP.

1.3 Aims and Objectives:

The main aim of this research was:

- To explore the value gained by participating in a peer facilitated community of practice in a voluntary sport setting.

In order to achieve this aim, the researcher addressed the following objectives:

- To design and implement a peer facilitated CCoP in a voluntary sport setting
- To assess the value gained by participating in a peer facilitated CCoP from a coach facilitator and coaches' perspective
- To provide recommendations for supporting peer coach facilitators in the delivery of a CCoP within a voluntary sport setting

1.4 Study Limitations

There were several limitations presented within this research which the researcher deemed necessary to disclose. These limitations included:

Covid-19 pandemic:

- Limited in person interaction affecting the ability for the researcher to build rapport and develop relationships in the early stages of the programme with the participants.
- Disrupted the availability of participants during the evaluation process.
- Reliance on technology in the implementation of the programme. However, this study highlighted some technological opportunities which might make this concept more accessible in the future. Further research on the delivery mechanisms is warranted from a coaching perspective.

As a novice, the researcher had limited previous experience with qualitative data collection and analysis. Therefore, the use of thematic analysis in this study provided a framework that guided the researcher when making sense of the data. The findings in the present study were developed from participants from one club, making generalizability of the results difficult. The short duration of the study posed a challenge in assessing the long-term level of impact on the participants and the club. The analysis of this study was conducted inductively based on the Value Creation Framework. A recommendation for

future studies would be to include rounded nuanced inductive and deductive analysis.

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis was structured around seven chapters. Chapter one, focuses on an introduction to the research undertaken. The theoretical framework and a description of the theory that influenced the research aim and objectives are the emphasis of chapter two. In chapter three, a review of pertinent literature relevant to communities of practice and its association with sport is discussed. Chapter four describes the methodological aspects conducted during this research such as, the appropriate research paradigm that informed the selection and recruitment of participants, research methods, the data collection approach, and data analysis methods.

The findings pertaining to the qualitative evaluation of the peer facilitated coach's community of practice, in accordance with the cycles of the value creation framework (VCF) is presented in chapter five. The exploration of the key influencers attributed to the learning experience for the participants involved in the peer facilitated community of practice is the attention of chapter six. Finally, chapter seven, conclusions and recommendations provide insights gained from the findings presented as well as the researcher's experience conducting the study. Using these insights, this chapter presents recommendations for the programme as well as direction for future research.

1.6 Chapter Summary

To be an effective coach requires coaches to be able to perform in complex and diverse settings. A variety of coach education platforms are available to enable a coach to conduct their role to the best of their ability. One learning approach that is promoted and served as a motivation for this study is the concept of a community of practice. This approach involves the development of coaches through social interaction that focuses on real life coaching issues. As a result, the next chapter will present to the reader the theoretical framework that underpins this concept.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter begins by focusing on the evolution of the social learning theory and its connection to the variety of learning opportunities available to coaches, in particular communities of practice. It promotes the idea that participants learn better in collaborative group settings when the activities are based on real-life experiences. Following this, an in-depth overview of the conceptual framework utilized to promote and assess the value creation in communities of practice, is presented.

2.1 Social Learning Theory

As suggested by Trudel, Culver and Werthner (2013), providing context specific learning opportunities for coaches to engage or interact with other coaches outside of a structured or traditional coach education programme has a place in the ongoing development of coaches. These opportunities will seek to address real life coaching issues and individual coach needs. One avenue advocated to change and support this ideology is the concept of coaches' community of practice (CCoP). There are many studies that advocate the role of CCoP within ongoing coach development in sport (Culver, Trudel and Werthner, 2009; Stoszkowski and Collins, 2012), but this concept is not largely investigated in a voluntary setting hence one of the motivating factors for conducting this study.

In the past century, how we view learning is influenced by social learning theorist's advancement of learning informally in a social context via a model like community of practice. Jarvis (2006) highlighted Dewey, a twentieth century philosopher of education, was one of the first to focus on the impression of experience and education. Dewey promoted the concept that every experience is ensued by another in a continuous cycle. Furthermore, Dewey advocated that every experience, both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after. Taking Dewey's viewpoint on the theory of learning into consideration, it can be concluded that learning outcomes influence future learning experiences (Jarvis, 2006). Bandura (1986) made the connection between the social learning theory and key principles that underpin informal learning. Bandura maintained that new behaviors can be attained by observing and imitating others in a social context. A Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978) supported this view by describing human beings as innate social beings that grow and learn from each other through interactions via speech, use of signs

and tools. Lave and Wenger (1991) progressed this concept of learning suggesting that learning takes place via ongoing social situations with others, where the learner gained skills and know how that can be applied immediately as opposed to attempting to apply it in a future context.

As the social learning theory has evolved, social learning spaces are more established where interactions and relationships between the individuals involved make it social (Culver and Duarte, 2022). Individuals learning in this space engage in a common or shared quest. Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2020) highlighted the space cannot be defined physically; but it is defined through the relationships in the space. A social learning space can be presented in many forms, including learning networks, CoP's and can vary in the number of participants from as little as two to hundreds. A social learning space will experience a number of phases before being deemed a CoP, such as regular conversations, reflection and blogging, to networks, to different learning communities or teams. A CoP can commence and evolve organically, the pace of developing social links can be slow but over time, by engaging together in a process of pushing knowledge beyond current levels and paying attention to the effects of this engagement, a CoP is formed (Culver and Duarte, 2022).

2.2 Situated Learning

For optimal learning to be achieved, learning needs to take place in the context of its intended purpose (Lave and Wenger, 1991). These authors expressed the involvement in apprenticeship type roles within the boundaries of a community of practice led to increased knowledge for the participants. Lave and Wenger (1991) conveyed the belief that newcomers join communities as apprentices but by immersing themselves within the community, they gain more experience and become more competent, therefore transition from low risk to more complex activities as the community progresses. Situated learning provides an environment that promotes the transfer of learning to real life practice and is ideally placed to merge formal and informal learning.

2.3 Value Creation Framework

In an attempt to provide researchers and practitioners with an assessment tool applicable across a wide range of contexts, Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat (2011) developed a

conceptual framework for promoting and assessing value creation in communities and networks: The Value Creation Framework (VCF). These authors make specific reference to the word ‘value’ and its significance to worth or practicality rather than moral standards even if these are related. Initially, value could be experienced across five non- hierarchical cycles (immediate, potential, applied, realised, and reframing). More recently, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2019, 2020) updated the framework to include three additional cycles, strategic, enabling, and orienting. Furthermore, reframing was revised as transformative. Wenger and colleagues highlighted that the success within the framework is not linear nor hierarchal in nature, it can move across the different value cycles, it can skip cycles, it can halt at a certain cycle, which indicates the need to be observant. In the VCF, social learning is theorized as loops that carry value creation across cycles and are reported back to the community (see Figure 1).

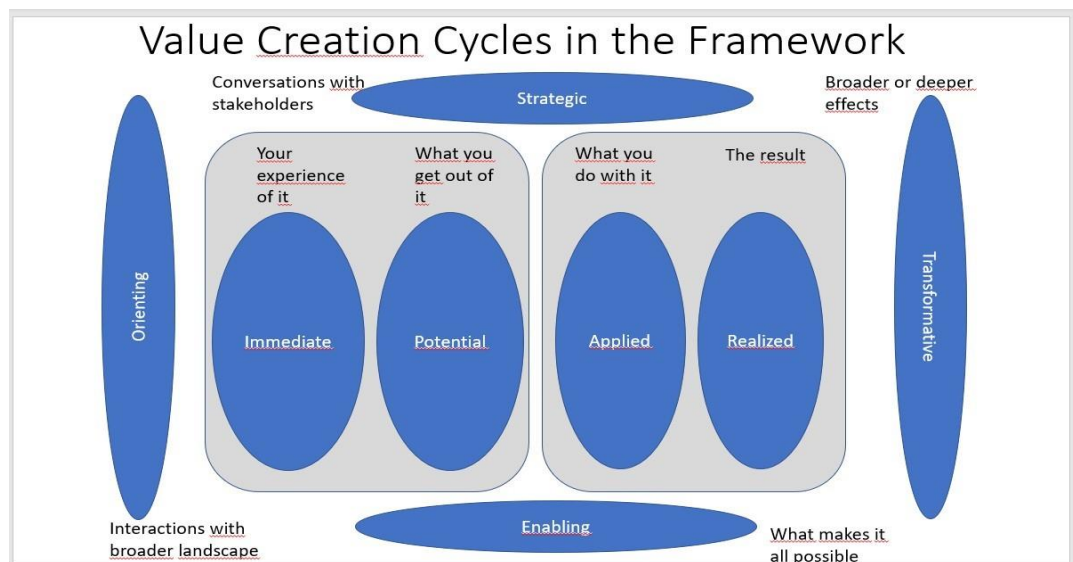


Figure 1. Value Creation Cycles in the framework (c) in ‘Learning to Make a Difference’ - Value Creation in Social Networks (p75)

In line with observations by Bertram, Culver and Gilbert, (2017, p.12), noted that there can be some ‘messiness involved in the separation of some evidence into the specific cycles’. Immediate value cycle involves participants engaging in social learning interaction such as enjoying the company of like-minded people, doing something exciting, helping a peer with a difficult scenario during a meeting, a useful conversation or a good tip provided by a colleague.

Potential value cycle refers to knowledge capital; value that has the possibility of being produced in the future i.e., insights, connections or resources. Wenger and colleagues (2011) divided potential capital into five sub categories: human (useful skills, a key piece of information, or a new perspective), social (ability to ask questions), tangible (privileged access to certain resources), reputational (gaining recognition within a group), and learning capital (applying learning from a CoP to different situations).

Drawing on new insights, connections or resources to change one's practice requires creativity and learning, and thus, is viewed as generating applied value. Changes in practice that makes a difference to what matters, social learning produces realized value i.e., observe positive outcomes. CCoP members experience applied value when they make changes to their practices, actions or approaches (e.g. implementing new coaching strategies). When these changes lead to an improvement in performance or the achievement of goals, CoP members and sport organisations experience transformative value.

Enabling value is produced when quality interactions are generated by internal leadership (i.e., organising logistics, facilitating a meeting) and external sources of support (i.e., funding, technology) or a combination of the two. An important factor that has the potential to make a difference to learning in a social space is strategic clarity. This involves members internally having meaningful conversations around their learning requirements and liaising with external stakeholders to align the learning into the bigger picture of what is important and to whom. Strategic value is the extent and quality of these conversations and relationships that determine the direction and worth of the social learning space. An effort to reach beyond the learning space and its stakeholders and take the broader landscape into consideration is orienting value. The outcomes generated from a social learning space include transformations such as influencing a mindset, changing a boundary or change in an identity. However, while transformative value may not always occur in a broader space, there is a possibility of social learning spaces having an impact in some way (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

In a sporting context, the support for the use of the VCF to assess value created within a coaches' communities of practice (CCoP) is growing. To date, studies with a coach development focus (Bertram, Culver and Gilbert, 2016, 2017; Vinson, et al., 2019) have

applied the first generation of Wenger and colleagues VCF (2011). However, more recently, coach development studies (e.g., Duarte, Culver and Paquette, 2020a, 2021) have utilised the expanded version of VCF (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020). The findings by Bertram and her colleagues (2016) revealed that the coaches created value within all five cycles of the framework. In particular, the coaches learned a number of coaching strategies, some of which they were able to implement, and as a result, observed benefits in their coaching and athletes' performance. In a Gaelic Games context, only one previous study (Bowles and O'Dwyer, 2021) has utilized the VCF to assess value in a social learning space.

In contrast, a study by Duarte, Culver and Paquette (2020a) with wheelchair curling coaches focused on three pairs of value cycles (i.e., immediate and potential, applied and realized, and orienting and transformative (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020). The authors found the VCF played a pivotal contribution in highlighting changes in more nuanced manners, such as changes in a learner's attitude and knowledge, even if the learners had not yet changed practice. This researcher was guided by key questions and dimension examples from Wenger-Trayner and Wenger Trayner (2020) to distinguish between each of the cycles (See figure 2).

Cycle	Year included	Key question	Orientation	Dimension examples
Immediate value Activities and interactions	2011	What is the experience like?	Individual	Identification, sense of inclusion, mutual recognition as learning partners, conviviality and enjoyment, productive discomfort, contestability, engaging with other perspectives, exciting company, generational encounters
Potential Knowledge capital	2011	What comes out of it?	Individual	Concrete help with specific challenges, innovation, stories of others' experiences, insight, critique, skills, information, resources, intangibles, self-worth, collective voice, social capital, potential collaborators
Applied Changes in practice	2011	What are you learning in the doing?	Individual	Inventiveness (as a source of innovation in practice), adoption/adaptation, reuse, being more assertive, increasing your influence, resisting more effectively, harnessing synergy, leveraging connections better
Realized Performance improvement	2011	What difference does it make?	Context-dependent	Personal, stakeholders, collective, organizational, societal
Strategic Conversations with stakeholders	2017	What is the quality of engagement with strategic stakeholders?	Internal External	Constituencies, intentionality, learning agenda, strategic context Stakeholders, strategic context, aspirations and expectations, assessment, ongoing engagement, power, resistance, learning theory, alliances
Enabling Raising the effectiveness	2017	What makes it possible?	Internal External	Commitment, internal leadership, robust back-channel, transparency, efficiency, process, language, documenting Using new learning approaches in a different context, social learning support, logistics and technology, strategic facilitation, resources, organizational initiative
Transformative Redefining success	2011	Does the difference you make have broader effects?	Internal External	Redefinition of success, identities, power shifts New identities, reconfigured boundaries, institutional changes, empowerment, history and culture
Orienting It's a big world out there	In press	What else is potentially relevant?	Internal External	Participant contexts, biographies and identities, inherited boundaries, personal networks Other spaces and boundaries, levels of scale, history and culture, power structures, external audiences

Note: Internal orientation happens within the social learning space itself and the external orientation happens outside the social learning space. The key questions, orientation, and dimension examples are from Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (in press). Part II – Value-creation cycles. *Learning to make a difference. Value creation in social learning spaces*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Figure 2. The key questions, orientation, and dimensions to distinguish between VCF cycles

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the theories that influence how coaches learn. It advocated that context specific learning opportunities (addressing real life coaching issues and individual needs) has its place in ongoing development of coaches outside of structured or traditional coach education programmes. One avenue advocated to change and support this ideology and the main focus of this study, is the concept of coaches' community of practice (CCoP). The interaction and relationships between the people involved in a CoP is what makes it social. Finally, this chapter presented an overview of the conceptual framework (VCF). This framework was formed initially to evaluate the learning occurring in a CoP and is now a well-developed tool for use in social learning spaces. This ends our overview of the key concepts pertaining to the social learning theory, social learning spaces, and VCF. In the next chapter, an in-depth examination of relevant literature will critically examine the coaching literature providing further background regarding coach learning opportunities and community of practice in a sporting context.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Introduction

Participants engage in sport for a variety of reasons, including personal wellbeing, skill development and improvement or for the purpose of winning at the highest level possible (Bailey, et al., 2010). Highly effective coaching plays a pivotal role in achieving continued success and positive outcomes in sport irrespective of the level of participation (Lyle, 2002; Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2004; Cushion, et al., 2010). As a result, the recruitment, training, and ongoing development of coaches across all levels of sport; community/recreational, developmental, and high performance is an important motivation for many sporting bodies (Schempp, McCullick, and Mason, 2006).

Traditionally, the provision of coach education programmes has been provided in formal settings. This could be attributed to the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE, 2012) requirement outlining that coaches must attain a minimum standard of competency. The formal approach to coach education has its benefits including, the stimulation of initial interest and enthusiasm in coaches (Irwin, Hanton and Kerwin, 2004) and creating a worthwhile learning environment for those with limited athletic and coaching experience (Wright, Trudel and Culver, 2007). In addition, the formal approach provides an opportunity for coaches to meet and engage with others (Lemyre, Trudel and Durand-Bush, 2007).

However, there are reservations regarding the long-term impact it has on coaches' learning (Gilbert and Trudel, 1999). Some reasons suggested for this are the perception that coaches obtain a high volume of information not specific to their own coaching context (Lemyre, Trudel and Durand-Bush, 2007), and material presented is in a concocted environment to suit the variety of learners on the programme, a one size fits all approach (Trudel, Gilbert, and Werthner, 2010). This may explain why the growing body of research on coach development consistently shows that coaches, place greater value on learning in a more informal versus formal settings, such as mentorship (Wilson, Bloom and Harvey, 2010), observation (Carter and Bloom, 2009), and reflective practice (Werthner and Trudel, 2006). Other forms of informal learning that play a central role to a coach's development are; recognising the time dedicated to coaching (Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009), learning through experience (Jones, Armour and Potrac, 2004) and coaches engaging with each other on a regular basis when trying to find

solutions to coaching problems (Gilbert and Trudel, 2001, 2006). It appears a coach education environment that cater to coaches learning needs and solutions to everyday coaching issues is widely supported as opposed to standardised coach education programmes.

This chapter will focus on the science behind sports coaching as well as explore the terms associated with effective coaching in sport. Furthermore, this chapter will present the evolution of the CoP concept, the role a CoP can play in improving coach development and some considerations that need to be observed when implementing a CoP in a sports setting.

3.1 Coaching Science

The science behind sports coaching has attracted growing attention from academic researchers (i.e., Rangeon, Gilbert and Bruner, 2012). Researchers such as Nelson and Cushion (2006) and Rynne, Mallett and Tinning (2010) have devoted meaningful time and effort to better understand the complexities of coach learning. This is evident by the number of academic journals, conferences and university programs dedicated to the development of sport coaches (Trudel, Gilbert and Werthner, 2010; Gilbert and Rangeon, 2011; Trudel, Milistetd, Culver, 2020). Furthermore, the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) has been assembled to align the vision of both practitioners and researchers, and promote sports coaching globally. As the science of sports coaching has evolved, a few developments relating to epistemological assumptions, research methodologies, and research focus have been unearthed (Gilbert and Trudel, 2004; Gilbert and Rangeon, 2011; Lyle and Cushion, 2017). These include a shift from a positivist to a more constructivist epistemology (Nelson, et al., 2014; Paquette and Trudel, 2016) and a move from a quantitative approach to measure coaches' behaviors (Horn, 2008; Smith and Smoll, 2007) to a qualitative approach that permits researchers to understand coaching in a specific context (Gilbert and Trudel, 2004; McCullick, et al., 2009; Rangeon, Gilbert and Bruner, 2012).

3.2 Coach Development

The International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) defined sports coaching as 'the guided improvement of sports participants in a single sport at identifiable stages of participant development' (ICCE, 2013, 1.2, p.14). This involves the coach organizing

practice sessions and training schedules, supporting the development and refinement of various demands of the game (physical, technical, and tactical skills) for competition, and leading the performers or team throughout a season and beyond (Cruickshank and Collins, 2015). Coach development programmes are conducted to change coach behavior in a specific field (Lefebvre, et al., 2016). Many terms can be associated with effective coaching in sport. The perceptions of a one size fit all coaching approach has inspired efforts to understand how coaches learn to resolve everyday coaching issues they experience (Gallimore, Gilbert, and Nater, 2013; Gilbert and Rangeon, 2011). Cushion, Armour and Jones (2003) established that to maintain a high-quality level of coaching in a sporting context, one needs to engross oneself in continued coach training and coach development opportunities. Nelson, Cushion, and Potrac (2006), identified three categories of how coaches learn: formal, informal and non-formal. Researchers suggest volunteer coaches' value informal and non-formal environments that enable social interaction (Seddon and Stoszkowski, 2017; Stoszkowski and Collins, 2016), with many coaches preferring 'to learn from their peers and mentors within their specific sport context' (Callery and Gearity, 2020, p.1).

3.2.1 Formal Learning

In the past, Coombs and Ahmed (1974) described formal education as a 'institutionalised, 'chronologically graded' and 'hierarchically structured educational system'. In more recent times, Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007) defined formal education as a 'highly institutionalised, bureaucratic curriculum driven, and formally recognised with grades, diplomas or certificates'. Despite the passage of time, not much has changed in relation to the perception of formal learning and opinion is divided as to what is the most effective way for coaches to learn. Numerous studies have supported the use of formal coach education (the Canadian National Coaching Certificate Program (NCCP) specifically) for youth sport, and volunteer coaches (Wright, Trudel and Culver, 2007, Lemyre, Trudel and Durand-Bush, 2007). A Canadian study analysed 15 Canadian Olympic coaches' learning pathways and found many cited formal coach training as useful to their development as coaches (Werthner and Trudel, 2006). However, another study by Duarte and Culver (2014) in Paraspport found that the sport specific coaching module was not tailored to athletes with a disability suggesting formal

coach education programmes do not reflect a typical coaching context, resulting in changes such as the design to the NCCP to include reflection in coaching (Taylor, et al., 2015).

3.2.2 Non -Formal Learning

As highlighted, formal education/accreditation programmes have limitations in relation to the opportunities provided to the learner (Abraham and Collins, 1998; Lyle, 2002). To balance this deficiency, alternative coach education opportunities such as conferences, workshops, and seminars are organised by sports clubs or local sports associations for coaches who want to further develop their coaching knowledge. These alternative coach education opportunities are categorised as non-formal coach education. Meriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007) describe these occasions as, organized learning opportunities outside the formal educational system tending to be short term, voluntary and requiring few if any pre-requisites. Non-formal situations are often opportunities for coaches to learn about a specific coaching topic of their choice. Considering that most coaches are volunteers, only a few of them devote time and money to such clinics (MacDonald, et al., 2015; Nelson and Cushion, 2006). A study by Erickson, et al., (2008), observed 44 coaches from various sports in NCCP, who voiced a preference for nonformal learning situations, but remarked that such opportunities are sparse.

3.2.3 In-Formal Learning

Informal learning situations are linked to the concept of self-directed learning. Multiple studies (Lemyre, Trudel and Durand-Bush, 2007; Callery, Werthner and Trudel, 2012) support the concept of informal learning, whereby coaches learn through their own experiences and become acquainted with social learning communities in which coaches share knowledge and reflect on coaching experiences. Studies by Culver and Trudel (2006) and Culver, Trudel & Werthner (2009) explored a variety of social learning communities in which coaches learn. Examples of these social learning communities are informal knowledge networks (IKNs) and communities of practices (CoPs).

3.3 Community of Practice

Stemming from work by Lave's (1982) on apprenticeship among tailors in Liberia, the concept of a community of practice (CoP) was initiated (Larocque, 2006). This learning

phenomenon focused on individuals learning in a socially constructed learning environment. Lave and Wenger (1991) further promoted the concept of individuals learning and developing from regular interaction with experts within a CoP setting. This process of social participation evolved into a broader conceptual framework, connecting issues of community, social practice, meaning, and identity (Wenger, 1998). Initially, clarity around its definition was unclear but indicators to verify if a CoP exists were presented i.e., sustained relationships, shared way of doing things, and mutually defining identities. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002, p.4) defined CoP's as

Group of people who share a passion or concern, and who interact on an ongoing basis to deepen their knowledge and gain expertise in their area of interest.

The CoP concept has been successfully implemented in a variety of settings: teacher education, healthcare, business and sport (Wenger, 2011). For example, in teaching, teachers became more student centered (Dunne, Nave and Lewis, 2000), teaching approaches and practices were enhanced (Bolam, et al., 2005), which had a direct impact on student learning and achievement scores on standardised tests (Hollins, et al., 2004). In Healthcare, practitioners improved their ability to transfer knowledge into their practice (Walker, et al., 2011), enhanced their interpersonal communication (Herdrich and Lindsay, 2006), and increased the sharing of ideas, knowledge and practice (Chandler and Fry, 2009). In business, members were exposed to experts, developed a sense of community, and retained knowledge (Saint-Onge and Wallace; 2003); productivity levels and job satisfaction improved (Millen & Fontaine, 2003); and an increased ability to create knowledge with others was observed (Li, et al., 2009). Based on the success of CoPs in other domains, it is no surprise that this concept has gathered attention in a sports coaching setting.

Wenger (2004) identified three key characteristics to consider that are fundamental to planning and designing a community of practice: domain, community and practice. The *domain* is the topic or subject of interest that is shared by the group, it inspires members to participate, guides learning and brings meaning to actions. The *community* comprises of the shared activities, discussions, and interaction the participants have around the domain. Finally, the *practice* is the specific focus around which the community develops,

shares, and maintains its core knowledge.

A CoP can be initiated in a variety of ways; by an individual, or small group of individuals with a common interest. In a teacher education context, as little as two people can form a CoP (i.e., Patton & Parker, 2017). Wenger (2010) highlighted the importance of establishing a set of guidelines or expectations to be acknowledged as a member of a community of practice. These guidelines involve three criteria: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Mutual engagement refers to participants involved in a community of practice setting sharing their knowledge, experience, and expertise in an area not only for their own benefit but for the benefit of others also. Joint enterprise refers to participants having a common goal or purpose where the learning between all the members develops over time. The final dimension is shared repertoire, referring to the community creating new concepts, tools, or different ways of doing things that have become standard practice.

3.4 Community of Practice in Sport

The focus on community of practice (CoP) for improving coach development is a relatively new phenomenon. Since 2009, a limited number of researchers have explored this space despite the increased awareness of its potential benefit (Duarte, Culver and Paquette, 2020a). In a sporting context, some CoP research has been theoretical (i.e., Gilbert, Gallimore, & Trudel, 2009, Barson, 2010). However, the majority of CoP research in sport has been practical with varying degrees of success, such as baseball (Culver, Trudel and Werthner, 2009), high school sport (Bertram and Gilbert, 2011), karate (Lemyre, 2008), figure skating (Callery, 2013), wheelchair curling (Duarte, Culver and Paquette, 2021) and voluntary sport setting (Bowles and O'Dwyer, 2021).

Informal coaching opportunities such as CoP's can play a role in paying attention to what the coaches learning needs are; developing 'just-in-time', indigenous, practical knowledge and stimulating on-going learning beyond the train to certify ('just in case') formal approach (Culver and Duarte, 2022). These informal opportunities are about learning with like-minded coaches who share similar challenges and passions. The coaches determine the agenda aligned to everyday coaching issues or challenges, leading to coaches taking ownership and being active in their own learning journey

(Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Some consideration needs to be observed when implementing a CoP in a sporting setting, in particular the role of the facilitator in managing opportunities for coach learning.

3.4.1 Facilitator

In previous literature, the role of the facilitator was deemed to be important; especially for helping the community of coaches manage their opportunities for learning (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002; Wenger, 1998). Furthermore, the literature advocated that the role the facilitator is critical in the delivery and sustainability of a community of practice in a coaching context. In a study to support a coaching CoP in an alpine ski club (Culver and Trudel, 2006), the researcher assumed the role of the facilitator. In the short term, the environment created by the facilitator resulted in the coaches enjoying the process, thus contributing to their coach development. However, in the long term, the effectiveness of the intervention was minimal as the CoP dissolved once the facilitator vacated their role and the structure was no longer imposed on the coaches. Lemyre (2008), attempted a collaborative approach to facilitate interactions between Karate instructors. Due to the hierarchical nature of the sport and the karate dojo, the establishment of a productive CoP failed to materialise. Another study with six coaches in a high school sport setting provided further evidence on coaches valuing opportunities to meet the facilitator individually or in a group setting (Lemyre, 2008). However, the sustainability of the CoP was compromised by a lack of interest shown by the participants to take up the opportunity to lead a CoP as a facilitator. A lack of time and perceived competence were seen as reasons for not taking the role. These studies highlight the importance of a visionary leader or facilitator in cultivating and sustaining a community of practice.

3.4.2 Peer Facilitator

Only two studies previously have investigated the impact of a peer facilitator: competitive baseball league (Culver, Trudel and Werthner 2009) and female coaches in a university sport setting (Bertram, Culver and Gilbert, 2017). Culver and colleagues (2009) observed the role of a technical director in fostering a coaching CoP in a competitive youth baseball league. Despite being a technical director, he was a coach in the league for three seasons deeming him an insider and a peer. In the first phase of the

study and due to the competitive nature of the league, rival coaches were reluctant to share their knowledge. However, a cooperative learning environment was achieved following the strong leadership demonstrated by the technical director. In the second phase of the study, when the technical director removed himself from his role as facilitator, the lack of both structure and a leader/facilitator resulted in a reversion to meetings concerned with the organisation rather than learning, and interactions between individual coaches seeking information from other coaches. Bertram and colleagues (2017) found the role of a peer facilitator was a key enabling factor to the ongoing success of a CoP among female coaches in a university sport setting. Coaches reported how the peer facilitator inspired them to remain engaged throughout the intervention through regular collaboration. In addition, the authors found that having a peer as a facilitator had many benefits; instant 'buy in' from a number of coaches and a safe environment was created where coaches felt comfortable in attending meetings and sharing their experiences. Furthermore, it was suggested that when a peer invests so much time into an intervention, it could have a knock-on effect on the other coaches to develop an interest in participating.

The remaining literature regarding peer facilitators cultivating a CoP in a sports setting has been theoretical in nature. Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel (2009) reinforces the value of a peer facilitator suggesting that the effectiveness of a learning community is enhanced when the group leader is selected from within the learners themselves. It is advocated that a peer leader is more effective than an external 'expert' due to the instant credibility with its members, ability to relate to real life coaching issues and experiment with strategies generated from the community (Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009). However, the selection of the peer coach facilitator can be challenging, and it should be someone who is respected, will inspire a new perspective and is familiar with the CoP approach and will nurture it (Culver and Trudel, 2009). Previous literature promoted that facilitators should exhibit certain characteristics to facilitate CoP sessions in their club. Gilbert and colleagues (2009), highlighted a peer leader should have the ability to keep their group on task, guide discussion to a conclusion where a resolution to a coaching issue discussed is achieved and implemented to assist athlete learning.

Sustaining a CoP by a peer facilitator can pose a challenge. Lemyre (2008) provided an insight into these challenges highlighting the peer facilitator did not have the time or skills to undertake leadership of the CoP. It is suggested that support and guidance should be provided for the peer facilitator to ensure they have the ability to create and nurture a coach learning community (Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009). These authors feel some form of basic training on how to lead a coach learning community should be provided. This training could be as simple as a 1-2hour orientation session led by external experts who have experience in creating and leading learning communities. The ultimate aim would be to empower members involved to take ownership for their own learning and eventually become peer facilitators.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This extensive review of the relevant coaching literature began by highlighting the move from quantitative to qualitative research, with a constructivist focus. The area of coach development was explored in terms of learning opportunities available to coaches, one of these being CoP. The origins of the CoP concept, including the key guidelines for a successful CoP, were identified. These include; mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. While the focus on the CoP concept is relatively new in a sporting research context, the benefits appear to suggest a role as a means to support coach learning.

These benefits are influenced by the identification of key personnel to fulfil roles within a CoP, one being a facilitator. The role of a peer facilitator, while suggested, has not been widely researched, in particular in a voluntary sport setting hence the motivation for this study. The next chapter will focus on the research paradigm that guided the design approach and implementation.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodological aspects conducted during this research. The chapter commences by exploring the appropriate research paradigm that informed the research methods and how the data was analysed. Following an explanation of the research paradigm, selection and recruitment of participants, the data collection approach, and data analysis methods were examined as well as the ethical considerations considered before engaging in the research.

4.1 Research Paradigm

Paradigms orient and represent particular ways of thinking. A paradigm is defined as a basic set of beliefs or worldview that guide research action or an investigation (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). A 'worldview' is described as the perspective, thinking, school of thought, or beliefs inform the meaning or interpretation of the research data (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined that a paradigm consists of a number of elements: epistemology, ontology, and methodology. When undertaking research, the philosophical underpinnings, including the epistemological and ontological standpoints guiding the direction of the study, must be considered as such assumptions will impinge and influence the findings of the research (Hammond, 2017). The position of each paradigm in relation to each of these elements provide a substantial influence regarding the methodology used in a research project (Morgan, 2007).

Since 2000, the interpretive perspective has been increasingly adopted to underpin inquiry in the evolving academic field of sports coaching. This growing subscription to interpretive approaches could arguably be attributed to the unavoidable realisation of the limits associated with understanding and representing sports coaching from a largely reductionist, logico-positivist position (Jones, Armour and Potrac, 2004; Jones, et al., 2011; Potrac, Gilbert and Denison, 2013).

The interpretivist paradigm views reality as constructed by the individual – people experience things differently and hence the research process should try to uncover the meaning that individuals ascribe to an event or happening. In order to fully understand "events", questions associated with interpretivist inquiry will consider not only how people make sense of that experience, but also what underpins that meaning-making.

Typically, this research relies on qualitative type data such as interviews to make explicit one's understanding of human meaning in constructing our dynamic social world. Unlike those from the positivist research tradition, interpretivist researchers do not attempt to predict or generalize behaviour but attempt to understand subjective experience in the context of time and place (Mallet and Tinning, 2014).

The following sections will explore this comparison in more detail and will provide a brief overview of the interpretivist paradigm to its ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions as applied in this inquiry.

4.1.1 Ontology

Ontology is theory associated with the nature of being. Ontology refers to assumptions about the nature of reality, what exists and how these interact with one another (Blaikie, 1993). Ontology discusses how things exist in the world and whether this existence is subjective or independent of the individual observing them (Koshy, 2009). From an ontological perspective, interpretivism rejects the view that the social world consists of 'hard, tangible and relatively immutable facts that can be observed, measured and known for what they are' (Sparkes, 1992, p.20). Instead, interpretivist researchers subscribe to the view that the social world is something that is constructed within individuals' 'subjectivities, interests, emotions, and values' (Sparkes, 1992, p.25). Furthermore, knowledge can be socially constructed and co-created, and is influenced by social interaction (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This project adopts a relativist ontology which involves the exploration and meaning of multiple realities through human interactions between the researcher and the participants of the research.

4.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is specifically concerned with determining what 'counts' as evidence or knowledge within academic research. Gaining an understanding of the subjective world of human experience is a central focus of the interpretivist paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). In essence, this approach allows the researcher to investigate the participants thought process and seeks to understand and interpret what they are thinking or the meaning the participants are making of the context. This paradigm assumes a subjectivist epistemology which involves the researcher making meaning of the data via their own

thought process, taking in and transforming the data that is informed by the researchers' interactions with the participants. Unlike those from the positivistic research tradition, interpretivist researchers do not attempt to predict behaviour, but attempt to understand subjective experience in the context of lived experience.

4.1.3 Methodology

Keeves (1997) refers to the methodology of the paradigm as the research design, methods, approaches, and procedures used in an investigation that are well planned to find out something. The interpretivist paradigm supports a naturalist methodology whereby the data will be gathered by the researcher through methods such as interviews, discourses, text messages and reflective sessions, with the researcher acting as a participant observer (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). As a result of the above, the interpretivist paradigm exhibited the key principles applicable to addressing the aims of this research, as multiple perspectives were considered while attempting to explore the lived realities of the research participants and interpret the meaning of their experiences. Therefore, the research questions, participants' selection, data collection instruments and collection procedures, as well as data analysis were grounded in this paradigm.

As this research is situated within the interpretivist paradigm, interpretive qualitative methods (semi structured interviews and focus groups) were used to assist with interpreting how the coaches make meaning of a situation or phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). In total, four semi structured interviews with each coach facilitator and the coach developer and one focus group comprising of six coaches were conducted at the end of the CCoP intervention. This approach enabled the researcher to use the data generated to explore patterns or themes. Furthermore, this approach permitted the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis, exploring the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated CCoP in a voluntary sport setting.

4.2 Selection and Recruitment of Participants

To address the aim and objectives of this study, one coach developer (external to the club), one Gaelic Games club and 12 club coaches (11 male, 1 female) were recruited through criterion sampling. Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002). The researcher, in his role as a

coach education lead in a Gaelic Games National Governing Body (Ladies Gaelic Football) and in consultation with other Gaelic Games coach education leads (GAA and Camogie Association) identified the various stakeholders involved in the study. The coach developer, the club and coaches were selected based on agreed criteria, which included the demonstration of a strong commitment to the research project, a basic understanding of the community of practice concept and the presence of characteristics that displayed readiness to engage in a community of practice setting.

4.3 Role of the Researcher

The researcher works as a coach education officer within a National Governing Body (NGB) of sport and has had previous experience of leading and engaging with a community of practice in an amateur club setting. Therefore, measures were taken in the design of this study to reduce or eliminate any bias that may exist as a result. The researcher chose not to be directly involved in the delivery or facilitation of the communities of practice in this study. The only communication the researcher had with the coaches and the coach facilitators during the study was to circulate the online check point survey at the specified times. This removed any bias the researcher may have due to prior experience in leading a club community of practice. The researcher supported the coach developer and conducted the semi structured interviews and focus group upon completion of the CCoP sessions. An overview of the research design can be viewed by in Figure. 3

4.4 Identification of the Coach Developer (CD)

The initial task for the researcher was the identification of a coach developer (CD) who would provide a support role for the peer coach facilitators in the club setting. This person was an external stakeholder to the club coaching environment and provided the required training opportunities to enable the coaches to act as peer facilitators. The support provided by the CD involved a club coach's induction, a coach facilitator orientation and ongoing support throughout the programme if required for the coach facilitators. It is important training opportunities are led by someone who has experience in creating and leading learning communities (Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009), so the identification

of a suitable coach developer was a significant step in the participant recruitment process and will be explored further in section research design. The researcher, in conjunction with coaching leads involved in the Gaelic Games National Governing Bodies (GAA, LGFA and Camogie Associations) identified a suitable coach developer that exhibited the required characteristics as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion criteria for Coach Developer

Inclusion Criteria	
Gender	Male, Female or Rather not say.
Age	Over eighteen years of age
Accreditation	Sport Ireland Accredited Coach Developer
Tutoring Experience	Has more than three years tutoring/coach developer experience.
Level of understanding of Community of Practice setting	A good understanding of what a coaches' community of practice involves, and the support required by the coach facilitators in facilitating sessions
Qualifications	Completed Garda Vetting. Completed Safeguarding 1.

To determine if the CD was suitable for the study, the researcher contacted the CD directly via a Microsoft Teams call. The initial conversation allowed the CD to provide a brief overview of their role within Gaelic Games. Their thoughts and perceptions of the community of practice concept, their prior experience of being involved in a community of practice setting and their opinion on the key ingredients for a community of practice to function effectively was also discussed. During the initial consultation with the CD, it was obvious that the CD demonstrated an understanding of the key principles for cultivating a community of practice. Following the initial consultation with the CD, the

researcher followed up with an email that included an information sheet to explain why the research was being conducted and the expectations of the key stakeholders (Appendix A). The coach developer was given a period of seven days to consider the details of the study, ask any further questions about their potential involvement before providing consent of their participation via Microsoft Forms (Appendix B). Details of the coach developer who participated in the study can viewed in Table 2.

Table 2: Details of the Coach Developer

Name	Age Range	No. of Years Coaching	Coaching Qualification	Coach Developer Qualification	No. of years as a Coach Developer	CoP experience
CD	25-34 years of age	More than 5 years but less than 10 years	Award 2 (GAA) Level 2 (LGFA/Camogie)	Sport Ireland Level 2 Coach Developer	More than 3 years but less than 5 years	Studied, created and led a CoP as part of 3 rd level MSc. in Applied Sports Coaching Programme

4.5 Identification of the Club

Following the identification of the coach developer, the next task for the researcher was to seek a suitable club for this research, preferably a club that was close in proximity to the coach developer from a geographical point of view. The researcher, in conjunction with the coaching leads from the various Gaelic Games National Governing Bodies (GAA, LGFA and Camogie Associations) identified a suitable Gaelic Games club that exhibited ‘stable settings’ or ‘characteristics’ as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. Inclusion Criteria for the Club

Inclusion Criteria	
Club Coaching Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate a progressive coaching structure i.e., have a player pathway or coaching plan in place.• Support their coaches in their coaching endeavours and demonstrated characteristics of readiness to engage in a community of practice setting:• Core group of coaches who meet on a regular basis.• Demonstrate a willingness to develop and improve as coaches• Support coach learning and promote sharing of coaching strategies, tools and other learning resources.

To determine if the club was suitable for the study, the researcher contacted the main coaching contact in the club, the club coaching officer. The initial telephone conversation included probing questions such as: What is the current purpose of the coach meetings in your club? Who organises the coach meetings? How do the coaches interact in the coach meetings? Does participation in the coach meetings influence the coaches learning or coaching approach? During this initial consultation with the club coaching officer, it was obvious that the characteristics of the club’s coaching environment met the criterion and demonstrated the club’s suitability for a coaches’ community of practice approach. Following the initial consultation with the coaching officer, the researcher followed up with an email to provide a more detailed overview of the research the expectations of key stakeholders and to seek gatekeeper access to coaches in the club (Appendix C). The coaching officer agreed to discuss the study with club members (executive officers and coaches) across the Gaelic Games codes in the club and gauge interest for participation.

Following consultation between the coaching officer and club members, the coaching officer informed the researcher via telephone that the initial reaction was one of positivity towards the study. Before full committal to the study, the club requested a Microsoft Teams meeting with the researcher, club executive members and any coaches who expressed an interest in participation. This online meeting provided the researcher with an opportunity to outline the full details of study design, answer any questions participants had, seek verbal confirmation from the club of their interest for future participation in the study and confirm the main point of contact for the duration of the study. Following the

online meeting, the researcher sent a follow up email to the club executive members seeking consent of the club’s participation in the study via a Microsoft Form (Appendix D). The researcher received confirmation of the club’s desire to participate within seven days of the email.

4.6 Identification of the Coaches

Following receipt of written confirmation from the club confirming participation in the study and granting access to club coaches, the researcher proceeded to make direct contact via email to all the club coaches who attended the online club information evening and to coaches in the club that met the inclusion criteria set out for the study. The email included an information sheet (Appendix E) that provided coaches with an outline of the study, the role of the coach within the research project and the benefits of participation for the coaches. Coaches were given seven days to read the relevant material in relation to the study and revert with written confirmation of their initial interest in the study. In total, twelve coaches voluntarily expressed an initial interest in the study prior to the commencement of the community of practice sessions. The criteria and the details of the coaches’ who participated in the study are presented in Table 4 and 5 respectively. Codes were used to protect coaches’ anonymity.

Table 4. Criteria for the Coaches

Inclusion Criteria	
Gender	Male, Female or Rather not say
Age	Over eighteen years of age
Coaching Experience	Currently coach/assistant coach with a team (GAA/LGFA/Camogie) in the between the ages of sixteen and seventeen years of age
Qualifications	Completed Garda Vetting. Completed Safeguarding 1 Held a basic Gaelic Games coaching qualification. Is a registered member of the club

Table 5. Details of the coaches.

Name	Age	No. of years coaching	Coaching Qualifications	Gaelic Games code coaching in	Age cohort currently coaching
C1	35-44 years of age	More than 2 years but less than 5 years	Award 1 (GAA) / Level 1 (LGFA/Camogie)	Boys Teams Only	U13
C2	35-44 years of age	More than 2 years but less than 5 years	Award 1 (GAA) / Level 1 (LGFA/Camogie)	Girls Teams Only	U10;
C3	35-44 years of age	More than 5 years but less than 10 years	Award 1 (GAA) / Level 1 (LGFA/Camogie)	Boys Teams Only	U7; U10
C4	45-54 years of age	More than 5 years but less than 10 years	Award 1 (GAA) / Level 1 (LGFA/Camogie)	Boys Teams Only	U13; Secondary schools' teams;
C5	55-64 years of age	More than 5 years but less than 10 years	Foundation (GAA) / FUNdamentals (LGFA) / Camán Get a Grip (Camogie)	Boys Teams Only	U15
C6	45-54 years of age	More than 2 years but less than 5 years	Award 1 (GAA) / Level 1 (LGFA/Camogie)	Camogie Only	U14

C7	45-54 years of age	More than 2 years but less than 5 years	Foundation (GAA) / FUNdamentals (LGFA) / Camán Get a Grip (Camogie)	A mixture of all codes	U13; U14
C8	45-54 years of age	More than 5 years but less than 10 years	Award 1 (GAA) / Level 1 (LGFA/Camogie)	Camogie Only	U9; U11
C9	45-54 years of age	More than 5 years but less than 10 years	Foundation GAA	Camogie Only	U13

4.7 Identification of the Peer Coach Facilitators

The identification of the coach facilitators, from among the twelve interested coaches, was a key focus. Leadership plays a pivotal role in the creation, nurturing and sustainability of a community of practice (Gilbert and Trudel, 2004; Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002). As previously mentioned, without a strong leader the community could potentially disperse and revert to previous practices (Culver, Trudel and Werthner, 2009; Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009). The novel approach of identifying multiple peer coach facilitators to support each other in cultivating and sustaining a CoP was applied to this research. As highlighted by Gallimore and colleagues (2009), facilitators needed to be able to keep their group on task and guide the discussion to a conclusion where a resolution to a coaching issue discussed was achieved and impact on athlete learning was proven. For meaningful learning to take place in a community of practice session, the reflective process and facilitation approach adopted is key to participants discussing, debating, and sharing their experiences (Cassidy, Potrac and McKenzie, 2006). The coaches involved in this study identified the coach facilitators to guide and support their respective community of practice sessions. Three coaches agreed to take on the role of the coach facilitator and facilitate three separate community of practice coaching groups in the club. An overview of the research design can be viewed in Figure. 3.

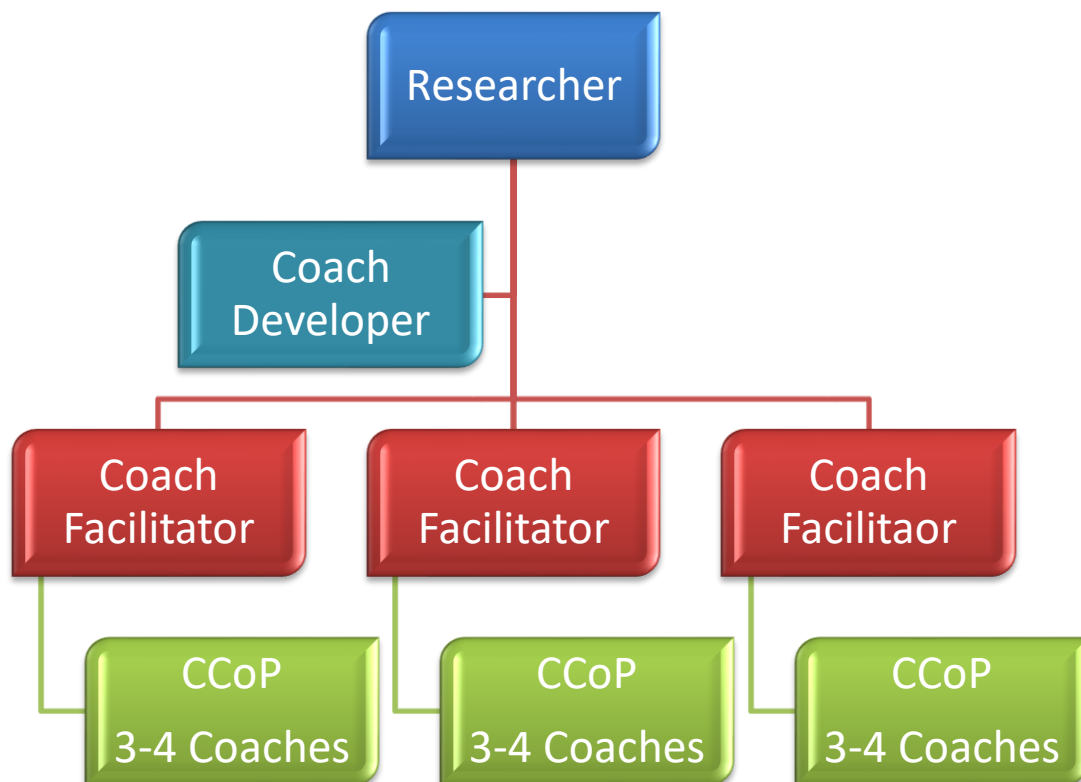


Figure 3. Overview of research design

The coach facilitator demographics are presented in Table 6. Codes are used to ensure coach confidentiality.

Table 6. Details of Coach Facilitators

Name	Age	No. of years coaching	Coaching Qualifications	Gaelic Games code coaching in	Age cohort currently coaching
CF1	45-54 years of age	More than 5 years but less than 10 years	Award 1 (GAA) / Level 1(LGFA/Camogie)	Girls Teams Only; Camogie Only	U14
CF2	45-54 years of age	More than 5 years but	Award 1 (GAA) / Level 1(LGFA/Camogie)	A mixture of all codes	U9; U16; Junior

		less than 10 years			
CF3	35-44 years of age	More than 10 years but less than 20 years	Award 2 (GAA) / Level 2 (LGFA/Camogie)	Boys Teams Only A mixture of all codes	U7; Intermediate

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Prior to commencing the study, full ethical approval for the research project from the Institute was required. Initially, the Institute Research and Ethic Committee (IREC) granted conditional approval for the project subject to a number of conditions being addressed. Greater justification was sought in relation to the selection of the National Governing Body (GAA), and individual clubs, for this project and clearer indication of the wider GAA's role in this research. The Gaelic Games Family (GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association) are embarking on a new and exciting venture to redevelop their player and coaching pathways. Coaching pathways are diversifying from the formal approach to learning to include more informal and non-formal learning opportunities. One integral part of the new Gaelic Games coaching pathway will be the promotion of the coach education delivery mechanisms such as club coaching community of practice, with clubs taking more ownership for their own learning relative to their stage of development. There is an immediate and urgent requirement to provide direction and support for these clubs throughout the sport and beyond. The new coaching pathway is unique in its structure and application and will direct learning from a coach education perspective. Due to timeframe constraints and direction of this research, it was important to liaise with an organisation that already had commenced exploring the community of practice concept in coach education. The results from this research will be available to all sporting organisations and will assist in determining future direction of how coach support education is applied.

Another consideration was the contingency plan details should Covid19 restrictions continue indefinitely. An alternative approach was put in place as Covid19 restrictions limited in person interaction. The club coaches' induction, the coach facilitator orientation as well as the coaches' community of practice sessions in the club were

conducted via an online platform. The platform utilized in this study was MS Teams in line with Institutes guidelines. As a Gaelic Games family is a small Community, it was important that secondary identifiers be avoided. Clear ground rules were stipulated to all coaches prior to participating in the coaches' community of practice to protect anonymity i.e., each coach was assigned a code and all coaching conversations were confidential.

The necessary steps were taken to ensure that consent was freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous (GDPR 2018). During the recruitment phase of the study, all coaches received an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study. Coaches were given a period of seven days to consider the details of the study and their involvement before being contacted again by the researcher. In addition, all coaches signed a consent form and were inform that they could opt out of the study at any stage without providing a reason. However, participation in the community of practice will still be permitted if they wish to stay involved in the process.

Once all considerations were deemed satisfactory by the IREC, full ethical approval was granted in February 2021 (see Appendix F).

4.9 Confidentiality

When becoming members of the Club, all coaches who work with young people are required to sign and abide to the Club Coaching Code of Behaviour. As a result, all conversations conducted during the coaches' community of practice were specifically coaching related and aligned with the Gaelic Games Code of Behaviour. No conversations about individual players were permitted. This was reinforced to the coach facilitators during the coach facilitators' orientation.

4.10 Research Design

This study involved an external support (coach developer) providing support to three Gaelic Games club coach facilitators. Each coach facilitator conducted three individual CoP's consisting of a maximum four coaches (including the coach facilitator). An overview of the CoP model can be viewed in Figure. 3 (p.36). This research presented a number of novel factors to address gaps in the literature and recommendations from previous research in the area:

- Coach facilitators were identified amongst their peers
- More than one coach facilitator was identified (n=3)
- The intervention took place in a voluntary sport setting

This section will provide an overview of the following interactions:

- Club Information Meeting (Pre-CoP)
- Formation of Coaches CoP (Pre CCoP)
- Formation of Coach Facilitator CoP (Pre CFCoP)
- Coach Facilitator Orientation (Pre CCoP)

As suggested by Bertram and Gilbert (2011), it is important to obtain ‘buy in’ from key stakeholders within the club prior to implementation of a CoP. Furthermore, as the focus on „community of practice“ is relatively new in a Gaelic Games context, an online club meeting was set up by the researcher to:

1. Provide the club with an overview of the aims of the study
2. Outline what the community of practice concept entailed
3. Introduce the coach developer
4. Outline the role the coaches
5. Answer any questions

This one-hour meeting was conducted online via Microsoft Teams. Members of the club executive, the club coaching officer and the coaches that showed initial interest in participating were in attendance. The presentation utilised by the researcher in this meeting can be viewed in Appendix G. In addition, a club liaison person was identified (club coaching officer) to act the main point of contact between the coach developer and the researcher throughout the study. The role of the club liaison was to arrange logistics for the various online interactions i.e., coach’s induction meeting and in addition followed up with coaches if any action points were required. Following the club information meeting, the researcher provided the club liaison person with the contact details of the coach developer so that they could arrange a suitable time for the club coach’s induction. The coaches’ induction was organised by the coach developer at a time that suited the participating coaches and was conducted online via Microsoft Teams. In total, 11 out of

the 12 coaches that confirmed their participation were in attendance. The coach developer noted that one coach was unable to attend due to work commitments. In addition, the duration of the meeting was logged and lasted approximately 60 minutes. As the researcher was not present during these interactions, the coaches' induction was delivered by the coach developer as per the agreed format with the researcher (see Appendix H). The two primary objectives of the coach induction were the identification of three peer facilitators amongst the coaching group and the formation of three communities of practice.

Research on adult learning, teaching, and coaching shows that adult learners place great value on learning experiences that are directly related to their immediate needs and context (Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009). This may to large extent, explain the lack of confidence in, and impact of, traditional teacher and coach development initiatives such as in-service workshops delivered by experts far removed from the particular setting (Blank, de las Alas and Smith, 2008; Garet, et al., 2001; Vescio, Ross and Adams, 2008). As suggested by Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel (2009), the formation of 'Job-alike Teams' may facilitate in-setting experiential learning where small groups of coaches who coach the same sport in the same context would use their meetings to set and share dilemmas to work on that have immediate relevancy to their coaching. As a result, three coach's' community of practice groups were set up consisting of 4 coaches in each including the coach facilitator.

The effectiveness of a coach's community of practice may be enhanced if the coach facilitator is selected from the group of coaches (Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009). Following the setup of the three CCoP groups, the coach developer provided a description of the characteristics required for a suitable coach facilitator to lead each group. Each group was provided with the time to discuss who they would like to lead their community. Following deliberation, each coaching group nominated a facilitator. As a result, three coach facilitators were in place and acted as a support network for each other. See figure 3 for an illustration of CoP structure.

A basic coach facilitator orientation was organised by the coach developer in consultation with the club liaison contact. A time/date that suited the coach facilitators was chosen and was conducted online via Microsoft Teams. All three coach facilitators were in attendance

on the night. The duration of the meeting was 60 – 90 minutes, with the coach developer delivering the session as per the agreed format with the researcher (see Appendix I).

As recommended by Gilbert, Gallimore, Trudel (2009), there are five areas which need careful consideration when implementing a community of practice setting in a sporting context, which are:

1. Stable Settings
2. Job alike Teams
3. Protocol that guides but do not prescribe
4. Trained peer facilitators
5. Working on athlete learning goals until there are tangible gains in athlete development

As a stable setting was a criterion for inclusion and job alike teams were organised in the induction, a coach facilitator orientation was used to provide facilitator training for the peer coaches and to establish protocols on how to operate effective coach learning teams in specific settings. As a result, the coach developer supplied each coach facilitator with a support document to act as a refresher and guide whenever required during the CCoP process. See Appendix J to view the support document contents.

4.11 Protocol

A requirement for increasing the accountability of coaches for their own learning, and for helping them capture and share the results of this vital learning experience, is to have a written protocol that provides guidance on how best to structure typical youth sport learning communities (Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009). Typical youth sport coaches work mostly in isolation and have brief tenures as coaches, often less than five years (Gilbert and Trudel, 2006). In addition, typical youth sport coaches do not have formal training in the teaching-learning process and therefore need guidance on how to effectively use their coaching experiences as professional development opportunities (Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009). In this study, a structured approach was adopted to guide discussion during each community of practice session (Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, 2009). This section will provide an overview of the approach adopted: agenda, catalyst and the conversational framework. In addition, this section will outline how the

CCoP sessions took place.

The concept of preparing an agenda has previously been supported in the literature (Culver and Trudel, 2006). Furthermore, a needs-based discussion focus is recommended (Culver, Trudel and Werthner, 2009) as it nurtures interpersonal skills amongst coaches (Jacobs, et al., 2015). In this study, the coaches advised the agenda which was distributed by the coach facilitator to the coaches prior to each CCoP session to assist with the preparation. The items on the agenda were coaching issues coaches experienced in their own coaching contexts. Each coach facilitator opened each session with a catalyst. Following the catalyst and to guide discussion, each coach facilitator adopted the conversation framework that was provided by the coach developer at the orientation.

As mentioned, each CCoP commenced with a catalyst or a trigger subject. The catalyst could be in the form of an academic journal (Jones, 2009) or the use of video clips to explore coaching techniques or practices from different perspectives. The catalyst prompted discussion and debate (Culver and Trudel, 2006), assisted with building rapport between the coach facilitators and the coaches, and contributing to co-creation of knowledge (i.e., ideas and solutions).

Gilbert and Trudel (2001) found that model youth coaches' reflection was characterised by reflective conversations triggered by coaching issues in context and shaped by the coach's personal goals. The reflective conversation framework (Gilbert and Trudel, 2001) was utilised to structure both the CCoP and CFCoP sessions. This framework was adapted from the reflective conversation loop recently implemented by Stodter, Cope and Townsend (2021) with student coaches to include 4 components: issue setting (appreciation), strategy generation, experimentation and evaluation.

The first component, issue setting (appreciation), was an important element of the CoP's as it served as a stimulus for discussion between the coaches. Prior to each CCoP, coach facilitators would prompt the coaches to think about coaching 'issues' or 'challenges' within their current practice and place on the agenda. A similar process would be adopted for the CFCoP, where coach facilitators would put forward facilitation 'issues' or challenges they encounter within each of their individual CCoP. The second component involved strategy generation. To promote critical thinking amongst the CCoP and the

CFCoP, the coach (CCoP) or the coach facilitator (CFCoP) would be given the opportunity to provide context to their coaching or facilitation issue respectively. Each member of the CoP would listen and then idea's and solutions would be encouraged. The third component experimentation, suggested resources or 'ideas' to try out would be logged as action points based on conversations between the coaches. Finally, the fourth component evaluation, feedback would be sought on the main action points agreed from the previous CoP session to identify how the ideas generated impacted coaching or facilitation practice.

4.12 Coaches Community of Practice Sessions (CCoP)

Each community of practice group held one CCoP session per month (depending on coaches' availability) via the online platform MS Teams over a five-month timeframe (May – September). This timeframe was guided by Wenger (2002), who highlighted that the lifespan of a community of practice can vary but ideally four months should be enough to foster value creation. An overview of the various CCoP sessions can be viewed in table 7. The sessions lasted approximately 60 minutes in duration and in total, thirteen CCoP sessions took place between the three coaching groups. Due to the worldwide pandemic at the time of the research, the CCoP sessions were conducted online. While this may not have been the preferred communication medium at the outset of this research, it has been suggested that a well-designed online learning environment can incorporate a variety of technologies for creating content, curation, and distribution as well as a vehicle for communication and collaboration (Johnson, et al., 2015).

Table 7. Overview of dates of CCoP sessions

Activity	Date
COVID 19 Return to non-contact underage training in pods of 15	26/4/21
Coaches COP Group 1 Session 1	19/5/2021
Coaches COP Group 2 Session 1	17/5/2021
Coaches COP Group 3 Session 1	12/5/2021
COVID 19 Resumption of Games	7/6/21
Coaches COP Group 3 Session 2	9/6/2021
Coaches COP Group 2 Session 2	14/6/2021

Coaches COP Group 1 Session 2	16/6/2021
Coaches COP Group 3 Session 3	21/7/2021
Coaches COP Group 1 Session 3	22/7/2021
Coaches COP Group 2 Session 3	Did not take place
Coaches COP Group 3 Session 4	23/8/2021
Coaches COP Group 1 Session 4	24/8/2021
Coaches COP Group 2 Session 4	Did not take place
Coaches COP Group 2 Session 5	27/9/2021
Coaches COP Group 1 Session 5	28/9/2021
Coaches COP Group 3 Session 5	28/9/2021

4.13 Coach Facilitator Community of Practice (CFCoP)

Similar to the CCoP process, the coach facilitators communicated at least once a month in between their individual CCoP sessions. As mentioned in the last section, due to the worldwide pandemic at the time of the research, this meant the coach facilitators needed to be more flexible in relation to their gatherings with some being spontaneous in nature. This was mainly due to the time of the year (Summer) and the busy games schedule in place following the break in games due to the pandemic. The conversations lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were conducted in small groups or at times one to one. At least three of the gatherings were as a full group (see table 8). The CFCoP adopted the reflective conversation framework to structure their gatherings. In this context, the issue settings were focused on issues or challenges the coach facilitators experienced as facilitators in each of their CCoP sessions.

Table 8. Overview of dates of Coach Facilitator gatherings

Activity	Month
Coach Facilitator CoP Session 1 – Orientation / Online	April
Coach Facilitator CoP Session 2 – Informal Gathering	June
Coach Facilitator CoP Session 3 – Informal Gathering	July

Coach Facilitator CoP Session 4 – Informal Gathering	August
Coach Facilitator CoP Session 5 – Informal Gathering	September

4.14 Data Generation

As this research is situated within the interpretivist paradigm, interpretive qualitative methods were used to assist with interpreting how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). This approach enabled the researcher to use qualitative instruments such as semi structured interviews, focus groups and check point surveys to explore patterns or themes that materialised from the data. Furthermore, this approach permitted the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis, exploring the value gained from a peer-facilitated community of practice within a voluntary sport setting.

4.14.1 Semi Structured Interviews

Semi structured interviews were utilised in this research with the aim to explore detailed accounts of the participants’ experience of their participation in a coach’s community of practice and subjective meaning, experiences, and specific details of each participant (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). A semi-structured interview is a verbal exchange where one individual, the interviewer, attempts to gather information from another, the interviewee (Schmidt, 2004). This methodological approach encourages the researcher to explore recurring patterns or common themes that emerge from the data and has been used previously in sport to explore coaches’ perceptions of participating in a community of practice (Bertram, Culver and Gilbert, 2017). Due to its flexible nature, the researcher felt this was an appropriate approach, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of how participants engaged in and benefitted from participating in a CoP. The flexible nature of this approach permitted the researcher to explore the value created from their interaction, while also affording the interviewees an opportunity to take the interviewer down avenues not previously considered (Smith and Sparkes, 2016).

Aligned to previous research by Bertram, Culver and Gilbert (2016, 2017) and Duarte, Culver and Paquette (2020b) the interview guides were created using the value creation framework (Wenger, Trayner and de Laat, 2011; Wenger-Trayner, et al., 2017). The interviews encompassed questions intended to help coaches reflect on what value was created (e.g., Can you discuss your participation as a coach facilitator this past season?

What difference has participating in the coach facilitator community made to your ability to achieve what matters to you or your coaching group? Has your participation changed your or other stakeholders' understanding and definition of what matters? In total, 4 semi structured interviews were conducted, 1 coach developer and 3 coach facilitators. The interviews averaged 62:08 min (ranging from 47:30 to 76:13) and resulted in 68 single spaced pages of transcripts. See appendix K to view the full interview guide for the coach developer, coach facilitator and the coaches.

Three pilot interviews were conducted for the purpose of ensuring question appropriateness/clarity and to upskill the interviewer, the researcher. The first interview was undertaken with the researcher's supervisor acting as the coach with feedback provided afterwards. Secondly, a recorded pilot interview was conducted with a university lecturer who has experience in implementing a CoP in a sports coaching setting. Feedback was provided by the participant and the researcher's supervisor after listening to the audio recording. Finally, a recorded pilot interview was conducted with a club coach who had a representative demographic to coach participants in the study. Once again, feedback was provided by the participant and the researcher's supervisor after listening to the audio recording. With the exception of slightly reducing the number of questions, no major changes were made to the interview guide. However, the rephrasing of a number of questions and an alteration in interviewing technique, specifically in the form of 'probing' on a set area was noted.

4.14.2 Focus Groups

Focus groups are a research method that collects qualitative data through group discussions (Morgan, 2017). The use of a focus group post intervention was an integral and innovated part of an effort to collect data to address the research question. In this case, the focus group was useful to determine the value of the peer facilitated CoP from a coach viewpoint. A similar approach was adopted for the focus group as per the individual semi structured interviews. The interview questions were guided using the value creation framework (Wenger, Trayner and de Laat, 2011; Wenger-Trayner, et al., 2017) and encompassed questions intended to help coaches reflect on what value was created (e.g., Can you discuss your participation as a coach this past season? What was the value of having a peer coach as a facilitator? Has your participation changed your

understanding and definition of what matters? The focus group involved 2 coaches from each CoP resulting in 6 coaches in total participating in the interview. The focus group lasted 76 minutes and resulted in 6 single spaced pages of transcript.

4.14.3 Check Point Surveys

It's recommended that there are continuous 'check-ins' during the implementation of a CoP (Culver, 2020). As a result, this research utilised „check point“ surveys (Microsoft forms) at regular intervals during the season: Post Induction, Post Orientation, Post CFCoP and Post CCoP. The purpose of the „check point“ surveys was three-fold:

1. Assess value gained from participating in the CCoP and CFCOP by coaches and coach facilitators respectively
2. Stimulate reflection
3. Inform and provide additional areas for probing during the interviews

Initially the surveys were used as a starting point to examine the coaches' biographies. More specifically, the surveys comprised of ten Likert scale questions which explored the value gained from participating in a CFCoP (e.g., This CoP further developed relationships between the coach facilitators, action points were agreed by coach facilitators for each topic discussed) and two open ended questions (e.g., What was the main learning moment for you as a result of attending this coach facilitator CoP session that you will apply or try in your next coaches' CoP session?). In addition to providing coaches with the opportunity to reflect on the content to which they were exposed, the surveys provided areas for additional probing during the interviews. A sample check point survey can be viewed in Appendix L.

For the Likert scale questions, the six-point scale (1=Strongly agree, 6=Strongly disagree) was used to ensure that the coaches made a definite choice on each item rather than simply choosing the middle option (Garland, 1991). This supports recommendations that suggest omitting a neutral option encourages participants to think more carefully about whether they agree or disagree with the statement, ultimately leading to greater precision (Martindale, et al., 2010).

Table 9: Overview of the time points that the Check Point Surveys were distributed.

Coach Developer		Coach Facilitators (3)		Coaches (12)	
When	How	When	How	When	How
Before CCoP	Researcher to provide guidance in preparation for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initial club call 2. Club coach's induction 3. Coach Facilitator Orientation 	Before CCoP		Before CCoP	
During CCoP	Check Point Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post club coach's induction • Online survey Check Point Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Coach Facilitator orientation • Online Survey Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of induction and orientation i.e. group engagement, group interaction, support, relationship • Value gained from participation. Questions guided by VCF 	During CCoP	Check Point Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post club coach's induction • Online survey Check Point Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post each Coach Facilitator CoP (CFCoP) and CCoP Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of CFCoP i.e. group engagement, group interaction, support, relationship • Value gained from participation. Questions guided by VCF • Value of support provided by the CD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Survey 	During CCoP	Check Point Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post each CCoP • Online survey Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of CCoP i.e. group engagement, group interaction, support, relationship • Value gained from participation. Questions guided by VCF
After CCoP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Semi Structured Interview x <u>1</u> Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support provided to the coach facilitator – lessons learned 	After CCoP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Semi Structured Interviews x <u>3</u> Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective was the CFCoP • Value gained from participation. Questions guided by VCF • Value of support provided by the CD. 	After CCoP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi Structured Interviews with <u>min 6</u> randomly selected coaches across each CCoP Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective was the CCoP • Value gained from participation. Questions guided by VCF

An overview of the timeline of distribution for check point surveys and response rate from the participants during the study can be viewed in table 10.

Table 10. Overview of when the ‘check points’ took place, with whom and response rate.

Event	Date	Number of respondents (Coach Developer x1)	Number of respondents (Coach x 12)
Coaches Induction	15/4/2021	1	11
Event	Date	Number of respondents (Coach Developer x1)	Number of respondents (Coach Facilitator x 3)
Coach Facilitator Orientation	29/4/2021	1	3
Community of Practice Group	Date	Number of respondents (Coach Facilitator x1)	Number of respondents (Participants x3)
1	19/5/2021	1	3
1	16/6/2021	1	3
1	22/7/2021	1	3
1	24/8/2021	1	3
1	28/9/2021	1	2
2	17/5/2021	1	3
2	14/6/2021	1	3
2	Did not take place	-	-
2	Did not take place	-	-
2	27/9/2021	1	1
3	12/5/2021	1	3
3	9/6/2021	1	3
3	21/7/2021	1	1
3	23/8/2021	-	2
3	28/9/2021	1	1
Coach Facilitator CoP	1/6/2021	3	n/a

Note: The gatherings between the coach facilitators were flexible and less formal than the CCoP's hence the limited number of check point surveys received for this cohort after the first formal meeting.

4.15 Data Analysis

4.15.1 Reflective Thematic Analysis (RTA)

Reflexive thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, focus groups and open-ended questions in the checkpoint surveys. Reflexive thematic analysis is one of many forms of thematic analysis that are differentiated by three principal approaches to thematic analysis (TA); coding reliability TA, codebook approaches TA, and the reflexive approach to TA (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Different from other approaches to TA, RTA has big Q qualitative underpinnings along with certain paradigmatic and epistemological assumptions (e.g., qualitative paradigm, subjectivity, recursive coding, continual reflection) which are necessary to carry out this approach to TA (Braun and Clarke, 2019a). Conducting a quality RTA is not about working through a series of steps, rather it is about the researcher's reflective and thoughtful engagement with the data . . . and the analytic process (Braun and Clarke, 2019a). The rationale for using RTA in this study will be discussed in the following sections.

Braun and Clarke (2006) originally conceptualised RTA as a paradigmatically flexible analytical method, suitable for use within a wide range of ontological and epistemological considerations. In recent publications, the authors have moved away from this view, instead defining RTA as a purely qualitative approach. This pushes the use of RTA into exclusivity under appropriate qualitative paradigms (e.g., constructionism/interpretivism) (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2020). Braun and Clarke (2019) emphasise that qualitative research is about meaning and meaning-making, and viewing these as always context-bound, positioned and situated. Qualitative data analysis is about telling 'stories', about interpreting, and creating, not discovering and finding the 'truth' that is either 'out there' and findable from, or buried deep within, the data. As a result, the researcher chose RTA as a suitable method for qualitative analysis to gain a rich, in-depth understanding of the meaning and value gained from participating in a peer facilitated COP.

4.15.2 Researcher Background

Denzin and Lincoln describe all qualitative research as interpretative as „it is guided by the researcher’s set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and interpreted (2011, p.22). Researcher subjectivity is a primary tool for reflexive TA, as knowledge generation is inherently subjective and situated (Braun and Clarke, 2020, pg.8). As mentioned below, the researcher’s occupation, interests and previous experience provided him with situated knowledge that provides a valuable resource for aiding analysis (Gough and Madill, 2012). As a result, RTA was chosen as a suitable method for qualitative analysis to capture the idea that ‘the researcher becomes the instrument for analysis’ (Nowell and Albrecht, 2019, p.2). Although, researcher subjectivity is an integral and valuable part of RTA - requirement for the researchers to ‘own our perspectives’ (Elliott, Fischer and Rennie, 1999) to ensure robust, quality analysis should be acknowledged.

4.15.3 Flexibility / Variation

While acknowledging the maintenance of reflexivity, theoretical knowingness and transparency, RTA offers researchers flexibility to broad theoretical frameworks, foci for meaning, and orientations to data (Braun and Clarke, 2020, pg.9). Braun and Clarke (2016) named a few active choices researchers should state when using thematic analysis (i.e., semantic focus or latent focus, inductive or deductive theme development, epistemological choice).

4.15.4 Novice Researcher

As the researcher is early in his research career, RTA provided a more accessible form of analysis as it does not require the detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of other qualitative approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Researchers who are relatively unfamiliar with qualitative methods may find that thematic analysis is easily grasped and can be relatively quick to learn, as there are few prescriptions and procedures (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Recently, there has been informative literature published which has centered on helping students and researchers to conduct reflexive, systematic and rigorous TA (e.g., Braun and Clarke, 2016, 2019, 2022; Byrne 2021). Braun and Clarke (2020) have advocated a six-phase process to the analytical process that is flexible in nature to fit the data and research question which should be viewed as guidelines as opposed to a

set of rules. The six phases of the analytical process are: a) data familiarisation and writing familiarisation notes, (b) systematic data coding, (c) generating initial themes from coded and collated data, (d) developing and reviewing themes, (e) refining, defining, and naming themes and (f) writing the report. Although Braun and Clarke (2019) offer a six-stage approach to RTA, they emphasise that analysis is not linear and movement back and forth between stages is needed (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

4.15.5 Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process

- **Phase 1: familiarisation with the data**

Phase one required the researcher to become intimately familiar with the dataset to ensure the appropriate information is identified relevant to the research question. In this study the researcher conducted all the interviews (n=5), listened back to each audio recording of the interviews at least once and transcribed each interview verbatim resulting in 74 single spaced typed pages. This process enabled the researcher to become immersed in the data by reading, and rereading while making notes of potential meaning units prior to moving to the next phase of the process.

- **Phase 2: generating initial codes**

Semantic codes are identified through the explicit or surface meanings of the data. Latent coding goes beyond the descriptive level of the data and attempts to identify hidden meanings or underlying assumptions, ideas, or ideologies that may shape or inform the descriptive or semantic content of the data. Although, a combination of both semantic and latent coding was used, semantic coding was primarily utilized. The researcher generated initial codes for each transcript. Generating initial codes refers to the process of identifying a feature of the data that appears interesting to the researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2016). In this study, the researcher initially highlighted meaningful quotes and notes in the side margin of the printed version of each transcript. Following this exercise, the researcher then uploaded all the transcripts onto NVivo (Version 12), a data analysis software, and codes were created by the researcher for the previously identified ones on the printed versions, and new codes identified while reviewing each transcript in NVivo (Version 12).

- **Phase 3: generating themes**

Phase three included generating themes, which are broader „patterns of meaning,

underpinned by a central organizing concept – a shared core idea’ (Clarke and Braun, 2016). Themes capture ‘something important about the data in relation to the research question’ (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This phase begins when all relevant data items have been coded. The focus shifts from the interpretation of individual data items within the dataset, to the interpretation of aggregated meaning and meaningfulness across the dataset. The coded data is reviewed and analysed as to how different codes may be combined according to shared meanings so that they may form themes or sub-themes. At this point in the analysis, the researcher searched for sub themes and themes deductively by organising the value indicators in line with each of the cycles of the VCF.

- **Phase 4: reviewing themes**

During phase four, it is imperative the themes are reflective of the entire dataset. It is at this point that the researcher may need to ‘let go’ of codes or themes that may not fit the overall analysis and possibly be labelled miscellaneous. The latter may become a sole theme or be removed from the analysis at a later stage (Braun and Clarke, 2012). This phase provided an opportunity for the researcher to cross reference each theme and decide if there was consistency and a logical pattern developing. This was achieved by reviewing the fit of each of the value indicators. Bertram, Culver and Gilbert (2017) noted that some „messiness involved in the separation of some evidence into the specific cycles“ could be experienced by the researcher in this phase. For validity purposes, the researcher and their supervisors (n=2), discussed the themes that were created and cross referenced to ensure the themes accurately represented the data. Feedback from the research supervisors provided recommendations for additional themes, combined themes, and affirmed what quotes fit within their chosen themes.

- **Phase 5: Refining, defining, and naming themes**

In the fifth phase, the researcher revisited the data to review and refine the themes and finally to define and name the themes. To define a theme, the researcher identified the unique features that separated them from the rest. In this study, the researcher defined each theme individually by ensuring they had a specific focus that was not overlapping any of the other themes and was related to the research questions. Extracts from the data were chosen applicable to each theme which will be demonstrated in the report. This phase also included selecting names for the themes which involved the researcher

identifying a short title for each which makes the theme easily recognisable and understandable for example, multiple peer facilitators. See table 11 for a graphic representation of the analysis process.

Table 11. Example of the analysis process from raw meaning to value cycle of the value creation framework

Raw Meaning Unit	Sub Theme	Theme	Value Cycle
‘After sitting on a park bench with CF1 and CF2 for the last hour after having a constructive and beneficial chat...I am pleasantly surprised on how much I enjoyed it’ (CF3)	Enjoyed meeting like-minded people	Interactions and Activities	Immediate
‘my approach to the group has changed. We now make better use of small groups to work on areas of need’ (C1)	Use of small sided games in coaching sessions	Changes in Coaching Practice	Applied

- **Phase 6: Writing the Report**

Finally, in phase six, the researcher produced the research report. This phase utilised the themes identified in the previous steps to produce a report which disseminates the research findings. Regarding the current research project, the findings of the thematic

analysis are presented in chapter five along with relevant discussion pertaining to current literature in the area of community of practice. Additionally, these findings are further utilised in order to make recommendations in chapter seven.

4.15.6 Supplementary Data

As previously discussed, the check point survey was devised to provide coaches with the opportunity to reflect on the content to which they were exposed as well as providing areas for additional probing during the interviews. The two open ended questions in each survey were analysed using RTA as described above and are presented in findings chapter. All responses from the check point survey Likert questions were imported into a customised excel file and collated as mean scores and standard deviations. This data was used to inform the prompting and reference to specific moments during the community of practice and assisted with informing the questions to be included in the semi structured interviews. Figure 4 includes a sample of this data

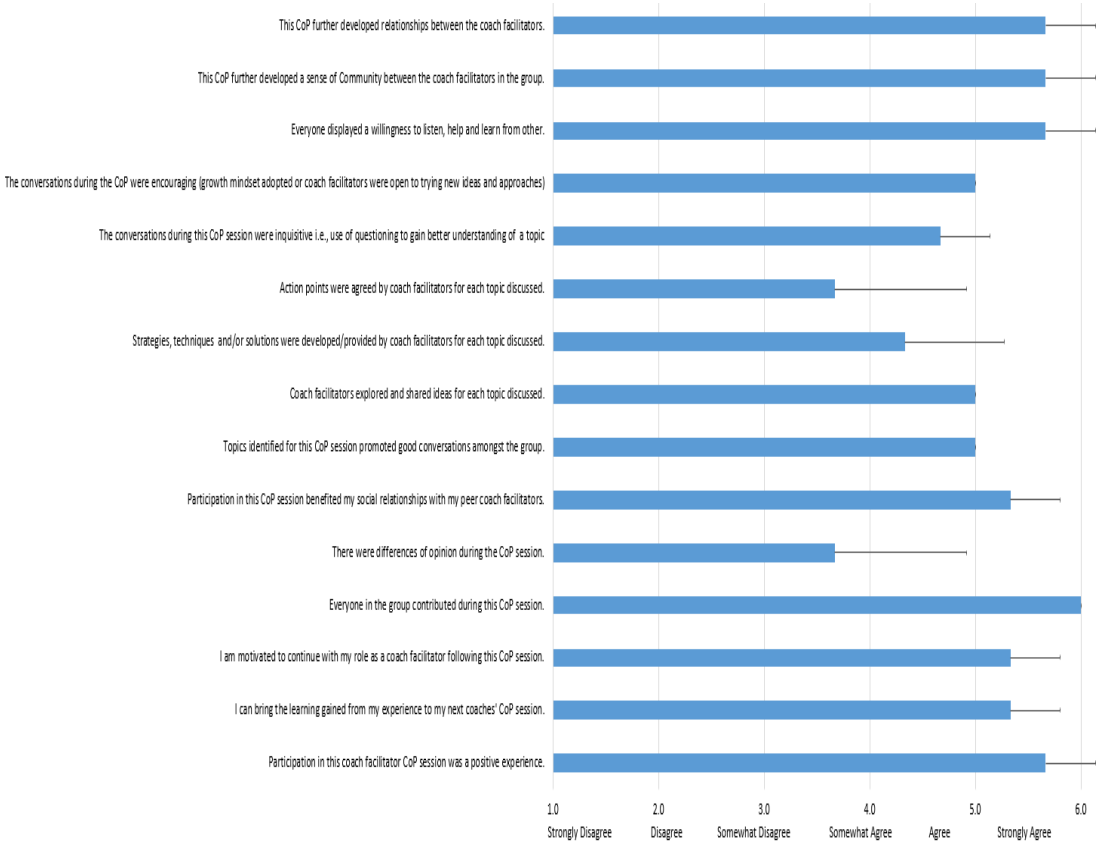


Figure 4. The level of coach facilitator agreement relating to their perceptions of CFCOP 1. Error bars reflect the standard deviation for each item.

4.15.7 Research Quality / Rigor

4.15.7.1 Researcher Positionality

The researcher works as a coaching lead within a National Governing Body (Ladies Gaelic Football Association), is a volunteer coach with his club and has previous experience of leading and engaging a coaches' community of practice in a voluntary sport setting. This positioned the researcher in a fortunate position, as previous experience in this area enabled him to have the ability to build rapport with the key stakeholders in the study and to understand the content, lingo, and pressures of their coaching setting (Evans, 2006; Light and Evans, 2013).

Aligning to the research paradigm, the role of the researcher is as an active agent in the production of knowledge. Researchers need to reflect and negotiate the complexity of their positionality (Hill and Dao, 2020). Qualitative researchers engage in a subjective practice and researchers may bring their own histories, values, assumptions and perspectives into research (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This not only includes how researchers develop interest in a particular topic or gain access to a population. It also includes how their interpretations (their analysis) of what they see, hear, and experience during the research is informed by their assumptions, values and commitments (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

As a result, (and as previously mentioned) reflexive thematic analysis was utilised to value the background and subjectivity of the researcher. Viewing the researcher's subjectivity as something valuable, rather than problematic, is a key aspect of qualitative sensibility (Braun and Clarke, 2022, pg.12). A reflexive approach to TA treated the practices and knowledge of the researcher as an essential resource.

4.15.7.2 Strategies to support research quality / rigor

Four practical strategies were also drawn upon to support or evidence the study's credibility, rigor and sincerity: author reflexivity, critical friends, member reflections and triangulation (Smith and McGannon, 2017).

Self-reflexivity is reported to be one of the most celebrated practices of qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). A reflexive journal is an important tool for ensuring quality

in thematic analysis research (Nowell and Albrecht, 2019). Research within a qualitative paradigm, values reflexivity, subjectivity and indeed the contextual, partial and located nature of knowledge (Braun and Clarke, 2022, pg.232). The researcher used the reflective journal to reflect on assumptions, and to acknowledge the situated and subjective nature of coding. See Appendix O for an excerpt of a reflective journal post following the semi-structured interview with CF 1.

In line with recommendations outlined by Smith and McGannon (2018), the researcher adopted a critical friend approach to achieve rigor and quality. This involved a process of critical dialogue between the researcher and the supervisory team. Regular meetings were held throughout the analysis process to facilitate the critical friend process. Within this process, the researcher and supervisory team would provide critical feedback on interpretations of the data. These exchanges resulted in many debates, where one person's interpretation was challenged with an alternative viewpoint. In adopting this disputatious dynamic, this satisfies guidelines that the role of critical friends is not to agree or achieve consensus but rather to encourage reflexivity by challenging each other's construction of opinion (Cowan and Taylor, 2016).

Regular meetings with the critical friend took place through each stage of the analysis process. For example, during the initial coding process, the researcher and the supervisory team independently coded two manuscripts and met to discuss the relative interpretations of the data. Within this meeting, one of the manuscript's codes was discussed on a page-by-page basis. At the conclusion of the analysis procedures, coding units, sub-themes and themes were reviewed. The differing viewpoints facilitated reflection on the categorisation and order of the themes and what would be the most meaningful and logical way to organise the coaches' perceptions of value. While a consensus is not necessary within the critical friend process, our discussions constituted a high level of agreement on the thematic structure (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). This application of a critical friend process is consistent with recommendations to enhance researcher reflexivity (McGannon, et al., 2019; Sparkes and Smith, 2014). In addition, the role of the critical friends assisted with validation of content. For example, the researchers distributed checkpoint surveys to four third level academics, two National Sporting Governing Body coach leads and a club coach. Feedback included thoughts and perspectives on the flow

of questions and suitability of questions to ensure questions answered the research question being explored.

Member reflections on the researcher's interpretations were sought to enhance the study's rigor (Smith and McGannon, 2017). Member reflections enhance qualitative credibility in several different ways, going far beyond the goal of ensuring that the researcher got it right (Tracy, 2010). Member reflections 'yield new data which throw fresh light on the investigation, and which provide a spur for deeper and richer analyses' (Bloor, 2001, p.395). As such, member reflections are less a test of research findings as they are an opportunity for collaboration and reflexive elaboration. This involved sharing and dialoguing with the participants about the study's findings, which led to additional data and insights that helped to co-construct more well-rounded themes (Connelly and Peltzer, 2016). The participants involved in the study were emailed a summary of their transcripts and the researchers followed up with a phone call within 7 days which lasted no longer than 15 minutes. This process provided new insights and a better interpretation of what was discussed in the semi structured interviews i.e., the researcher's analysis of how the coach facilitators used the conversational framework was enhanced as a result of member reflection with CF3.

Finally, triangulation was used in this study to promote trustworthiness. Denzin (2017) highlights how multiple observers, theories, methods and/or data sources are examples of this process. An over-reliance on interviews risks missing opportunities to harness other methods that could contribute in different ways to understanding and answering the research question (McGannon, et al., 2019). In this study, triangulation was evident through the use of multiple qualitative data sources e.g., semi structured interviews, check point surveys and focus groups. Furthermore, the results of the survey (Likert scale questions) were used to inform and complement the interview questions. Tracy (2010) promotes that the use of multiple data gathering methods assists with a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

4.15.8 Chapter Summary

The methodological approaches employed within the research study were explored in this chapter. The research paradigm provides the philosophical approach applied by the researcher, that of interpretivism. As a result, a qualitative methodology was utilized to disclose the subjective meaning of the experiences of each participant that was interviewed. Following an explanation of the research paradigm, selection and recruitment of participants, the data collection approach, and data analysis methods were examined as well as the ethical considerations considered before engaging in research. The following Chapter, Chapter 5, presents the findings pertaining to the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated CCoP in a voluntary sport setting. Semi-structured interviews, a focus group and check point surveys were utilised as data-collection tools in order to facilitate meaningful discussion. Braun and Clarke (2019), 6-step thematic analysis process informed the analysis of the interviews conducted and led to the development of themes. Figure 5, provides an overview of the timeline of the study.

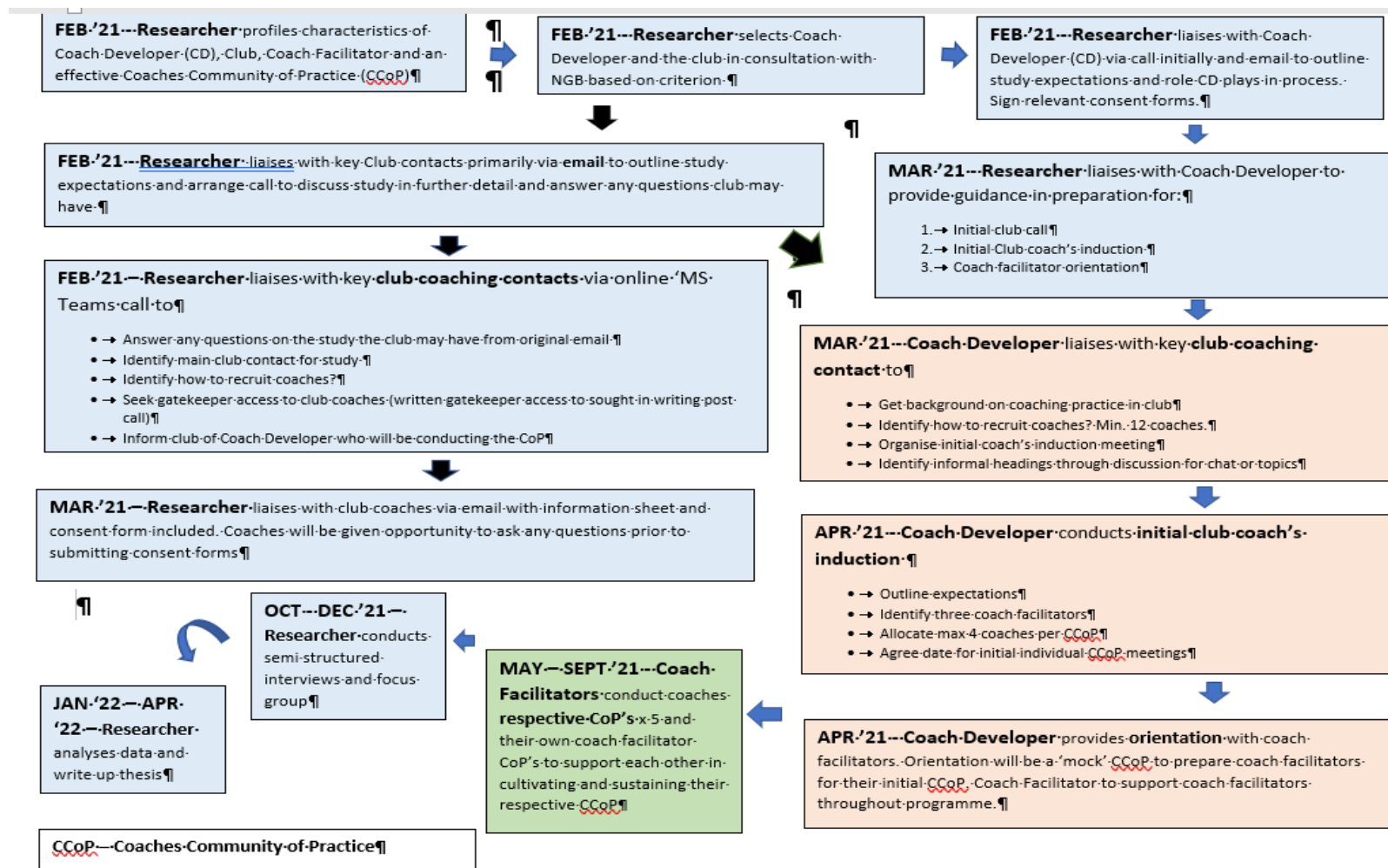


Figure 5. Overview of main action points of the study and timeline associated with completion.

Chapter 5

Findings

Introduction

In order to explore the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated community of practice in a voluntary sport setting, the findings are presented in cycles in accordance with the value creation framework (VCF). The VCF, while not perfect, makes a valuable contribution to the process of assessing CoP members' individual learning stories related to social learning spaces (Bertram, Culver and Gilbert, 2017). Initially this framework, outlined in some detail in chapter two, section 2.2, comprised of five non-hierarchical cycles: immediate value, potential value, applied value, realised value, and reframing value. However more recently, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) updated the framework to include three additional cycles, strategic, enabling, and orienting value. Furthermore, reframing value was revised as transformative value. Bertram, Culver and Gilbert (2017) noted that there can be some „messiness involved in the separation of some evidence into the specific cycles“. Recently, Wenger and colleagues (2020) describe the values as belonging in four pairs due to the close connections between each other. Thus, the four pairs are: (a) immediate and potential values; (b) applied and realized values; (c) strategic and enabling values; and (d) orienting and transformative values. Although close connections exist between cycles, for the purpose of the analysis in this study, the researcher focused on each value individually. Quotations presented here are for clarity, with the goal of illustrating value creation and are representative of all the coach facilitators (CF), a selection of coaches (C) and the coach developer (CD) who participated in the study. Quotations were extracted from the coach check point surveys, and semi structured interviews conducted with the participants following the programme

5.1 Immediate Value

Immediate value involves participants engaging in social learning interaction such as enjoying the company of like-minded people, doing something exciting, helping a peer with a difficult scenario during a meeting, a useful conversation or a good tip provided by a colleague.

5.1.1 Activities and Interactions

Participation in a peer facilitated community of practice resulted in new activities and significant experiences for the coach facilitators. The coach facilitators highlighted that

this was the first time that they experienced this concept in sport setting, with the coach facilitators feeling enthused from their early interaction and activities. CF3 remarked:

It is lovely to know that there are like-minded people around as well, as you might be a little lost in the fog sometimes and you are trying to find like-minded people, so the CCoP has definitely brought forward something already in its infancy.

Furthermore, following the coach facilitator orientation, CF3 through their check point survey mentioned how they thoroughly enjoyed the engagement and interaction with their peer coach facilitators, and felt motivated as a result:

There was learning and further understanding from our facilitators meeting (orientation) yesterday evening. I felt as well as getting to know the people involved better on a personal level, I feel that we further increased our understanding of coaching through dialogue. We listened, shared views, talked and talked some more whilst all the time being respectful of everything that each person shared...we most definitely have a bond and shared interest in coaching and coaching to the best of our abilities which is most definitely evident in the passion and knowledge shared.

The coach facilitators (n=3), were identified amongst the coaches during the coaches' induction. This meant that the coach facilitators were able to engage and support each other in a smaller group and at times in one-to-one discussion.

CF1 mentions how much they enjoyed this peer support network: 'loving the facilitators meetings'. These interactions were scheduled in between the coach facilitators CCoP sessions and at times were spontaneous in nature. CF3 highlighted the flexible nature of these gatherings and the impact of engaging with like-minded people:

After sitting on a park bench with CF1 and CF2 for the last hour after having a constructive and beneficial chat...I am pleasantly surprised on how much I enjoyed it.

CF2 reinforces the informal nature of these gatherings:

Meetings were both formally, informally, face to face and remotely. There was times when it was just text messages, there were times when it was just phone calls and as time wore on and you could meet up a bit more when training came back, you might have had at the end of training 10 minutes on a picnic bench outside because you could not still come inside but it was unstructured at times, informal and catching up with each other on when are you doing your next one and what are you going to discuss and how did that go for you before.

As a result of their participation in the CFCoP and CCoP activities, coach facilitators felt it increased their social network and created new connections with other members in the

club that they do not normally encounter. This developed a sense of inclusion as CF1 remarks:

That was a massive thing for me. I didn't know any of those coaches or the male side of the club. We are totally Camogie and although we are meant to be one club, we are not we are just Camogie. So, it was nice to get to know the main club, the main people behind it, to know different people's perspectives and to hear stories that would not have never heard.

Similar to the coach facilitators, this was the first time that the coaches experienced a peer facilitated CCoP in a club setting. C3 mentions how the early interaction's and activities left them excited about the concept: 'I was more intrigued of what was coming down the road. It was a great guide point, a great lead'.

The CCoP provided an opportunity for coaches to engage in discussions with like-minded coaches who they normally do not come in contact with:

It was great to meet other coaches and have great conversations. I am the same I am only here like the lads four years, so I am getting to know other people that are in the club. (C8)

In addition, C2 reinforces the benefit of building social networks: 'it was very good. The lads are in the football side of it in my group. I have never met them and never spoken to them before'. The atmosphere created by the coach facilitators and being involved with a small group of people with a similar passion in the club provided a sense of inclusion for C6:

I looked forward to it and felt comfortable. I sat down with a cup of tea. It was like being in the sitting room having a chat with the lads. That is what made it feel good.

5.2 Potential Value

Potential value refers to knowledge capital; value that has the possibility of being produced in the future i.e., insights, connections or resources. Potential value is divided into five sub categories: human (useful skills, a key piece of information, or a new perspective), social (ability to ask questions), tangible (privileged access to certain resources), reputational (gaining recognition within a group), and learning capital (applying learning from a CoP to different situations).

5.2.1 Personal (Human Capital)

Having multiple coach facilitators in the club provided the group with an opportunity to share ideas, strategies and information. Following on from this, the coach facilitators

were able to acquire new facilitation skills such as which may help to enhance future CCoP sessions. During these meetings and interactions, the coach facilitators were able to discuss similar challenges they encountered collectively while facilitating their respective CCoP sessions. CF1 highlights the influence of their peers in advising, supporting and providing encouragement when required:

You know we'd have concerns around the same issues. The first few weeks, I was kind of „where do we start with this“? So that is what I would bring up and obviously the coaches in my group would come up with their own topics.

The importance of sharing learning moments to enhance facilitation skills of their peers was something that was valued by CF2:

I shared my idea of the area that I would like to improve in (note taking to derive action points) for my next coach facilitator session. We discussed the idea and the other facilitators have said that they will try something similar as well as a trial. We will discuss it again at our next facilitator CoP session.

From a personal coaching perspective, the support CF1 received made them realise all coaches, irrespective of experience and gender experience similar coaching challenges:

Highlight for me was the feeling of not been alone in how I was struggling with my coaching group. Other coaches have these sessions in training that leave you frustrated and wanting to give up. This was good to hear. Sometimes I feel as a female I don't get the respect from my players but I now know that this isn't just me as a female coach.

Gaining confidence from engaging in conversations with their peers around coaching strategies and developing technical skills was something C6 spoke of:

We discussed making training more applicable to what actually happens in games, a „less is more“ approach when it comes to sessions so that we are not trying to pack too much in and coaching players to strike on the move. Got good advice on how to break down the skill.

5.2.2 Relationships and Connections (Social Capital)

The coach facilitators expressed how their involvement in the CFCoP assisted with the forming of new relationships and connections. Even though all of the coach facilitators were from the same club, they were all involved in different codes (football, hurling, camogie or ladies football) and did not know each other prior to this process. This experience provided them with the opportunity to tap into new knowledge and experiences that existed within the group:

We had two people (CF1 & CF2) that I didn't know very well but I know them very well now but like you know we just exposed ourselves and our vulnerabilities and learned from each other. (CF3)

CF1 further emphasised the importance of developing a close connection with their peers. It provided them with invaluable support and guidance when required during the process. The trusting relationship developed enabled them to ask questions of their peers at a time when they struggled to understand the concept: 'I didn't get what was happening that night (coaches' induction). I had to go back and ask CF2 and CF3 and what was happening'.

From the coach's viewpoint, the relationships and connections developed during the CCoP increased self-awareness of their own coaching practice. C1 notes:

I am aware of elements and aspects of coaching that, up to now, I would not have planned for or known of the potential possibilities of this arising in my cohort.

Coaches reported how being involved in the CoP provided them with an opportunity to seek different perspectives from peer coaches and reflect on how they coach. C8 mentions how this collaboration assisted with their decision-making process as a coach: 'I was looking for guidance on what everyone else does; it would have fed into my decisions and how I would have conducted the practices'.

The relationships and connections formed provided a safe space for participants to discuss and share coaching challenges. C5 mentioned how having a peer facilitator developed a mutual respect amongst the participants which enabled them to be open and honest in relation to coaching issues within the club:

I think that some of the coaches would have been more comfortable with a peer to raise an issue rather than an expert or someone external. Some coaches may be afraid to raise an issue (with an external facilitator) as they might say „well that is the level you are at“ and they might not have brought it up at all. I think it was good from a confidence building point of view that people can share the small challenges which I felt were hindering a real success or development of coaching. If you got over those smaller steps, then I think there be more momentum around the bigger picture.

5.2.3 Resources (*Tangible Capital*)

The coach facilitators set up a central online platform where coach facilitators would upload their self-reflections following their respective CCoP sessions. The coach facilitators mentioned how these documents were available for all the coach facilitators to view and learn from each other's experiences. In addition, these documents helped to guide discussions for the CFCoP gatherings and were easily accessible for participants to refer to in preparation for subsequent CCoP sessions:

We as facilitators agreed to have a rolling document organised between us to share our group conversations and main points highlighted using buzz words. This heightened my awareness around the endless possibilities for learning, knowledge gathering and indeed a reference point in the future for how multi beneficial these CoP sessions actually are. (CF3)

CF2 reiterated the benefit of this shared document:

CF3 has a shared document so that we can always go back to that. It is not as detailed as recording and going word for word on it stuff like that it was like what topics came up and how did the discussions go and was their conclusions and stuff.

Each coach facilitator set up a WhatsApp group to assist with engaging directly with their CCoP members. This facility enabled the coach facilitator to upload information, ideas or queries for participants to view in preparation for their CCoP, such as an article or video. C6 gives an insight in the how this process operated and generated discussion:

We would usually get a WhatsApp a couple of days leading up to CCoP that would include a couple of ideas to initiate discussion. It could be a typical video or an article in the paper or something.

5.2.4 Collective Intangible Assets (*Reputational Capital*)

As a result of being part of the CFCoP, CF1 felt it presented an opportunity for recognition across other codes within the club and enabled them to view things from a different perspective:

So, it was nice for them to hear from the female point of view as well. They be going on about their teams of males, but I would be saying it is so different sometimes over on the female side of the game. It is good for them to see that as well as coaches to see what it is like to be a female.

Furthermore, CF1's participation brought the realisation that they were part of a wider community:

I think you have a lot to learn from the boy's side of things and listening to other coaches. Sometimes when you are around your own coaches, you are used to them.

The coaches discussed how being inspired by their peers could benefit them if they were to continue this concept in future seasons. C6 spoke about the role they could play in encouraging other club coaches to participate in a CCoP. This would develop a collective voice within the club and gain recognition, where other coaches in the club identify them as a knowledgeable group of coaches:

If we were to do it again next year...maybe a couple of people here could be extra facilitators and maybe get CF1, CF2 and CF3 to do it again and maybe two of us, that would be five groups and ten more coaches.

5.2.5 Transformed ability to learn (Learning Capital)

Participation and learning from interactions with their peer coach facilitator group transferred to other areas outside of the CCoP. CF3 was excited about implementing a community of practice concept in their work setting:

I've now even tried to adapt it into my school in that anyone that has an interest in history or something like that that we might just bounce a few ideas off one another, subject wise and stuff like that in the primary setting.

Furthermore, CF3 saw potential in transferring their learning to other areas of the club:

Thoroughly enjoying the process. I have commenced an informal approach to this idea with the football coaches already and they love the idea and concept. Highly motivated, moved and enthused by the sharing of coaching knowledge and coaching related topics.

5.3 Applied Value

Drawing on new insights, connections or resources to change one's practice requires creativity and learning, and thus, is viewed as generating applied value. This cycle will be divided into two sections: changes to practice and changes in personal development.

5.3.1 Changes to coach facilitator practice

The coach facilitators highlighted how their regular conversations as a coach facilitator group assisted with making changes to their facilitation practice. CF1 mentions how documenting the information gathered from their discussions improved the formulation of action points:

It was at one of the facilitators meetings that we were saying, „do a synopsis at the end, come to a conclusion at the end“. We were great at talking about topics, but we were not coming up with conclusions or what to do, so we kind of said at the end of each point, what are our solutions here and I would write down the solutions.

Furthermore, CF1 highlighted how taking notes during their CCoP sessions assisted with keeping the conversations on track: ‘I think when I write stuff down, I am much better as I might talk and go off topic. I found by writing down points kept me on track’. CF3 mentions how improving their questioning technique assisted with participant engagement: ‘Having spoken with the other facilitators, I was conscious of ensuring that each participant was involved in the conversation’.

The coach facilitators discussed how their experiences led to changes in their facilitation skills and their own personal learning. The coach facilitators felt that participation in the CFCoP assisted with improving their ability to listen more which they valued as beneficial: ‘A learning point for myself in self-development was that I needed to listen to the other points a bit more when we are in our sessions’ (CF3). This was echoed by CF2: ‘It was a good exercise for me personally as I ended up being more of a listener than a talker’. Furthermore, CF3 spoke about how it made them more observant as a coach facilitator; taking a moment to step back: ‘I definitely learned a lot more about myself in that I need to take a back-step sort of thing and allow a process to happen and with that as well listen a lot more’.

5.3.2 Coach Facilitator Personal Development

Participation in the CFCoP increased the coach facilitators self-confidence to engage in deeper conversations outside of the scheduled CCoP session with non- members of the CCoP. Coach facilitator one illustrates how their ability to connect with other members within their own code was enhanced:

I suppose I am more confident in what I am telling other coaches. As a result, we started having regular head coaches“ meetings with the Camogie. So, we had never done that prior to participating in this concept.

A similar benefit of reaching out to the wider support network within the club was mentioned by CF3:

I don’t think I would have had the bravery to reach out (S&C Coach) and I suppose

share that responsibility and tell people the vision, without what I have done through the CoP process.

The coach facilitators described their interactions as positive and played a pivotal role in increasing their own self-confidence to carry out their role to the best of their ability. CF3 spoke of how this support aided their self-development:

The first one (CFCoP), it was lovely to sit down and get their perspective, especially CF2 because he came really prepared with notes taken and everything where it was all up here (pointing to head) for me. On the first meeting, there was definitely personal growth for me as a facilitator after that with communication and whatever else.

Furthermore, CF3 felt that their self-confidence was increased as a result of all these interactions: ‘I suppose it was only by my interactions with CF1 and CF2 that like I got even more confident’.

CF3 stressed the importance of connecting with their emotions to improve their self-development and communication with their group members in future coaches’ community of practice sessions.

I'd like to think that my emotional intelligence to respecting and listening to other people even though it might not be the full valid viewpoint that I might have, is something that has definitely increased.

5.3.3 Changes to coaching practice

The coaches reported making changes to their coaching practices and implementing new coaching strategies as a result of participating in their respective CCoP. The coaches mentioned implementing new initiatives such as games-based coaching to respond to the needs of the group. C1 reported that ‘my approach to the group has changed. We now make better use of small groups to work on areas of need’. C6 echoes the changing of coaching practice to replicate the game: ‘we made training more applicable to what actually happens in games.

Coaches reported how their participation in the CCoP impacted on how they plan their coaching sessions:

I did factor when I was planning my sessions, drills I would do per session would be considered. It would have fed into my decisions and how I would have conducted the practices. (C5)

C8 reinforces the changes to practice planning as a result of the CCoP:

‘we approach our sessions and plan them to try and keep those girls going as long as we can’. C1 discussed how their practice plans have subsequently changed and have ‘focused more on quality of drills and not trying to do too many in the session’.

5.3.4 Coaches Personal Development

The coaches maintained how their participation in the CCoP boosted their self-development as a coach more so than from a technical perspective. This could be attributed to the influence of having a peer as a facilitator:

I think it was good from a confidence building point of view that people can share the small challenges which I felt were hindering a real success or development of coaching. (C3)

The coaches revealed that the peer facilitated CCoP provided them with the opportunity to develop their coaching repertoire through sharing of ideas and information related to coaching. CoP C8 revealed:

It is a cross pollination of ideas; we are all trying out different things and learning from what works and what doesn't. It is about sharing those ideas, and this is a good format to do it as it is informal.

5.4 Realised Value

Changes in practice that makes a difference to what matters, social learning produces realized value i.e., observe positive outcomes.

5.4.1 Facilitation Skills

CF2 mentions how sharing of ideas with their peer coach facilitators helped with summarising conversations during CCoP sessions and settling on action points: ‘I realized afterwards we talked a lot, but I haven't written enough down. So, I said, for my next one I'm going to try write things down’.

CF1 reflected on the need to stick to the topic and recap any conclusions of the discussed. Subsequently, CF1 reports that discussions with the peer coach facilitators in the CFCOP led to the achievement of this goal:

My fellow facilitators advised to stick to topics which I did and to wrap up each conversation with a synopsis of what we just discussed. This I did and worked well. Similar to the CF1, CF2 reported an improvement in their time management skills: I became more conscious of time management during the sessions, to allow all participants discuss their ideas on all topics. I moved on from each topic after 15 minutes, to ensure we covered all proposed topics.

5.4.2 Support Network

CF3 recognised the value that they are not alone in the club and that support is available whenever coaching issues arise:

I suppose the need for advocacy and support from one another as opposed wearing all my emotions and trying to sort them out myself as to opposed to a sound board and sharing. A problem shared is a problem halved.

5.4.3 Improvement in Coaching Practice

The coaches felt that their performance improved, or goals were achieved as a result of participating in the CCoP. C2 mentions that changes in coaching practice had a realised effect as the games-based coaching initiative had a positive outcome in their coaching sessions: 'we did really find it helpful, weaker girls were getting on the ball a bit more'.

Within the CCoP, the coaches discussed involving the players more, this goal was realised as Coach two explained that the players were now getting more touches of the ball and were exposed to more decision-making opportunities.

Coaches also improved their practice as a result of discussions in their respective CCoP, C2 reported that 'we kind of had chats on things that don't work really as well as things that do work. Sometimes you just have to take a step back if it is not going to work or whatever'. C2 stated how these discussions led to positive outcomes in session management and delivery:

I definitely paired things back a little bit and kind of having more patience and trying to do so much. So maybe take a drill out, slow things down and just if something doesn't work it doesn't work.

C2 mentions how their participation initiated a change in coaching practice leading to players taking ownership in a particular session:

Definitely trying to relax sessions; they're coming up to meet their friends and have a chat. We had a session, we were chatting as coaches and the girls were chatting. They just picked two teams and starting playing. We let them off, we refereed it and put in a few conditions. We threw out the plan as it went out the window. We just left them at it, just to de pressurize it.

5.5 Transformative Value

CCoP members experience applied value when they make changes to their practices, actions or approaches (i.e., implementing new strategies). When these changes lead to an improvement in performance or an achievement of goals, CoP members and sport organisations experience transformative value.

An insight into how the interaction between the peer coach facilitators helped transform how they experience their coaching journey and rethink their identity:

I admit, I was tired and under stress from work and home life on my way to our face to face meeting. However, this contact between the facilitators proved invaluable for me in reigniting the importance of what we are doing and how much I actually am interested in my development as a coach. Sometimes, I compartmentalise this ambition and personalise this journey to my own detriment in adding layers of worry and unwanted stress on evaluating and perhaps over thinking what I am trying to achieve for the children at my sessions and what I am trying to learn also. Coaching is a craft and having shared this session with CF1 and CF2, I have found again the importance of communication, sharing of knowledge and concerns and maybe learnt to lighten the load on my shoulders and perhaps just let it flow. (CF3)

CF 1 discussed how engaging in the CFCOP has had broader effects throughout the club:

As a development officer (Camogie club), I try and bring that to the whole group of Camogie coaches. It has definitely helped that way. We started with the Camogie having regular head coaches" meetings. We had never done that prior to participating in this process.

A similar viewpoint is provided by CF3:

I suppose it has empowered me in my role as a coaching officer (Football & Hurling), I am a little more assertive definitely but also 100% giving me courage to open conversations and question some coaches to maybe think a little bit deeper.

Participation in the CoP for coach facilitator two broadened their perspective on coaching:

It's changed and it has broadened me to think that there are lots of other ideas in the club and some might be different to mine and some might be the same as my own.

CF1 reflected on the journey they have travelled following an uncertain start to the programme:

It has been a really interesting journey over the past six months. I got to know three fellow coaches very well and all of whom are great people and true club/GAA people. The topics discussed were personal, frustrating, interesting and much more. Everything was discussed and debated, solutions were found. Limitations were identified but our dedication and passion for our sport and the kids has been the basis and forefront of our discussions.

The process assisted with coaches continually reflecting on their identity and the role they play in achieving a positive coaching environment. C6 highlights the importance of enjoying the coaching journey with their peer coaches: ‘pretty much the same, probably learned from talking to coaches that the bigger picture to make sure everybody stays and enjoys themselves’.

5.6 Enabling Value

Enabling value is produced when quality interactions are generated by internal leadership (i.e., organising logistics, facilitating a meeting) and external sources of support (i.e., funding, technology) or a combination of the two. This cycle was discussed in terms of internal leadership as well as timing and technology that makes the existence of the community possible.

5.6.1 Peer Coach Facilitator

CF1 indicated the need for an internal leader to help maintain their motivation and enthusiasm during the process: ‘I would say you need someone within your club. If there is a leader within the club, you need someone like CF3, a person to drive that’. This is reinforced by CF2: ‘Coach facilitator three is great for getting us together and getting conversations started’. Interestingly, the importance of a strong internal leader was also observed by the coach developer: ‘Like anything, you need strong leadership for things to work well’. He also went on to say that the peer coach facilitator should be selected amongst the coaches; ‘it is better to give autonomy to the coaches, they will pick the best person, they know them’.

Within the CCoP session, each of the coach facilitators spoke about having the ability to lead coaching conversations and stick to the topics on the agenda. As a variety of topics

were discussed during each of the CCoP sessions, at times the participants found themselves getting caught up in organisational conversations as opposed to sticking to the coaching issues on the agenda. Coach facilitator one provided an example of this:

I think a lot of the time what was being discussed turned back onto ourselves and the focus of the club. It sometimes turned into a bit of a rant session.

Strong leadership and the required skillset from the facilitators are necessary to ensure the CCoP sessions remain on topic, steer away from organisational issues and maintain the learning value for coaches. The coaches participating in the CCoP recognised this challenge and praised the coach facilitators for having the leadership and facilitation skills to refocus the conversation:

The coach facilitator would fire out a topic at the beginning and we chat away and may head off on a different path but the coach facilitator would drag us back a little bit. (C6)

The value of identifying a peer facilitator was discussed. C2 was clear on their thought process:

I think it is a no brainer really. If it is not a fellow coach in the club then they do not know what they are talking about. If it is not someone (coach facilitator) within the club, a fellow coach, then I think it loses its value.

C5 expressed a similar viewpoint: „I think the coaches are more comfortable with a peer when raising an issue rather than an expert or someone external“. CF3 reinforces this point. They felt a peer has the advantage of ‘building blocks of complete trust’. They continued to note that as a result of this trust, a safe space is created for the coaches to expose any challenges or vulnerabilities. CF3 explains this in more detail:

There was one particular meeting where we just reflected on a coaching issue that one coach had in the previous meeting that was very relevant. C1 blew us away with how personal they took this situation and the honesty at the start of the session. I suppose the honesty to put themselves out there and display this frustration, they didn't know what to do and they were talking to three strangers. It just opened up a huge conversation for us like and I can still remember it and we spoke about how you know supporting one another in instances like this and how brave it was of C1 to feel vulnerable and to put himself out there and communicate with that with us. He felt safe in the environment to be able to contribute because we had built up that safety net between us.

The coaches highlight the atmosphere created by a peer facilitator promoted open and honest discussions between the group members.

There was an openness and honesty there and people then expressed what their learnings might, they knew that that person had experience of some of the issues and they were being honest and were honest if they found those similar challenges (C5).

C8 echoed this point about the importance of the environment: 'The coach facilitator created a safe environment so you can talk about whatever issue you wanted'. The importance of having the right people internally to be able to facilitate CCoP was prominent across the coach facilitators. CF1 highlighted how being organised and a good communicator were key attributes a coach facilitator should possess:

You must be organised, there and ready to run it and communication. That is huge. You have to be able to communicate ideas...if you are not on the ball for that then forget about it. Communication and organisation.

CF3 mentions the importance of having good facilitation skills:

To be able to identify that the moment is done, that the conversation is finished on a topic, to move on or to make sure that everybody is included fully within it.

C3 gave an insight to the type of person that would flourish in the coach facilitator role:

They had knowledge of the club, very open minded and very good time management; They would raise a topic but we would go off on tangents, but they would bring us back. It flowed.

5.6.2 Multiple Coach Facilitators

The value of having more than one peer coach facilitator was discussed and it was felt that the CCoP design had a direct impact on the level of dependency on the external support:

You felt you had a local support group that if I was struggling to arrange a meeting, come up with a trigger/appetizer or topic or struggling with somebody's engagement or lack of engagement, you will be able to bounce it off somebody else that might have come across the same thing as you. (CF2)

The CD (external support) reinforces the point about how having more than one coach facilitator impacted on the dependency on them throughout the process:

I think if it was one coach facilitator, they would be coming back to me a lot more if it was a one to one thing. I think because there was a group of them, there was a mentality that we are the same and we will figure it out for ourselves.

Having more than one coach facilitator meant that multiple CoP groups were formed.

The participants felt that the smaller coaching groups was a positive contributing factor as it facilitated developing social relationships and cemented the commitment of participants to the process:

The group sizes were right, if you got too many more people (more than 4) the it would be too many. I think you felt that if you join and don't turn up then you would be leaving the group down. (C8)

Similar to C8, C5 felt the cross representation of coaches from each code in the club in each of the CCoP groups was important and provides a number of reasons for this:

While there is a little bit of cross representation between the codes in the clubs, there is no real joined up thinking. There is a competitiveness between the different codes in the club. They should be seen as equal stakeholders in the whole thing. I think that was the thought process when selecting the groups. There might be an opportunity to get familiar with other less known people involved in the other codes in the club. I think it was healthy from that way.

5.6.3 Timing

The most suitable time of the season for a CoP to most effectively enable learning produced varying responses. CF1 highlighted how certain times of the year can be challenging:

I think it was great off season starting off, I think it can be very difficult in the middle of the season, especially Summertime because people are away but it is nice to have this CoP during competition as it is nice to get another perspective and if someone needs help, you are there for them.

CF2 made the point that it is more about recognising the right time of the year as opposed to whether it is best completed in-season or off- season:

I think we have to acknowledge that there will be busy periods for matches, family and holidays so we need to be flexible.

Coaches outlined the merits of participating in the programme during the playing season as it promotes the opportunity to seek support and advice to everyday coaching issues from their peers. C6 highlighted the value in a CoP being embedded within the playing season to solve ' indigenous ' issues rather than 'just in case' issues

During in season, you have coaching issues that might pop up and you be able to bring this up with your peer coaches in your next chat. Whereas off season, you have your first meeting and then there is nothing new between the next session.

5.6.4 Technology

Due to COVID restrictions, video conferencing software was utilised for the coaches' induction and CF orientation meetings. From a CF viewpoint, it was felt meeting in person with their peers in the early stages i.e., induction and orientation would have been more beneficial. One coach facilitator spoke of how they felt lost during the coaches' induction due to lack of technological know-how and inability to ask questions:

If I am honest, I was lost in the induction. I am not great with technology...I think face to face might have been better. I find when you are online you can't really ask questions as there are a load of people on it. (CF1)

CF3 mentioned how nerves played a part early on for them and how meeting in person would may have alleviated this somewhat:

On the first call (orientation), there would have been a little bit of nerves. It definitely would have been a lot better had we met around a table. The nervousness would have gone straight away because you would have realised you are the company of a community around a table as opposed to headphones.

CF3 went on to highlight how their nerves were further heightened for their initial coaches CCoP, as they didn't know all the participants and how conducting the meeting online removed the opportunity to build a relationship:

When it came to meeting our groups, there was a nervousness over the phone because I did not know C2 very well. It is difficult to read and get to know each other in a group situation when you can't sit around a table, flesh things out and get to know mannerisms of a person as opposed to just looking at a screen. While C5 preferred in person interaction, they outlined some benefits to the online element regarding keeping coaching conversations concise: „Face to face is a lot better. I think the only thing that the online helped with was that it brought a bit more structure to it and concise“.

5.7 Strategic Value

Strategic value was discussed in terms of maintaining strategic conversations with influential people within and outside the club environment.

5.7.1 Constituencies

Participants discussed the different codes within the Gaelic Games club and how different perceptions and expectations amongst the coaches could influence effectiveness of a

CCoP within the club. CF3 provided a possible insight as to why this may be the case: „the individuality that comes through in certain sections of the club is really concerning“. C5 also mentions about the lack of strategic approach within the club:

There is a little bit of cross representation between the clubs, there is no real joined up thinking. There is a competitiveness between the different codes of clubs.

5.7.2 Strategic Context

It is imperative participants have a clear understanding of what is involved in the social learning process, what counts as learning and what it entails to promote engagement in the concept from the relevant stakeholders. The CCoP concept was something new to the club and the participants. CF2 mentions how participants would have reservations on whether the club and coaches were ready to engage in this type of learning:

I would not be sure yet whether the whole club would be ready for it. I would not be sure that every coach in every age group are ready for it.

C3 was open about their thoughts when asked about their prior knowledge of CoP concept: ‘To be honest, I had not a clue what it (CoP) was about’. C4 reinforces this lack of understanding: ‘I was not aware of it (CoP) prior to getting involved’. However, having experienced a CCoP setting, the coaches showed an understanding that social learning imperatives could be beneficial for the club long term but did not explicitly state if these conversations were held with the key decision makers in the club at the time of writing up the thesis. For example, CF3 felt motivated to discuss the concept further and broaden the concept within the club: ‘A massively worthwhile journey. There are many ideas upon which I hope we can act on to make this CoP embedded within the club’. C7 echoed this point also: ‘I would hope the club would develop CoP further and adopt it as part of the club’s strategy going forward’.

5.7.3 External Stakeholders

CF2 revealed the important role the external CD had in the early stages of the CCoP process, in particular the orientation session with the coach facilitators that involved a ‘mock’ of a CCoP session:

Our first session (orientation), was a mock of what we were going to do as a

group of coach facilitators with our group of coaches that included a trigger subject (catalyst). The coach developer outlined the purpose of this is that you are hoping that coaches are going to give you ideas, preferably giving ideas before your CCoP.

From the coach facilitator perspective, they felt a peer coach facilitator is more impactful but valued the external support network to assist them in their role:

Does it have to be internal yeah definitely but like external advice is wanted and warranted also but not for a community of practice for the actual sessions. (CF3).

CF2 affirmed the benefit of having someone in the background as a support:

I knew that the coach developer was there if I needed them. If what you are trying to do isn't broken and you're working away at it and stuff like then you don't need to be relying on the coach developer. I mean in essence, I felt we knew what the story was, and I would have made contact if I needed assistance.

The external support having prior experience in a CoP was noted by CF3 and was a motivating factor in their involvement:

I remember the coach developer being extremely relaxed about the whole process and the situation. The coach developer shared their view of what a community of practice was and how they were interested in it; I was really blown away by their presentation.

Interestingly the coach developer had similar views on the role of the external support. He spoke about the value of having more than one coach facilitator had on his role over the course of the process: 'It was them that supported each other. I suppose if they got anything, they knew someone was there'. In addition, the participants were impressed by the level of knowledge on the CoP concept by the coach developer, which served as a motivating factor early in the process. The coach developer reiterates the importance of coach educators understanding of the CoP concept: 'I would say it is crucial they have a fair idea of what it is. They need to understand it and how it fits onto coach education'.

5.7.4 Alliances

The value of everyone working together and sharing opinions across all codes for the long-term development of the club seems a key factor to the sustainability of such a programme in a voluntary sport setting. CF1 mentions the value of getting everyone involved and improving together: 'If we had all codes involved, it would have worked

better'. CF2 expressed the opinion that not only do all codes need to be involved but coaches that may have different coaching philosophies should be part of the programme from a 'buy in' point of view:

You need to have some of the „traditionalist“ that would not buy into it initially with you because if you come up with a conclusion from your community of practice sessions and present that to the club executive hypothetically, a business case or sporting case, the distractors in the club are going to pull the opposite to you.

Having experienced the CoP concept, the coaches share a similar viewpoint to the coach facilitators in relation to broadening the idea to more coaches and codes in the club to enable learning from previous coaching experiences:

One team got relegated from Senior to Intermediate and then to Junior. Obviously, there are coaches involved that would have stories to tell and maybe need to be told something at the same time in a forum like this. (C6)

5.7.5 Co Creation of Solutions

A few coaches mentioned how the topics being discussed were a bit organisational at times and could have potentially led to a lack of opportunity to co-create solutions. C3 attributed a lack of guidance from the club on certain topics as a potential reason for this: 'In relation to the topics, I thought to be honest they would be narrow but it comes back to the club'. C8 was content that the focus was primarily on coaching issues but felt there was room for more creativity regarding the topics identified. It could be that the pre-occupation with facilitation of conversations meant that the conversations did not allow, as indicated by C3, for the coaches to go deeper into potential solutions and actually co-create knowledge:

Quite often we would focus on issues from a coaching point of view. I think from listening to everyone here, we could have gone further afield than more general chat, but it was still very good. I felt there was more potential for coming up with different ideas, brainstorming ideas and things like that. I felt by the end that we needed to shake up some of the topics a bit.

During the coach facilitator orientation, a support document was distributed by the coach developer to support the coach facilitator in structuring and delivery of CCoP. CF3 mentions how this document benefitted them with how to manage conversations during their CCoP: 'I would have the document in front of me on the phone, just to remind myself

about things that the coach developer said about how to lead a conversation’.

5.8 Orienting Value

An effort to reach beyond the learning space and its stakeholders and take the broader landscape into consideration is orienting value.

5.8.1 Personal Networks

Some participants discussed the value of connecting with other stakeholders within the club to deepen their own learning within the social learning space. They felt that these connections provided them with invaluable access to coaching knowledge and experience that otherwise would not have existed:

Some of the other coaches have a background in S&C which I don't have, I suppose an awareness of other sports the girls might play and the risks of overloading the players was something they felt strongly about. (C2)

CF3 mentions how the process gave them the confidence to progress discussions with other stakeholders in the club:

We had a designated S&C coach now. I don't think I would have had the bravery to reach out and I suppose share that responsibility and tell people the vision, without what I have gone through in the last five months.

5.8.2 Biographies and Identities

The CCoP involved coaches with a variety of backgrounds: coaches from different codes, male and female and coaches involved with a variety of age cohorts. This promoted participants viewing things from different perspectives:

So, it was nice for them to hear from the female point of view as well. They be going on about their teams of males, but I would be saying it is so different sometimes over on the female side of the game. It is good for them to see that as well as coaches to see what it is like to be a female. (CF1)

5.8.3 Levels of Scale

Participants discussed the learning space playing a part of a wider movement. Coach four observed the impact of sharing and learning from each other in relation to a common approach to coaching across the club:

It was good to share and learn about aspects of the club. I am for a one club

approach, and I think we need to start pulling together. Everybody is doing good stuff in their own little pockets, so this is a great way of pulling everyone together and taking the best bits of what everybody is at.

5.9 Chapter summary

The purpose of this research was to explore the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated coaches' community of practice (CCoP) in a voluntary sport setting. Coach education programmes are often referred to as 'complex systems' that involve a multitude of actors (Culver, Trudel and Werthner, 2009). Therefore, the VCF provided the researcher with a logical method to meaningfully capture the view of the coach facilitators and coaches in the research. The findings of this study revealed that participation in the CCoP created value across all cycles of the VCF. By engaging in a variety of activities (e.g., coaches' induction, coach facilitator orientation, group meetings) and interacting with other coaches from different codes in the club, the participants shared ideas and resources and developed new relationships. From this, the participants modified their facilitation and coaching practice behaviour, and benefitted as a result of this learning. Furthermore, it led to some participants reframing their perspective and outlook on their coaching and „buy in“ from internal alliances, in utilising the variety of biographies and identities within the CCoP.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Introduction

Having examined the literature in this area, this study was designed with some novel aspects, as outlined in the rationale. The novel findings, presented in Chapter 5, will be discussed in this chapter and it is hoped they will add to the current body of literature and support future practice in the area of coach education. These key findings include, the value gained by:

- Identifying a peer as a coach facilitator in a voluntary sport setting
- Selecting multiple peer coach facilitators as a support network within the community
- Providing training for the coach facilitators, prior to the CCoP, from an external source to assist the CF to effectively structure CCoP sessions i.e., learning agenda and conversation framework

The sections will explore how the design of the CoP has had an influence on the ongoing learning and development of coaches in a voluntary sport setting and how the coach facilitators acted as a constant source of support for each other throughout the learning experience.

6.1 VCF dominance & critique

This study applied the VCF when assessing the value gained by coaches and coach facilitators. However, Bertram and colleagues (2014) did caution that the VCF approach may present an incomplete and possibly biased perspective of overall group functioning because of the sole focus on the leveraging of positives influences and outcomes. In this study the VCF was useful in determining value gained from the coach facilitators and coaches participating in a CCoP on an individual and collective level. In this study, some values exhibited similarities across the cycles while others were more dominant than others. Consistent with findings reported by Bertram, et al., (2014), there was an unequal distribution of indicators for each cycle of value found within participants' transcripts. In particular, a steady decrease in the number of indicators for each cycle was observed from immediate through to orienting value with the exception of enabling value. However, as noted by Bertram and colleagues, what is important is that CoP members are able to benefit in relevant and meaningful ways regardless of the cycle in which they

are creating value. This finding could be influenced by the nature of the design for this study i.e., multiple coach facilitators and provision of training were included as part of the research design. Wenger-Trayner, Wenger Trayner (2021) provided an insight into some reasons why certain cycles may be more dominant than others and suggest different stakeholders could derive different value from various cycles. In the context of this study, the coach developer may be more interested in providing positive early experiences and interactions for the participants so they feel motivated and enthused by the CoP (immediate value). The coach facilitators wanted to apply the tools and ideas provided by the coach developer through the orientation (potential value), and they wanted to conduct quality coaching conversations in their individual CCoP sessions. Coaches participating in the CoP may have been interested in finding solutions to common coaching issues (applied value).

The relatively short life span of this study may be a contributing factor to the dominance of some cycles over others. For example, some cycles, in particular realised value, might not be evident until future CoP sessions. A similar observation was found when assessing value gained from a CCoP study in a university setting over the academic year (Bertram, Culver and Gilbert., 2017). Bertram and colleagues found that a great deal of potential value was discovered but it was suggested that the true extent of realised or transformative value could not be determined until future sessions. Indeed Duarte (2020a), presented CCoP empirical studies from 2009 to 2019, that provided a range of frequencies and duration of meetings (**e.g., max/min**) supporting Wenger and colleagues (2002) observations on the life span of CoPs can vary greatly. At the time of submitting this thesis, the club continued the CoP into the new playing season, suggesting transformative value was gained. However, the true extent of the impact of the CoP on coaching practice is not clear and therefore for future studies, follow up interviews and observations to explore this would be warranted.

6.2 Value of a Peer Coach Facilitator for the coaches in a Voluntary sport setting

The findings from this study concur with previous literature, a coach facilitator selected among their peer group of coaches can attribute positively in fostering learning and enhancing the effectiveness of a CCoP in a voluntary sport setting. Aligned to Bertram, Culver and Gilbert (2017), this study found that a peer coach facilitator has the ability to obtain instant 'buy in' from coaches, assist with making coaches feel more comfortable to attend meetings and to share experiences suggesting enabling value. Indeed, coaches were very explicit about the value gained from having a peer act as a coach facilitator in leading a CCoP, stressing that it was a 'no brainer' (C2) and that if it was not an internal person it would 'lose value'(C2). Some of the significant value gained from a peer facilitated CCoP for the coaches included; creation of a safe learning environment and improvement in personal development.

One coach (C5) stressed that coaches feel more comfortable raising an issue with a peer rather than an external person out of fear of feeling inferior. This notion could be interpreted in two different ways. Firstly, it could be a power issue. An internal dimension of enabling value is robust back-channel conversations that pay attention to power dynamics that might inhibit the social learning process (Wenger-Trayner Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Secondly, it could be as a result of the environment created by an internal facilitator. CF1 stated that 'building blocks of complete trust' led to what was described by one coach as a 'safe environment to talk about whatever you wanted'(C8), exposing any challenges or vulnerabilities coaches may have. Coaching is a complex, dynamic and socially driven activity. Coach education, particularly in a voluntary setting, does not focus heavily on these essential elements of coach development. The connections developed amongst the peer coaches as a result of this 'safe space', enhanced the opportunity for coaches to engage in deep coaching conversations and comfortably expose coaches' vulnerabilities when addressing real life coaching issues, something that may not have been possible if the coach facilitators was from outside the club.

Furthermore, this study revealed that the coaches gained significant value from a personal development perspective as a result of their participation in a peer facilitated CCoP, corroborating findings by Bertram and Colleagues (2017). Previous literature mentions coaches reporting some sense of isolation in their learning (Mallet, et al., 2014),

highlighting the importance of creating a safe learning environment that develops a sense of inclusion for coaches in a club setting. Participants in this research mentioned how interacting with their peers increased their self-confidence and ability to connect with other coaches within the club who they did not know prior to the CCoP. The top reason, cited by Gaelic games coaches, for ceasing coaching practice is motivation (Coaching and Coach Education in Gaelic Games: A Baseline Report, Horgan, et al., 2021, p.40-41) and those same coaches considered reflection as one of the most important learning experiences for them as coaches (p.51). The novel CCoP, presented in this study, can provide the motivation and opportunity for coaches to reflect on their own and other coaches' practices, provided the appropriate people are selected to the various roles within the CCoP.

The selection of a peer coach as a facilitator can be challenging. It should be someone who the coaches respect, will inspire a new perspective and is familiar enough with the CoP approach that they will nurture it (Culver and Gilbert, 2004). A peer coach facilitator should exhibit certain characteristics to facilitate CoP sessions in a club. Culver and Trudel (2009), in a youth baseball context, found that a strong leader, with a clear vision and philosophy on the development of athletes over competition could have a significant impact on fostering a CCoP, characteristics shown by CF3 in particular in the present study. In the case presented by Culver and Trudel, the structure dissolved once the leader removed themselves from a leadership role, therefore corroborating the value of a dedicated peer leader in fostering learning within a community. Similar observations were identified in this current study with one leader playing a key role in the setting up of the CoP in the club due to their position as coaching officer in the club and their visionary attributes. This leader subsequently was chosen by their peer coaches to become one of three coach facilitators. At the time of writing this report, the CCoP was still being implemented in the club with this coach facilitator again being a central figure.

Furthermore, this coach facilitator was a source of inspiration and support for their peer coach facilitators i.e., arranging CFCoP sessions and setting up a shared online space to access materials. During the interviews, the coaches revealed they were inspired by their coach facilitators and expressed an interest in taking a facilitation role in future CCoP sessions. However, due to the limited timeframe of this study, it is difficult to ascertain

if the CCoP would continue to exist if this visionary leader left or stepped back, or would those who expressed an interest to take on the role of coach facilitator take on leadership roles.

A peer as a coach facilitator in this study is strongly advocated by the participants, however this may not be applicable across other club environments. A study by Hogan, et al. (in press), highlighted how the role of an external facilitator was commended as significant to the CoP success as the coaches referenced being treated equally during the coaching discussions as no one influenced the direction of the conversations. One possible reason for the difference of opinion in terms of the selection of the facilitator could be attributed to the stage of development of the club and the mindset of the coaches prior to the implementation of a CoP. The focus of a community of a practice as a coach education tool in clubs is still a relatively new phenomenon, in particular in a voluntary sport setting. The club in the current study had a culture of hosting coaches' meetings on a regular basis and therefore could be deemed 'ready' for taking ownership of their own learning. This indication of a readiness for change and an acceptance of a reorientation away from formal coach education, appear to be essential elements for the implementation of a CCoP.

6.3 Value of Multiple Peer Coach Facilitators as a support network in a Voluntary sport setting

The over reliance of one visionary leader can impact the sustainability of a CoP (Culver, Trudel and Werthner, 2009). Literature has observed CCoP in the same sport (e.g. Callery, 2013), from the same club (e.g., Bertram, Culver and Gilbert, 2016; Garner and Hill, 2017) and the same league (e.g., Cassidy, Jones, Potrac, 2004; Culver, Trudel and Werthner, 2009) but it appears that research assessing the value of having multiple peer facilitators supporting each other in the same club has not been explored and therefore is a novel aspect of this study. The finding of this study suggests that having more than one peer coach facilitator from the same club, in this case in a volunteer, non-elite environment, played an important role in the implementation and sustainability of the CCoP and therefore reduced the over reliance on one leader. The peer coach facilitators formed their own support network outside of the regular CCoP sessions, in essence a coach facilitator CoP (CFCoP). One coach facilitator mentioned how they struggled to understand their role initially but felt the early support and guidance provided from their

peer coach facilitators played a key role in their continued participation. Furthermore, the facilitators felt more at ease with asking questions of their peers instead of the external support (coach developer), in particular in the early stages of the CoP, which suggests potential value. Other studies adopted similar approaches in relation to CCoP (Culver et al., 2019; Kraft and Culver, 2020)

Having more than one peer coach facilitator resulted in more than one CCoP taking place simultaneously in the club. Due to fewer members in each CCoP, this provided the platform for more personally pertinent conversations and promoted interaction that led to a greater sense of belonging, empowerment, and camaraderie amongst the participants. This finding is comparable to observations by Bertram, Culver and Gilbert (2017) where participants expressed immediate value from their involvement in smaller group interactions and activities, indicating that a sense of inclusion is an important component in fostering learning between coaches as it offers an alternative to coaches working in isolation, which was observed in other studies (Gilbert and Trudel, 2006). One coach mentioned how the smaller groups were 'just right' as it meant members involved would be leaving the group down if they did not attend. In addition, the smaller groups allowed for; greater flexibility when arranging CCoP gatherings due to hectic games schedule, sharing of experiences and a more focused agenda on individual needs to promote deeper coaching conversations. The coaches valued having the coach facilitators from different codes in the club lead the CCoP sessions as it meant coaches were exposed to perspectives outside of their 'own bubble'.

A typical element of a CoP involves the 'co-creation and sharing' of resources and subsequent discussions (Culver, et al., 2020). These resources represent examples of 'tangible capital' that underpins potential value (Bertram, Culver and Gilbert, 2016). In previous literature, Bowles and O'Dwyer (2021) mentioned how they shared coaching lesson plans and other resources to facilitate further discussions and in doing so expanded their repertoire of practical activities. A similar support network was created in this current study. The coach facilitators experienced 'tangible capital' through posting their self-reflections via an online platform, sharing trigger topics (catalyst) via their coach facilitator text group as well as uploading information, ideas or queries for coaches to view via the WhatsApp group in preparation for their individual CCoP. Similar to findings by Bowles and O'Dwyer (2020), these documents formed the basis of

discussions for the CFCoP and CCoP gatherings and were easily accessible for participants to refer to in preparation for subsequent sessions. This body of work is now stored and could be referred to when planning CoP sessions in future seasons. A recent study, *Coaching and Coach Education in Games Gaelic: A Baseline Report* (Horgan, et al., 2021), emphasized that ‘lack of support from clubs’ as one of the potential reasons that coaches may cease coaching in their club. Having this CoP resource bank in place may positively influence coaches continued involvement in club activities.

During this study, one coach facilitator disengaged for a period of time. The findings provide some insight into the reasons for this disengagement, citing timing of the programme (summer months) and other priorities i.e., family, holidays and a condensed games schedule (due to the pandemic) taking more of a priority at that time. Therefore, this meant that one CCoP group did not have the opportunity to engage in the programme in its entirety. The peer coach facilitators were able to reach out to their fellow coach facilitator and provide support if required. However, this was not required as the CCoP group had agreed to reengage following this busy timeframe, which they did. This study reveals the value of having more than one coach facilitator in a real-life setting. If a coach facilitator disengages for a period of time then support is available and coaches could filter into other CCoP’s if required or desired. As highlighted in the recent *Coaching and Coach Education in Games Gaelic: A Baseline Report* by Horgan, et al., (2021), the majority of coaching is conducted by those between ages of 35-54 years of age (75.2% of respondents) in a voluntary capacity and these individuals have work and family commitments. It is important to acknowledge that at times other priorities take precedent and flexibility around scheduling is required. This finding highlights the importance of communication between the coach facilitators and was evident in this study to ensure the CCoP’s continue.

6.4 Value of Training in supporting the Peer Coach Facilitators in a Voluntary sport setting

Evidence from this study suggests guidance is necessary around facilitation strategies for the peer coach facilitators. Bertram, Culver and Gilbert (2016) provided information to the coach facilitators on how to structure a CoP, however, the peer facilitators did not receive any training. Although the CoP was successful and was still thriving at the time

of publication, Bertram and colleagues acknowledged that it may have been beneficial if the facilitators were trained in some regard, as was the case in the present study. Gilbert, Trudel and Werthner (2009) recommended that 'trained' peer facilitators is a necessary component in the successful implementation of a community of practice promoting that the peer facilitator will need to complete some basic training on how to lead a coach learning community, which may be as rudimentary as a 1-2-hour orientation session.

Prior to this current study, the researcher was unaware of research where training was provided to peer coach facilitators in a sports coaching context. Training provided in this study was aligned to the theoretical recommendations of Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel (2009). The findings from this study suggest that the early guidance provided by the external support (coach developer) via the coach facilitator orientation was valued by the coach facilitators. The peer coach facilitators were provided with a basic 1-hour online orientation by an external support that involved the peer coach facilitators participating in a "mock" coach community of practice session. The coach facilitators expressed immediate value from their participation in this interaction, and mentioned how the orientation provided an insight into how to structure and facilitate a CCoP session, and assisted the management of coaching conversations during their CCoPs, which suggests applied value.

Previous research acknowledges the challenge of focusing discussion on specific coaching topics rather than veering towards organisational issues (Bertram, Culver, and Gilbert, 2017). The idea of preparing an agenda has previously been supported in the literature (Culver and Trudel, 2006), where a needs-based agenda, nurtures interpersonal skills amongst coaches (Jacobs, et al., 2015). This study supports the notion that learners who share similar challenges and passions will take ownership of the learning agenda that is linked to their current coaching issues (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger Trayner, 2020). In this study, the coaches contributed to creating the agenda with issues relating to coaches' own coaching experiences. The coach facilitators distributed the agenda to the coaches prior to each CCoP session, to assist with preparation. The findings in this study suggest that the participants valued this process as it meant the coaching conversations were specific to their own coaching contexts. In addition, it provided structure to the CCoP sessions and assisted with keeping conversations on track in particular when

conversations veered towards organisational issues.

At the start of each CCoP, the use of a 'trigger subject' or 'catalyst' has been promoted to prompt debate (Culver and Trudel, 2009). This could be an academic article (Jones, 2009), and/or use of video footage to explore approaches to coaching from different perspectives. Prior to the CCoP, the coach facilitators would include a video or an article with the agenda. The coaches in this study recognised the benefit by highlighting that it helped initiate discussion, trigger alternative perspectives on certain topics and build rapport amongst the participants, suggesting potential value. The use of a catalyst may also have focused the CoP participants to prevent the conversations becoming organisational.

This study supports the notion that a certain amount of structure is required to act as a scaffold for personal learning and development (Culver and Trudel, 2006). To support the coach facilitators and coaches' deeper learning, the coach facilitators were introduced to a conversational framework document by the coach developer during the coach facilitator orientation. The conversational framework is an adapted version of the reflective conversation loop from the coach learning theory (Gilbert and Trudel, 2001; Stodter and Cushion, 2017). The framework involves issue setting (appreciation), strategy generation, experimentation and evaluation of what works and why and was applied both the CFCoP and CCoP from a facilitation and coaching perspective. However, the application of any framework into practice is never straightforward, and adapting it requires reflection (Moon, 2001; Schon, 1983), as was the case in this study. The findings in this study illustrate that the coach facilitators referred to this document on a regular basis to guide discussions and it acted as a scaffold for the meetings. The reliance on this document could be attributed to the lack of facilitation skills by the coach facilitators, possibly due to a lack of formal training in the area of facilitation. Based on this observation, and in line with Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel (2009), the participants reaffirm the need to provide, at a minimum, a basic orientation to equip coach facilitators with the necessary skills to be able to quote club policy, facilitate conversation and ensure discussions stay on topic.

6.5 Chapter Summary

In summary, this study has demonstrated the value gained of a peer facilitated CoP in providing coaches the opportunity to avail of ongoing learning opportunities. The findings from this study suggest the coaches place high value on selecting coach facilitators from amongst their peers as opposed to an external facilitator in a community setting, due to their ability to relate to everyday coaching issues, recognise coaches' vulnerabilities and being cognisant of the club needs. In addition, the coaches recognised the value of having more than one coach facilitator in the club as it promoted multiple CCoP sessions involving a small number of members per CCoP. The coaches spoke of how it resulted in a better learning experience and led to perceived improvements in their personal learning and coaching practices. The coach facilitators mentioned how having more than one coach facilitator provided the required support network and impacted on the over reliance of the external support. The coach facilitators felt the training and support resources offered were influential in providing the necessary scaffold to implement and guide the CCoP sessions. The duration and frequency of the CCoP sessions were deemed appropriate in this study by the participants but the timing of the sessions would require further consideration. Furthermore, measuring the long-term impact of the process on coaching practice requires more time, just one of the areas that will be addressed in the recommendations for future research in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Conclusion/ Recommendations

Introduction

The findings from this research will be presented in this chapter including valuable and novel observations for the design, cultivation and implementation of a peer facilitated CCoP in a voluntary sport setting. In addition, recommendations for future and practice and research are provided.

7.1 Key observations

This study concluded that:

- The selection of a peer as a coach facilitator as opposed to an external person is an important enabling value to a CCoP. Coaches relate more to a peer, and the connections developed amongst the coaches provide a ‘safe space’ for coaches to have open and honest coaching conversations.
- The opportunities for personal development within the CCoP signify applied value, more than instances where the coaching of technical skills was addressed. Technical skills are applied value; however personal development is far more pronounced and meaningful to the coaches. Having a peer act as a facilitator rather than an external support resulted in a closer connection which enhanced personal development. Likewise, although the close connection of having a peer facilitate personal growth; the peer coach may not have the professional knowledge or facilitation skills to improve technical skills practice. Thus, it may be a recommendation to have external supports provide support on specific topics.
- Multiple coach facilitators in a community is advocated, enabling more than one CCoP to take place simultaneously in a club, resulting in members engaging in deep coaching conversations specific to their coaching needs. This enabling value meant the coaches benefitted from having a peer as a coach facilitator as they were able to relate to the coaching issues raised and apply relevant action points. In addition, having more than one coach facilitator meant that the coach facilitators formed their own internal support network, in essence a coach facilitator CoP where they discussed common facilitation issues and were a

constant support for each other throughout the programme.

- The provision of basic training from an external source to provide guidance on how to structure and facilitate a CCoP is advisable in a volunteer sports setting and contributed to immediate value in the process. To many voluntary coaches in a voluntary sport setting, the CCoP is new and would be viewed as a challenge, hence the need to provide support, especially in the initial stages of the setup and implementation of the CCoP.
- The ability of the external support, in particular in a voluntary sport setting, to display a certain level of understanding of the CCoP concept also assists the CF to engage in the CCoP process effectively and is a crucial strategic value. This characteristic was recognized as an influential factor in the early stages of the study. In addition, the quality of training and guidance motivated the coach facilitators and provided them with the required confidence to implement the CCoP.

7.2. Recommendations for Future Practice:

- The Coaching and Coach Education in Games Gaelic: A Baseline Report by Horgan, et al., (2021, p.73), and in line with recent research (Culver and Duarte, 2022) recommended a ‘just in time’ approach, where coaches should be able to select their own preference for learning based on their own needs and limited time to engage in coach education.
- With research promoting a move towards more informal coach education, the findings of this study can greatly assist the National Governing Bodies (NGB) to include CoP as an avenue for coach learning. However, it must be noted that sport clubs, in particular Gaelic Games Clubs, are at different stages of development and therefore will require different levels of support from their NGB if they are to successfully implement a CoP within their club. One way to assist this process would be the creation of a template devised by the relevant NGB for clubs to assist in determining their ‘level of readiness’ for a CCoP prior to engaging in the concept. Factors include; evidence of an existing coaching policy or guidelines for coaches in the club to aid conversations veering towards organizational issues

e.g., no storage for equipment or unable to gain access to the pitch. In addition, other factors include, traditional ways of doing things and dominant coaching figures. It is imperative ‘buy in’ from administrative members is obtained and a willingness of coaches from the start to want to learn and develop as coaches across all levels in a club.

- Presence of a visionary leader (voluntary coach in the club) to act as a conduit to excite members initially to get involved in the CoP learning space, in particular in a voluntary sport setting.
- Training and external support is important for the coach facilitators. The quality of the training provided to the coach facilitators could determine the level of dependency that will be expected from the external source, for example a coach developer. It is unrealistic to suggest that an NGB will be able to provide ‘one to one’ support to all clubs in their organization over a sustained period of time. Therefore, quality training or upskilling of coach developers or educators is required to ensure the coaches and coach facilitators have a clear understanding of a CCoP from the outset.
- This study has shown that a CCoP within a club setting provides the platform for these coaches to learn at a pace and with a time involvement best suited to them.
- The CAC and the University of Ottawa have collaborated to prepare a ‘Communities of Practice: A how to model for building social learning spaces that provides sport organizations with a step-by-step approach to plan, train, design, implement, assess and maintain a Community of Practice focused on supporting long-term change. Based on the recommendations from this study, the model may be useful for any organization implementing an initiative to support collective learning and will suggest tips, questions to consider, and a guide through the process.

A visual representation of how the recommendations for future practice provided in this study could look in a voluntary sport setting can be viewed in figure 6.

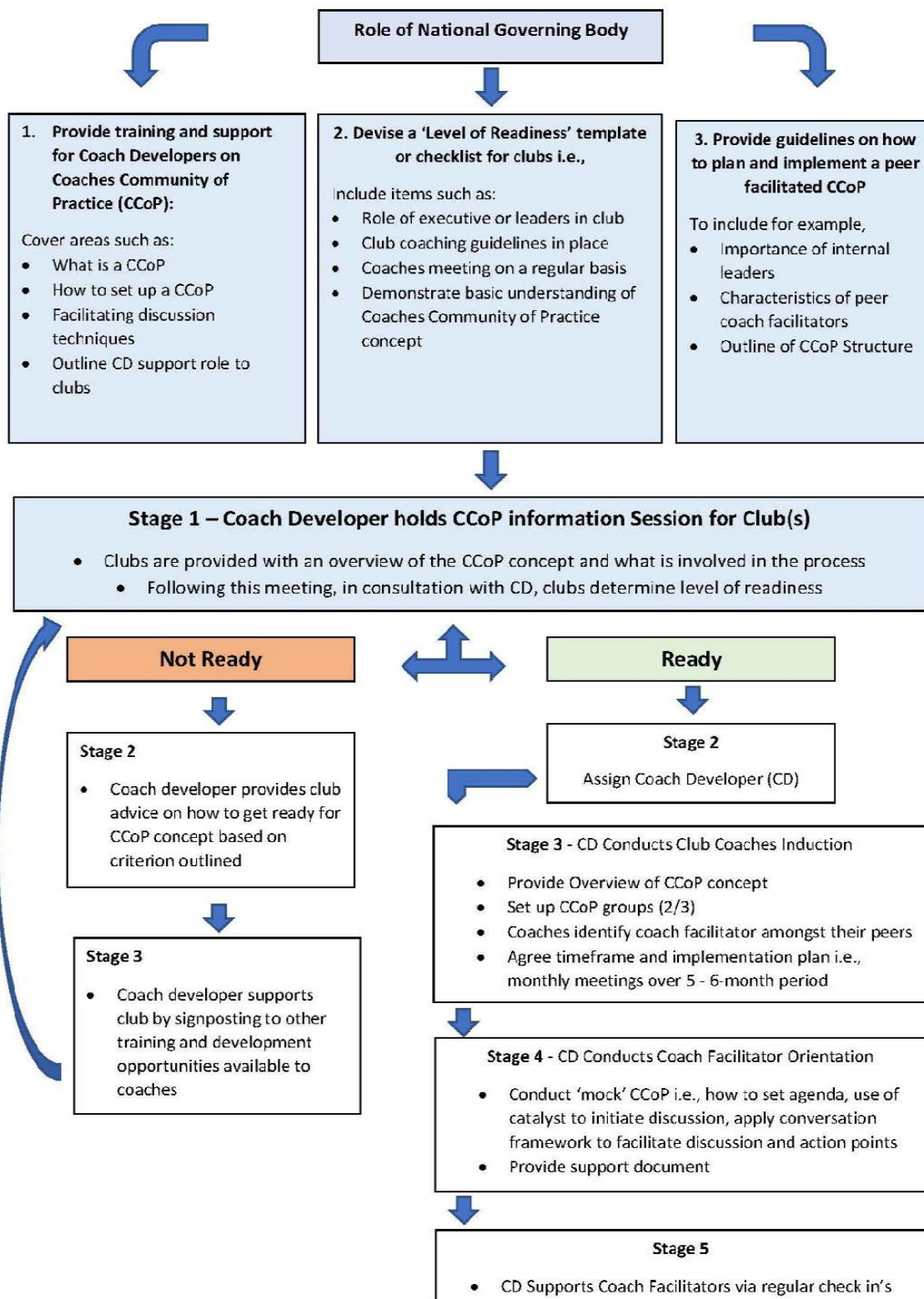


Figure. 6. Visual representation of Future Practice.

7.3 Recommendations for Future Research:

The findings of this research have provided an insight into the value gained from participation in a peer facilitated CoP in a voluntary sports setting. As with any research the findings have unveiled other areas for consideration in future research.

- The VCF was utilized to assess the value gained from participating in a CCoP. Similar to Bertram and colleagues (2017) suggestion, it is recommended that future research should use the VCF as a tool to design and implement a CoP, in particular the planning phase. This may assist members to consider how they might engage in the CoP in order to create specific cycles of value, rather than just retrospectively identifying the value created. For use of VCF for framing activities see Duarte, et al., (2020) Framing a Social Learning Space for Wheelchair Curling in International Sport Coaching Journal.
- Wenger-Trayner and Wenger Trayner (2013) promoted the concept of ‘shared leadership’ advising members to take on other roles within the CCoP. This study reaffirms that one leader is required to nurture a CCoP, however it also provides the platform for other members to assist with the facilitation and organization of meetings and potentially inspire them to take on leadership roles for the sustainability of a CCoP. Future research could explore this concept in a voluntary sports setting.
- Due to the timeframe the impact of the CCoP had on coaching practice was difficult to assess. A longitudinal study, that incorporates a follow up with participants to explore both impact and outcome evaluation, would help to explore the sustainability of this concept.

7.4 Limitations

It is important to discuss some of the limitations of this study to fulfil the requirement of this study. The factors that limited this research include:

- The researcher conducted this research with one club demonstrating a certain element of readiness for a CCoP. Based on this, caution is needed in concluding that all clubs in a voluntary sports setting will exhibit similar findings as it is very much based on the stage of development of the club.

- The researcher derived the conclusions of this study based on the findings that emerged from three methods of data collection; interviews, a focus group and regular check point surveys. Observation of the coaches conducting their meetings and interactions would be another method of data collection that should be considered, particularly if interested in the area of coach learning.
- The duration of the CoP (5 months), to align with the time constraints of this research project, may have had an impact on the value created from participating in the CoP, thus limiting the ability of the coaches to turn potential value into applied or realized value. A follow up with the coaches would be merited to explore changes in coaching practice and identify more indicators for cycles for applied, realized and transformative value.
- This study specifically focused on the valued gained from having a peer facilitated CCoP. The scope of this study did not permit the researcher to investigate other roles that can exist within a CCoP, for example organiser and the social reporter.
- The researcher searched for sub themes and themes deductively by organising the value indicators in line with each of the cycles of the VCF. However, other themes emerged from the data that should not be dismissed. Due to the timeframe and scope of this research, it meant the researcher was unable to analyze this data in detail and should be considered for future research.

7.5 Chapter Summary

This study provided an insight into the value gained from a peer facilitated CCoP in a voluntary sports setting. The current research is another addition to the literature on CoP for sports coaches by contributing to our knowledge of: a) how a peer facilitated CoP can be designed and implemented effectively in a voluntary sports setting and b) the value gained by coach facilitators and coaches from participating in a peer facilitated CoP using the VCF.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Coach Developer Information Sheet



Research Project Title:

An exploration of the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated community of practice in a voluntary sport setting

Researcher:

William Harmon Masters by Research Student in Munster Technology University

Research Project Supervisors:

Dr Mary Beades & Mr. Niall O Mahony

What is this study about?

The Gaelic Games Family (GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association) is embarking on a new and exciting venture to redevelop the player and coaching pathways. Coaching pathways are diversifying from the formal approach to learning and shifting more towards informal and non-formal learning.

One integral part of the new Gaelic Games coaching pathway will be the promotion of „active coaching“ through delivery mechanisms such as individual club communities of practice. It is envisaged that clubs will take ownership for their own learning relative to their stage of development.

There is an immediate and urgent requirement to provide direction and support for these clubs throughout the sport and beyond. The new coaching pathway is unique in its structure and application and will direct learning from a coach education perspective. Due to timeframe constraints and direction of this research, it is important to liaise with an organisation that already has commenced exploring the community of practice concept in coach education. The results from this research will be available to all sporting organisations and will assist in determining future direction of how coach support education is applied in any sport.

This study will focus on exploring the lessons that can be learned from supporting the coach facilitator within an voluntary community of practice setting. Number of communities of practice will be set up in the club with a coach facilitator in each one to guide and direct the activities of the community of practice. These coach facilitators will

receive support from a coach developer as well as provide each other with support during the process. This study will examine the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated community of practice in a voluntary sport setting.

Why is this study important?

The Gaelic Games Coach Development Programme aims to reflect the variety of coaching needs, and the breadth of learning opportunities and experiences that can be provided for coaches. Research has shown that a wide range of learning opportunities arise within non-formal coach education, for example in communities of practice.

One key component linked to the successful delivery and sustainment of a community of practice in a coaching context is the role of a coach facilitator, a coach facilitator that is selected from the group of coaches and supported in their role. It is this support of the coach facilitator that is under investigation in this research. The findings of this research will inform all National Governing Bodies of sport, i.e., GAA, LGFA, Camogie, of the key considerations when designing, and delivering a community of practice at club level in voluntary sport.

What will be required of me if I agree to participate? As a Coach Developer you will be required to

- **Attend three meetings** via online Microsoft Teams **with the researcher** to plan and prepare for the
 - initial club call.
 - coaches' induction meeting.
 - orientation with the coach facilitators.
- **Liase with the club via online platform** i.e., Microsoft Teams to gain insight into coaching practice, identify how to recruit club coaches and arrange date for coaches' induction meeting.
- **Conduct coaches' induction meeting** – preferably face to face but can be conducted via online platform i.e., Microsoft Teams if required.
- **Conduct orientation for coach facilitators** – preferably face to face but can be conducted via online platform i.e., Microsoft Teams if required.
- **Support coach facilitators** throughout programme i.e., by phone, email, text or whatever communication strategy is agreed with the coach facilitators.

What are the risks (if any) of participation? How are any risks managed?

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study other than your time and effort. You may have some slight discomfort with having to talk about yourself and your experiences. During the survey and/or interviews you will not be required to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with. Responses to the questions will be confidential to reduce this risk.

What are the benefits (direct/indirect) of participation?

Possible benefits of participation for you include:

- Exposure to an environment where you can enhance your tutoring knowledge and expertise, create new networks and develop beneficial connections with club coaches.
- Development of facilitation skills and learning through collaboration with club coaches.

On a wider scale, your participation and feedback will be very important as it will help enhance the quality and effectiveness of coach education initiatives with National Governing Bodies of sport. Following the completion of the study, recommendations will be made for how coach developers can support clubs develop a community of practice (or similar group) with the aim of continuing to develop coaching knowledge and expertise with others.

Consent Process

Can I change my mind and withdraw my consent/participation?

- You can opt out at any time without any prior notice or explanation.

How can I do this?

You can opt out of the study by emailing the researcher, william.harmon@research.ittralee.ie

Is there a specific time that I need to withdraw consent?

No, participation in this study is voluntary so participants can opt out at any stage and don't have to give a reason for opting out.

If I refuse to participate in this research will it have any consequences for me?

No

Data Protection

Data Controller:

- Munster Technological University (MTU) will be the principal data controller.

Data Processors:

- William Harmon (Researcher)
- Mary Beades (Lead Supervisor)
- Niall O Mahony (Co Supervisor)

Data Protection Officer: John Fox (DPO Kerry Campus)

Lawful base for use of personal data:

Permission to use personal data will be determined in written format via signed consent forms.

What type of personal data will be collected?

- Name Gender Age range.
- Current level of coaching?
- Number of years coaching.
- Level of coaching qualification?
- Current coach developer qualification?
- Number of years tutoring.
- What level do you currently tutor i.e., Foundation, level 1 or level2?
- What sport(s) do you tutor for?
- Reasons why you became a coach developer?
- What circumstances led you to becoming a coach developer?

How will my data be stored and for how long?

- All data will be stored on a password protected computer.
- All files will also be password protected.
- All data will be held on file for maximum of five years and will be deleted from records after this time.

How will my data be destroyed?

After five years, all data will be permanently deleted from the computer.

What will happen to the results?

The results of this research will be analysed and presented in thesis format in completion of a Masters“ degree.

Will the research be published and in what format?

In addition to the publication of the thesis manuscript, it is hoped the research will be disseminated in following formats:

- Poster Presentation at conferences
- Dissemination – Dissemination will be open access due to publicly funded work

How will my identity be protected?

All participants that will be participating in the study will be anonymized using pseudonyms.

Has the data protection implications of this study been assessed?

Yes, and there are no data protection implications identified. Details of Ethical Approval

Name of Ethics Committee: Institute Ethics Committee (IREC), MTU Kerry

Date of Ethical Approval: Friday 26th February 2020

Any reporting arrangements/conditions agreed with research Ethics Committee?

- N/A

Points of Contact

Name and Contact Details of Principal

Investigator:

Dr. Mary Beades
Munster Technological
University, Kerry 066
714 4238
Mary.beades@staff.ittralee.ie

Name and Contact Details of Co-

investigator as required: William

Harmon
Munster Technological University, Kerry
087 9794955
William.harmon@research.ittralee.ie

Chair of Ethics Committee and Contact Details:

Chair of Institute Research
Ethics Committee, c/o
Registrar's Office,
Munster
Technological
University
Tralee,
Co. Kerry

* Resources Reviewed in compiling this guidance: Data Protection Act 2018, GDPR 2018, Health Research Regulations 2018, Department of Health Guidance on Information Principles for Informed Consent for the Processing of Personal Data for Health Research 2019

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY:

An exploration of the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated community of practice setting

NOTE:

All participants that will be participating in the study will be anonymized using pseudonyms in results presented.

1. Name

Enter your answer

2. Please insert date

Please input date (M/d/yyyy)

3. Please answer the following statements.

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the Information Leaflet about this research study.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and my participation. I am satisfied that I understand the information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I voluntarily agree to take part in the above study.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understand that I don't have to take part in this study and that I can opt out at any time. I understand that I don't have to give a reason for opting out.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of the risks, benefits of this research study.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I give informed explicit consent to have my data processed as part of this research study in accordance with the Information Leaflet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have been given a copy of the information leaflet and this completed consent form for my records.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I agree to abide by the club coaching code of behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of who to contact if I have queries/concerns about my involvement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I agree to being contacted by email/phone as part of this study.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Contact Number

Enter your answer

5. Email address

Enter your answer

6. I have taken the time to fully read through the information sheet provided and understand the nature and purpose of this study. I understand the risks involved as well as the possible benefits. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on any aspect of the study that concerned me.

By inserting my name in the below space and by clicking submit, I am giving my consent to participate in this study.

Enter your answer

Appendix C

Club Information Sheet



Research Project Title:

An exploration of the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated community of practice in a voluntary sport setting

Researcher:

William Harmon Masters by Research Student in Munster Technology University

Research Project Supervisors:

Dr Mary Beades & Mr. Niall O Mahony

Dear Club,

I would like to invite Club 1 to assist me in conducting my masters by research study. Before you decide on your participation, I will provide you with an overview to explain why this research is being conducted and what it would involve for the club and for the participants (coaches). Please take time to read the following information carefully. Do not hesitate to ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide if you would like to facilitate this research.

WHO I AM?

My name is William Harmon, a Masters by Research student in the Munster Technology University, Tralee, Co. Kerry. My project will explore the lessons learned from supporting the coach facilitator within a Community of Practice in an voluntary sport setting.

WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT

The Gaelic Games Family (GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association) is embarking on a new and exciting venture to redevelop the player and coaching pathways. Coaching pathways are diversifying from the formal approach to learning and shifting more towards informal and non-formal learning. One integral part of the new Gaelic Games coaching pathway will be the promotion of „active coaching“ through delivery mechanisms such as individual club communities of practice. It is envisaged that clubs will take ownership for their own learning relative to their stage of development. There is an immediate and urgent requirement to provide direction and support for

these clubs throughout the sport and beyond.

The new coaching pathway is unique in its structure and application and will direct learning from a coach education perspective. Due to timeframe constraints and direction of this research, it is important to liaise with an organisation that already has commenced exploring the community of practice

concept in coach education. The results from this research will be available to all sporting organisations and will assist in determining future direction of how coach support education is applied in any sport.

This study will focus on exploring the lessons that can be learned from supporting the coach facilitator within an voluntary community of practice setting. A number of communities of practice will be set up in the club with a coach facilitator in each one to guide and direct the

activities of the community of practice. These coach facilitators will receive support from a coach developer as well as provide each with support during the process. This study will examine the value gained from this support of the coach facilitator

WHAT ASSISTANCE DO I NEED FROM THE CLUB?

How many participants will be required for this study?

- This project is specific to Gaelic Games coaches, and coaches coaching age groups between six and seventeen years of age, I am requesting access to your club coaches currently coaching these age cohorts in the club.
- From this group of coaches, I hope to recruit a minimum of **twelve** coaches and a maximum of **sixteen** coaches.

How will the participants be selected?

The club will identify coaches to participate in the study who exhibit the following:

- Male, Female or Rather not say.
- Over eighteen years of age.
- Currently coach/assistant coach with a team (LGFA/GAA/Camogie) between the ages of six and seventeen years of age.
- Completed Garda Vetting.
- Completed Safeguarding.
- Hold a basic Gaelic games coaching qualification.
- Is a registered member of the club.

These coaches will be invited to attend a coach's induction meeting via online platform i.e., Microsoft Teams where they can find out more information before consenting to participate in the research study.

Coach facilitators will be selected at the coaches' induction meeting by coaches in attendance. All coach facilitators will have to meet the inclusion criteria

outlined with addition of three years coaching experience to be in position to express confidence in guiding conversations within groups.

What coaches will be excluded from the study?

See below coaches who will not be eligible to participate in the study:

- Are under eighteen years of age. Not currently coach/assistant coach with a team (LGFA/GAA/Camogie) between the ages of six and seventeen years of age.
- Does not have Garda Vetting completed.
- Does not have Safeguarding completed.
- Does not hold a basic Gaelic games coaching qualification.
- Not a registered member of the club.

WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE DATABASE?

The principal investigator (lead researcher) and co investigators (co-supervisor/student researcher) will be responsible for keeping control and use of information from the study. The data will be stored on a password protected laptop

WHAT WILL TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH INVOLVE?

Club coaches participating in the study will be required to attend a coach's induction meeting. At this meeting coaches will be given an opportunity to ask any questions on the study before consenting to participate.

Clear ground rules will be established at the coaches' induction meeting which will align to the club coaching code of behaviour. Any alleged breaches of the Code of Behaviour will be managed in conjunction with the Gaelic Games Code of Behaviour and subsequently by the Club coaching and games committee.

In addition,

If coaches decide to participate in the study, they will be asked to:

- Attend maximum **five** club **coach gatherings** over a **five-month period** with their peer coaches. These meetings will be sixty-ninety minutes in duration. These gatherings may be conducted via an online platform i.e., Microsoft Teams
- Complete a **short online survey** after each community of practice gathering.
- Participate (if randomly selected), in a **semi structured interview** with the researcher to assess the value gained from participation.

At the coach's induction meeting, three coach facilitators will be selected by their peer coaches to lead three separate communities of practice. If a **coach becomes a coach facilitator** then they will be required to do the following:

- **Undertake an orientation with the coach developer** to prepare for facilitating the coaches' community of practice. This orientation will involve participation in a „mock“ community of practice conducted by the coach developer. The orientation will assist the coach facilitator with how to structure a community of practice session and how to shape coaching conversations amongst participants. This orientation may be conducted via an online platform i.e., Microsoft Teams
- Participate in **one semi structured interview** with researcher post-the community of practice. Please note, all interviews will be anonymized.
- Complete a **short online survey** after the orientation and after each coach facilitator community of practice session.
- **Lead maximum five club coach gatherings** over a five-month period with peer coaches. These gatherings may be conducted via an online platform i.e., Microsoft Teams
- **Participate in a maximum of four coach facilitators community of practice sessions** over a five-month period. These gatherings may be conducted via an online platform i.e., Microsoft Teams

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS (DIRECT/INDIRECT) OF PARTICIPATION?

Possible benefits of participation include:

- Exposure to an environment where club coaches can enhance their coaching knowledge and expertise, create networks, and develop beneficial connections with other coaches in the club.
- Gaining a better understanding of how to learn through collaboration with peer coaches.
- Gaining access to other experts within your coaching domain.

On a wider scale, coaches' participation and feedback will be very important as it will help enhance the quality and effectiveness of coach education initiatives with your National Governing Body and on a wider scale.

Moreover, following the completion of the study, recommendations will be made for how coaches in your club might continue participating in the community of practice (or similar group) in order to continue developing coaching knowledge and expertise with others.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS FROM MY PARTICIPATION?

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study other than the coaches time and effort. A coach may have some slight discomfort with having to talk about themselves and their experiences. During the survey and/or interviews the coach will not be required to answer any questions that they are uncomfortable with. Responses to the questions will be confidential to reduce this risk.

CAN COACHES CHANGE THEIR MIND AND WITHDRAW THEIR

CONSENT/PARTICIPATION?

- Yes, coaches can opt out at any time without any prior notice or explanation.

How can they do this?

Coaches can opt out of the study by emailing the researcher, william.harmon@research.ittralee.ie

Is there a specific time that they need to withdraw consent?

No, participation in this study is voluntary so participants can opt out at any stage and don't have to give a reason for opting out.

participate in this research will it have any consequences?

If coaches refuse to

No

WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO DATA FROM RESEARCH?

The principal investigator (lead researcher) and co investigators (co-supervisor/student researcher) will have access to the data from the research. The data will be stored on a password protected computer.

Due to the anonymity, all data collected will be utilised until such point that a participant decides to withdraw.

The quantitative data can be extracted from the project up until one week after the last check in survey is completed. The interview data may be extracted no later than one week after the final interview.

How are confidentiality and anonymity to be ensured?

- **Confidentiality**
 - The information shared will remain strictly confidential. The audio recordings, data and analysis of the data will be stored on a password protected computer with access granted primarily for the primary investigator. The data will be kept for five years. At the end of the five years, all the data will be deleted and destroyed.
- **Anonymity**
 - The club and coaches will be provided random pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.
 - Participation in the surveys will be anonymous.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

What will happen to the results?

The results of this research will be analysed and presented in thesis format in completion of a Masters' Degree.

Will the research be published and in what format?

In addition to the publication of the thesis manuscript, it is hoped the research will be disseminated in following formats:

- Poster Presentation at conferences
- Dissemination - Dissemination will be open access due to publicly funded work.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

Name and Contact Details of Principal Investigator:

William Harmon
Munster Technological University, Kerry 087 9794955
William.harmon@research.ittralee.ie

Name and Contact Details of Co-investigators as required:

Dr. Mary Beades Munster Technological University, Kerry 066
714 4238
Mary.beades@staff.ittralee.ie

Mr. Niall O Mahony Munster Technological University, Kerry 066
714
niall.OMahony2@staff.ittralee.ie

Chair of Ethics Committee and Contact Details:

Chair of Institute Research Ethics Committee, c/o Registrar's Office, Munster
Technological University Tralee,
Co. Kerry

Appendix D:

Club Consent Form

Club Consent Form

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY:

An exploration of the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated community of practice in a voluntary setting

NOTE:

All participants that will be participating in the study will be anonymized using pseudonyms in all data collected and results presented.

1. Club Name *

Enter your answer

2. Please insert date *

Please input date (M/d/yyyy)

4. Role in the Club *

- Chairperson
 Secretary
 Coaching Officer
 Other

5. Please answer the following statements.

	Yes	No
The Club have read and understood the Information Leaflet about this research study.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Club have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and our participation. We are satisfied that we understand the information, understand that we don't have to take part in this study and that we can opt out at any time. We understand that we don't have to give a reason for opting out.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Club are aware of the risks, benefits of this research study.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The Club give informed explicit consent to have their data processed as part of this research study in accordance with the Information Leaflet.

The Club have been given a copy of the Information leaflet and this completed consent form for my records.

The Club aware of who to contact if they have queries/concerns about my involvement.

The Club agrees to being contacted by email/phone as part of this study.

The Club will provide the researcher gatekeeper access to the club coaches who wish to participate in the study

6. Club Contact Number *

Enter your answer

7. Club Contact Email address *

Enter your answer

7. Club Contact Email address *

Enter your answer

8. The Club have taken the time to fully read through the information sheet provided and understand the nature and purpose of this study. The Club understand the risks involved as well as the possible benefits. The Club have been given the opportunity to ask questions on any aspect of the study that is of concern.

By inserting your name in the below space and by clicking submit, the Club are giving their consent to participate in this study and provide Gatekeeper access to club coaches. *

Enter your answer

Appendix E

Coach information sheet



Research Project Title:

An exploration of the value gained from participating in a peer facilitated Community of Practice in an voluntary sport setting.

Researcher:

William Harmon Masters by Research Student in Munster Technology University

Research Project Supervisors:

Dr Mary Beades & Mr. Niall O Mahony

A Chara,

I would like to you to assist me in conducting my masters by research study. Before you decide on your participation, I will provide you with an overview to explain why this research is being conducted and what it would involve for you as a coach.

Please take time to read the following information carefully. Do not hesitate to ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide if you would like to facilitate this research.

WHO I AM?

My name is William Harmon, a Masters by Research student in the Munster Technology University, Tralee, Co. Kerry. My project will explore the lessons learned from supporting the coach facilitator within a Community of Practice in an voluntary sport setting.

WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT

The Gaelic Games Family (GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association) is embarking on a new and exciting venture to redevelop the player and coaching pathways. Coaching pathways are diversifying from the formal approach to learning and shifting more towards informal and non-formal learning. One integral part of the new Gaelic Games coaching pathway will be the promotion of „active coaching“ through delivery mechanisms such as individual club communities of practice. It is envisaged that clubs will take ownership for their own learning relative to their stage of development.

There is an immediate and urgent requirement to provide direction and support for these clubs throughout the sport and beyond.

The new coaching pathway is unique in its structure and application and will direct learning from a coach education perspective. Due to timeframe constraints and direction of this research, it is important to liaise with an organisation that already has commenced exploring the community of practice concept in coach education. The results from this research will be available to all sporting organisations and will assist in determining future direction of how coach support education is applied in any sport.

This study will focus on exploring the lessons that can be learned from supporting the coach facilitator within an voluntary community of practice setting. A number of communities of practice will be set up in the club with a coach facilitator in each one to guide and direct the activities of the community of practice. These coach facilitators will receive support from a coach developer as well as provide each with support during the process. This study will examine the value gained from this support of the coach facilitator

Why is this study important?

The Gaelic Games Coach Development Programme aims to reflect the variety of coaching needs, and the breadth of learning opportunities and experiences that can be provided for coaches. Research has shown that a wide range of learning opportunities arise within non-formal coach education, for example in communities of practice.

One key component linked to the successful delivery and sustainment of a community of practice in a coaching context is the role of a coach facilitator, a coach facilitator that is selected from the group of coaches and supported in their role. It is this support of the coach facilitator that is under investigation in this research. The findings of this research will inform all National Governing Bodies of sport, i.e., GAA, LGFA, Camogie, of the key considerations when designing, and delivering a community of practice at club level in voluntary sport.

WHAT WILL IT REQUIRE OF ME IF I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE?

As a coach you will be required to attend a **club coach's induction meeting**. At this meeting, clear ground rules will be established in relation to interaction, and you will be given an opportunity to ask any questions on the study before consenting to participate.

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to:

- Attend maximum **five** club **coach gatherings** over a **five-month period** (May – Sept) with your peer coaches. These meetings will be approx. sixty-ninety minutes in duration. These gatherings may be conducted via an online platform i.e., Microsoft Teams
- Complete a **short online survey** after each community of practice gathering.
- Participate (if randomly selected), in a **semi structured interview** with the researcher to assess the value gained from participation.

At the coach's induction meeting, three coach facilitators will be selected by peer coaches to lead three separate communities of practice. If a **coach becomes a coach facilitator** then they will be required to do the following:

- **Undertake an orientation with the coach developer** to prepare for facilitating the coaches' community of practice. This orientation will involve participation in a „mock“ community of practice conducted by the coach developer. The orientation will assist the coach facilitator with how to structure a community of practice session and how to shape coaching conversations amongst participants. This orientation may be conducted via an online platform i.e., Microsoft Teams
- Participate in **one semi structured interview** with researcher post-the community of practice. Please note, all interviews will be anonymized.
- Complete a **short online survey** after the orientation and after each coach facilitator community of practice session.
- **Lead maximum five club coach gatherings** over a five-month period with peer coaches.
These gatherings may be conducted via an online platform i.e., Microsoft Teams
- **Participate in a maximum of four coach facilitators community of practice sessions** over a five-month period. These gatherings may be conducted via an online platform i.e., Microsoft Teams

What are the risks (if any) of participation? How are any risks managed?

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study other than your time and effort. You may have some slight discomfort with having to talk about yourself and your experiences. During the survey and/or interviews you will not be required to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with. Responses to the questions will be confidential to reduce this risk.

What are the benefits (direct/indirect) of participation?

Possible benefits of participation include:

- Exposure to an environment where you can enhance your coaching knowledge

and expertise, create networks, and develop beneficial connections with other coaches in your club.

- Gaining a better understanding of how to learn through collaboration with peer coaches.
- Gaining access to other experts within your coaching domain.

On a wider scale, your participation and feedback will be very important as it will help enhance the quality and effectiveness of coach education initiatives with your National Governing Body and on a wider scale.

Moreover, following the completion of the study, recommendations will be made for how coaches in your club might continue participating in the community of practice (or similar group) in order to continue developing coaching knowledge and expertise with others.

Consent Process

Can I change my mind and withdraw my consent/participation?

- Yes, you can opt out at any time without any prior notice or explanation.

How can I do this?

- You can opt out of the study by emailing the researcher, william.harmon@research.ittralee.ie

Is there a specific time that I need to withdraw consent?

- No, participation in this study is voluntary so participants can opt out at any stage and don't have to give a reason for opting out.

If I refuse to participate in this research will it have any consequences for me?

- No

Data Protection

Data Controller:

- Munster Technological University (MTU) will be the principal data

controller.

Data Processors:

- William Harmon (Researcher)
- Mary Beades (Lead Supervisor)
- Niall O Mahony (Co Supervisor)

Data Protection Officer:

- John Fox (MTU)

Lawful base for use of personal data:

- Permission to use personal data will be determined in written format via signed consent form
- What type of personal data will be collected?
 - Name
 - Gender
 - Age Range
 - Current Level of Coaching?
 - Number of Years Coaching?
 - Level of Coaching Qualification?
 - Level of players or age group you Coach currently?
 - Reasons why you became a Coach?

How will my data be stored and for how long?

- All data will be stored on a password protected computer.
- All files will also be password protected.
- All data will be held on file for maximum of five years and will then be deleted from all sources.

Due to the anonymity, all data collected will be utilised until such point that a participant decides to withdraw.

The quantitative data can be extracted from the project up until one week after the last check in survey is completed. The interview data may be extracted no

later than one week after the final interview.

How will my data be destroyed?

- After five years, all data will be permanently deleted from the computer.

What will happen to the results?

- The results of this research will be analysed and presented in thesis format in completion of a master's degree.

Will the research be published and in what format?

In addition to the publication of the thesis manuscript, it is hoped the research will be disseminated in two formats:

- Poster Presentation at conferences
 - Dissemination – Dissemination will be open access due to publicly funded work
- How will my identity be protected?
- All participants that will be participating in the study will be anonymized using pseudonyms.

Has the data protection implications of this study been assessed?

- Yes, and there are no data protection implications identified.

Details of Ethical Approval

Name of Ethics Committee: Institute Ethics Committee (IREC), MTU Kerry

Date of Ethical Approval: Friday, 26th February 2021

Points of Contact

Name and Contact Details of Principal Investigator: Dr. Mary Beades
Munster Technological University, Kerry 066

714 4238

Mary.beades@staff.ittralee.ie

Name and Contact Details of Co- investigator as required: William Harmon

Munster Technological University, Kerry 087

9794955

William.harmon@rese.arch.ittralee.ie

Chair of Ethics Committee and Contact Details:

Chair of Institute Research Ethics Committee, c/o Registrar's Office, Munster

Technological
University
Tralee,
Co. Kerry

Appendix F:

Ethics Approval Letter



Institute Research Ethics Committee (IREC)

Gortalassa,
Firies,
Killarney,
Co. Kerry
V93 X9X9

26/02/2021

Mr. Harmon,

Re: An exploration of the lessons learned from supporting the coach facilitator within a community of practice in an amateur sports setting

Thank you for your revised ethics application (22-02-21) in respect of the above project and response to previous conditions of approval. The application has been reviewed in accordance with the Institute's Research Ethics Policy. I can confirm your research has been granted full ethical approval subject to the general conditions of approval outlined below:

1. The research is undertaken in accordance with Institute's Research Ethics Policy
2. If there is any planned substantive change in the research protocol, this detail is submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for review in advance.
3. If any ethical difficulties arise in the course of your project these are reported to the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee.

Please note, while IREC provides guidance on personal data management from an ethical perspective, compliance with data protection legislation, regulation and policy remains the responsibility of the research team.

The committee wishes you well in your research.

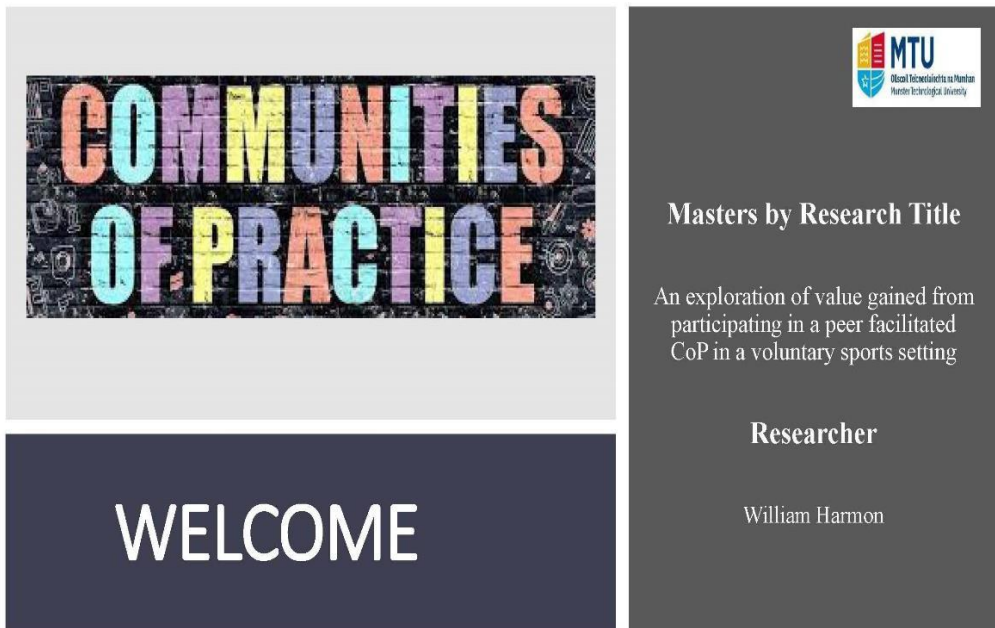
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna-Marie Greaney', written in a cursive style.

Dr Anna-Marie Greaney
Chair of Institute Research Ethics Committee (IREC)
c/o Office of Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar
Munster Technological University - Kerry Campus.
Phone: 066-7191960
e-mail: irec@ittralee.ie


Appendix G

Club Meeting (Pre-Community of Practice) Presentation



COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

WELCOME

 MTU
Máistir Techniceolaíochta na Manúchan
Munster Technological University

Masters by Research Title

An exploration of value gained from participating in a peer facilitated CoP in a voluntary sports setting

Researcher

William Harmon



Who am I?

- A Kerryman!
- Previously worked for Kerry GAA (2002 – 2007)
- Work for LGFA (2007 – present)
 - National Development Officer with remit for Coach Education
- Coaching Officer in my clubs for 3 Years (2017-2020)
- Currently coach my club U11 Boys Team
- Currently coach Adult Senior Men's Team
- Currently studying in MTU Kerry researching an area I have a huge passion for and interest in

 MTU
Máistir Techniceolaíochta na Manúchan
Munster Technological University

Title of my Project

An exploration of value gained from participating in a peer facilitated CoP in a voluntary sports setting



Objectives

To undertake a comprehensive review of the literature in the areas of coach education – formal, informal and non-formal learning opportunities.

To design and implement a **support** network for coaches in a Gaelic Games setting at grassroots level.

To evaluate the lessons that can be learned from supporting the coach facilitator of a community of practice in an amateur sport setting using Wenger, Traynor, De Laat's Value Creation Framework (2011).

To provide recommendations for supporting coach facilitators in the delivery of a community of practice within an amateur sport setting.



What attracted me to this Research?



- Gaelic Games Family will be launching a new Player Pathway next week!
- Need to develop a Coaching Pathway to align with same
 - **Shift from traditional linear framework to more diverse experience** - Formal, In-formal, Online, Mentoring and Active Coaching through CoP's
- **Vision**
 - Clubs take more ownership for their own learning – support system
 - Coaches stayed engaged in coach education process relative to their needs and context!

What is a Community of Practice?



Wenger (1998)

Community of Practice involves

- Coaches meeting regularly (mutual engagement)
- Share common coaches' issues (joint enterprise)
- Producing shared artefacts, for example, coaching strategies and tools thereby improving their coaching practice and knowledge

In essence...

It is club coaches having better coaching conversations on a regular basis – Coaching Dugout!

Potential Benefits



COACHES:

- Exposure to an environment where club coaches can enhance their coaching knowledge and expertise, create networks, and develop beneficial connections with other coaches in the club.
- Gaining a better understanding of how to learn through collaboration with your peer coaches.
- Gaining access to other experts within your coaching domain.

Potential Benefits



CLUB:

- Guided by an experienced Coach Developer who has a passion and knowledge for this area
- Role in influencing change!
- Receive recommendations will be made for how coaches in your club might continue participating in the community of practice (or similar group) in order to continue developing coaching knowledge and expertise with others

Who do I require:



- **1** Coach Developer
- **1** Club
- **Min 12** Coaches, **Max 16** Coaches across all codes
- **3** Coach Facilitators from above coaching pool

Minimum Requirements:



- Male/Female Coach.
- Over eighteen years of age.
- Currently coach/assistant coach with a team (LGFA/GAA/Camogie) between the ages of six and seventeen years of age.
- Completed Garda Vetting.
- Completed safeguarding.
- Hold a basic Gaelic games coaching qualification.
- Is a registered member of the club.

BUT

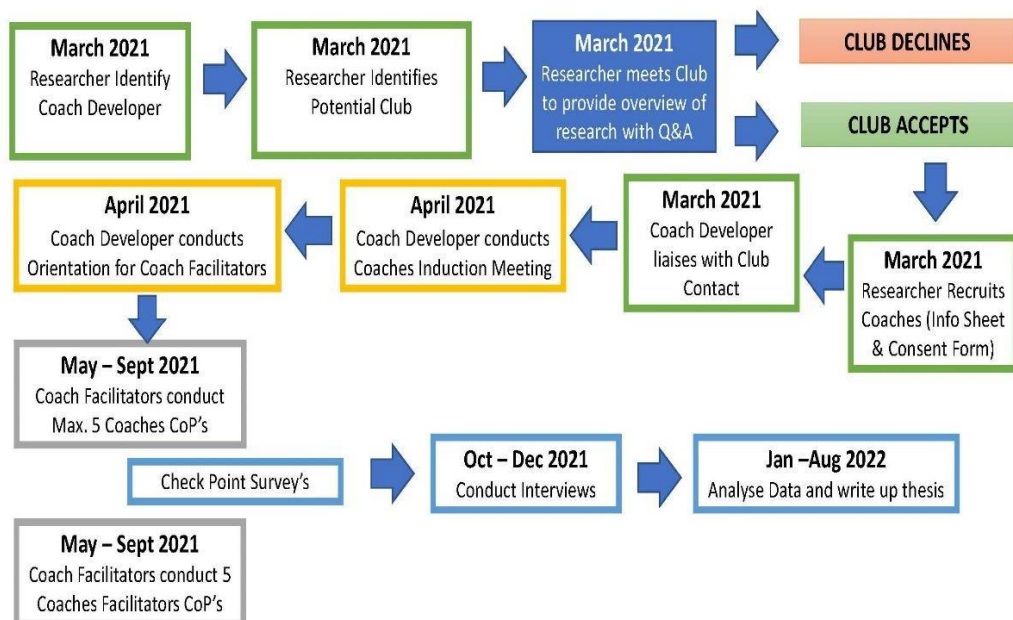
- Positive and open minded
- Passionate
- Give it a go and give it Socks!!!

Coach Facilitator Expectations



- Attend coaches induction meeting with Coach Developer
- Undertake an orientation with the coach developer
- Lead maximum five club coach gatherings over a five-month period with peer coaches.
- Participate in a maximum of four coach facilitators community of practice sessions over a five-month period.
- Complete a short online survey after regular interactions
- Participate in one semi structured interview with researcher post-the community of practice

Next Steps:



Appendix H:

Format - Club Coaches Induction (Pre-Community of Practice) with Coach Developer

- **Introductions – Name, code, age group you coach etc.**
- **Outline Role of the Coach Developer**
 - To conduct coach's induction meeting
 - To conduct coach facilitator orientation
 - To be a support to Coach Facilitators throughout the programme i.e., phone or via WhatsApp
- **Provide Brief overview of CoP Concept**
- **Ask Open Question of the Group?**
 - **Describe to me, what is your understanding of a Community of Practice?**
 - **Prompts:**
 - Group of people, with a common interest who meet on a regular basis.
 - Opportunity to
 - Promote good coaching conversations within club coaches
 - Develop Coach Self-Reflection
 - Focus specifically on „active coaching“ i.e., good coaching practice, challenges etc.
- **Identify three CoP groups – 3 groups of 4 coaches**
- **TASK: BREAK OUT ROOM**
 - **Peer coaches identify coach facilitator for their group**
 - Coach Developer to highlight key characteristics of a good coach facilitator before enter breakout room – creditable within group, ability to facilitate conversation and understands CoP Concept
 - **Agree Communication plan**
 - Agree Dates for coaches CoP – May (10th), June, July, August and September
 - CoP's set up communication tool for their respective CoP i.e., WhatsApp group etc.
 - Medium – MS Teams or Face to Face (COVID dependant)
- **Outline to coaches what the CoP structure will look like**
 - **Catalyst** – something relevant, topical, video, article etc. **(10mins)**
 - **Coaching Issues**
 - Challenge or Opportunity in current coaching

be agreed pre-CoP – **Topics to be sent to Coach Facilitator in advance!**

- Explore Ideas on topics discussed
- Find solutions on topics discussed

Outline CoP Group Rules or Guidelines Important

- Community of practice is aligned with club coaching code of behaviour
- Ensure all conversations are coaching related.
- When becoming members of the Club, all coaches who work with young people are required to sign and abide to the Club Coaching Code of Behaviour. As a result, all conversations conducted during the coaches „community of practice will be specifically coaching related and in line with Gaelic Games Code of Behaviour. No conversations about individual players will be permitted.

Appendix I

Format - Coach Facilitator Orientation

This info could be distributed to Coach Facilitators to help provide structure/
framework

Organise a 'Mock' CoP

- CD will act as Coach Facilitator - CF
- Coach facilitators will act as coaches

PART ONE

CoP Structure

- **Prior to meeting:**
- CD sets up WhatsApp group with Coach Facilitators
- CD sends a text to group x days prior to orientation with following:
 - **Catalyst** - CD will send an article, video, something topical etc.
 - Identify items like to discuss relevant to their coaching context
 - CD sends four topics and group rate 1-4 in order of what they would like to discuss
 - CD confirms order of discussion in advance of the orientation/CoP session

CoP Meeting

- CD commences discussion by having a quick chat on the catalyst - (10mins max.)
- **Evaluation** – update on how coaches applied agreed action points – **Only applies from CoP 2 onwards**
- CD commences asking open questions re discussion topics as per order.

Further details are explored via questioning

- Explore Ideas on topics discussed
- Find solutions on topics discussed

(Note – from second CoP onwards, an evaluation of solutions of previous CoP will be included)

PART TWO

- **Facilitating Discussion**
 - Assisting coach facilitators re how to ask right questions to promote discussion or ensure everyone is involved in the session

Introduction – Catalyst

- **Let us discuss / Let me start / Let us begin** with the article, video, quote etc. that I sent to you prior to the meeting
- What are your thoughts? Do you agree with it?

Main Body of the CoP Might also be nice to give the participants or the CFs time to discuss / reflect on what strategies Michael used to facilitate the CoP

- Can I suggest the following order of conversation?
- What is the topic?
 - Why is this topic important to you at this point?
 - What would you like to discuss regarding your topic?
- What have you tried? What worked? What didn't work?
- What is challenging about your topic?
- Has anyone any thoughts on the topic just shared by x?
 - How can we assist x with solving, improving or enhancing the situation?
 - How can we help you progress?
- Who else could we seek help from?
 - Is there another way of achieving this?
- Are we agreeing that this is best course of action?
 - What are you going to do as a result of this conversation?
- What could be potential barriers to you achieving this?

Evaluation

- Tell me, how did everyone get on since we last spoke re actions agreed?
 - **Agree Logistics**
 - Agree how will coach developer liaise with coach facilitators outside structured sessions?
 - Agree Dates for coach facilitator CoP
 - Agree how will coach facilitators liaise with each other outside planned sessions?
 - Agree how will coach facilitators liaise with respective CoP's outside structured sessions?

Appendix J:

Support document for Coach Facilitators

PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE SESSIONS STEP

ONE – PLAN

PRIOR to CoP session:

- **Coach facilitator** sends a **text** to their respective coaches' community of practice group **approx. 5** days prior to coaches CoP Session to:

A

- Identify items/issues coaches like to discuss relevant to their current coaching context. These items could be something positive that coaches like to share with the group and explore more.
- When topics submitted, coach facilitator sends three topics to the group and the group rate 1-3 in order of what they would like to discuss at the CoP session. *Please note, coach facilitator may not get through all topics in a CoP session.*

B

- Coach facilitator sends a text to group **2** days prior to CoP Session to:
 - **Confirm order of discussion** in advance of the CoP session
 - Provide a **Catalyst** for coaches to think about prior to the CoP Session as icebreaker discussion - Coach facilitator will send an article, video, something topical at the time. **(A resource bank of catalyst will be set up for coach facilitators if required)**

STEP TWO – DO

DURING the CoP session:

- Coach facilitator commences session by having a quick chat with coaches on the catalyst - (10mins max.)

Discussion develops via questioning

- Coach facilitator commences session by asking open questions re discussion topics as per order agreed
 - **Explore the topic more** – see below possible questions that can be used.
 - **Find solutions on topics discussed** – see below possible questions that can be used.
 - **Agree action plan to topics discussed** – see below possible questions that can be used.

(Note – from second CoP onwards, an evaluation of solutions of previous CoP will be included after catalyst)

STEP THREE – REVIEW

AFTER the CoP session – REVIEW WITH PEER COACH FACILITATORS AS A GROUP

- Coach facilitator discusses / reflects on strategies used to facilitate the CoP from with peer coach facilitators:
- **For example:**
 - Selection of the topics or coaching issues
 - Agreeing rate of order
 - **Selection of Catalyst** – Build up a bank of resources. Important this is part of all coach CoP Sessions!
 - **Session structure**
 - **Issues / Solutions / Action plan**
 - Importance of asking right questions – How can improve?

TIPS ON HOW TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION

Asking the right questions to promote discussion or ensure everyone is involved in the session is key.

Introduction – Catalyst

- **Let us discuss / Let me start / Let us begin** with the article, video, quote etc. that I sent to you prior to the meeting
- What are your thoughts? Do you agree with it? Tell me how it may be relevant to you as a coach?

Main Body of the CoP - Three main headings for CoP

- What are the issues in your current coaching? Or could be something good you like to chat about or like to improve?
- What are the potential solutions?
- What is the action plan?

ISSUES conversation starters...

- Can I suggest the following order of conversation?
- What is the topic?
 - Why is this topic important to you at this point?
 - What would you like to discuss regarding your topic?
- What is challenging about your topic?

SOLUTIONS conversations starters...

- What have you tried? What worked? What didn't work?
- What are your thoughts on the topic just shared by x?
 - How can we assist x with solving, improving or enhancing the situation?
 - How can we help you progress?
- Who else could we seek help from?
 - What other options do we have to achieve this?
 - What could be potential barriers to you achieving this?

ACTION PLAN conversation starters...

- What are we agreeing that this is best course of action?
 - What are you going to do as a result of this conversation?

Evaluation (only applies from CoP session two onwards)

- Tell me, how did everyone get on since we last spoke re actions agreed?

Logistics

- **Agree Dates for monthly Coach Facilitator CoP or PLAN/REVIEW SESSIONS**
 - Important Coach Facilitators meet between coaches CoP sessions to identify key learning moments and plan for next coaches CoP sessions based on learnings.
- Outside of the monthly coach facilitator CoP, Coach facilitators can interact via phone, WhatsApp or individually.
- Support of Coach Developer is available when required.

Appendix K

Semi Structured Interview Guide – COACH FACILITATOR



Coach Facilitator Semi Structured Interview Post Study

This semi structured interview will be completed with the coach facilitator following the completion of the study.

The aim of this interview is to:

- Identify lessons learned in relation to value of support gained from coach developer and peer coach facilitators.

The questions to be posed to the coach by the researcher will be:

BEFORE COP SESSIONS...

1. From what you know as a coach to date, what are your thoughts and perspectives of the coach's community of practice concept and how have they evolved since being of the programme?
2. Tell me about the coaches' induction that was delivered by the coach developer?
3. As part of the coach's induction, you agreed to take the role of coach facilitator. Can you explain why you took the role and what were your perceptions of being a coach facilitator?
4. Your next engagement because of being selected as a coach facilitator was to attend the orientation that was conducted by the coach developer, provide me with a description of this experience.

DURING COP SESSIONS...

5. Can you please outline your role as a coach facilitator with your coaching group this past season?
6. What impact did more than one coach facilitator have on your role as a coach facilitator throughout the programme?
7. I am interested to hear what all this activity and interaction has

produced. What did you gain or learn from being a part of a coach facilitator group?

8. Has it made a difference to your ability to be a coach facilitator?

AFTER COP PROGRAMME OR UPON REFLECTION...

1. Were there any barriers or challenges that hampered or impacted your engagement/involvement as a coach facilitator in the community of practice?
2. How would you describe the support provided to you by the coach developer in your role as a coach facilitator?
3. How do you think the support from the coach developer could be improved?
4. How do you think the coach facilitators' community could be modified to better serve your role?
5. Now that you have experienced the role of a coach facilitator, what attributes do you feel are necessary for this role?
6. What difference has participating in the coach facilitator community made to your ability to achieve what matters to you when it comes to coaching?
7. Has your participation in this programme changed in any way the understanding and definition of what matters in a coaching context for you, your fellow coach facilitators, coaches, and the club?
8. Do you have any other comments or thoughts to add?

Appendix L

Semi Structured Interview Guide – COACH DEVELOPER



This semi structured interview will be completed with the coach developer following the completion of the community of practice and therefore the end of support role for the coach developer.

The aim of this interview is to:

- Identify lessons learned in relation to the role of the coach developer in supporting the coach facilitator.

The questions to be posed to the coach by the researcher will be:

BEFORE COP SESSIONS...

1. From what you know as a coach developer to date, what were your thoughts and perspectives on the coaches CoP and how have they evolved since the commencement of the programme?

DURING COP SESSIONS...

2. Your role as a coach developer was to support the coach facilitators this past season. Tell me what did that involve and what was your experience of it?
3. As a result of this activity, what did the coach facilitators gain or learn from your support?

AFTER COP SESSIONS...

4. How do you think your role has made a difference to the coach facilitators' practice/performance?
5. Were there any barriers or challenges that hampered or impacted your role as a coach developer in supporting coach facilitators in the community of practice?
6. Has your participation changed your understanding and definition of what matters in a coaching context? If yes, how?
7. How do you think your role as a coach developer could be modified to better serve club coach facilitators in a club community of practice setting?

8. In your opinion and based on your experience to date, what do you feel are the essential components to ensuring a coach's community of practice programme can be set up in an voluntary sport setting?
9. In your opinion, how does having more than one coach facilitator in a club impact on your support role as a coach developer?
10. Having been involved in the CoP practice from start to finish, what support do you feel a coach developer requires from their respective NGB to ensure they conduct their role to the best of their ability?
11. Do you have any other comments you like to make?

Appendix M

Semi Structured Interview Guide – COACH



This semi structured interview will be completed by the coach following the completion of the study.

The aim of this interview is to:

- Identify value gained from participation in the community of practice and assess the support provided by the coach facilitator.

The questions to be posed to the coach by the researcher will be:

BEFORE COP SESSIONS...

1. From what you know as a coach to date, what are your thoughts and perspectives of the coaches' community of practice concept and how have they evolved since the commencement of this programme?
2. Tell me about the coaches' induction that was delivered by the coach developer?
3. What were your thoughts on how the coaching groups were created?
4. How did you find having a peer coach as a coach facilitator?

DURING THE COP SESSIONS

1. Tell me about your participation and experience in your coach's community of practice sessions?
2. I am interested to hear what all this activity and interaction has produced. What did you gain or learn from participating in the group?
3. How has your involvement made a difference to your coaching practice?

AFTER COP SESSIONS...

1. Were there any barriers or challenges that hampered or impacted your engagement/involvement as a coach in the community of practice?

2. Tell me about the role the coach facilitator played throughout the CoP in helping you achieve what you have gained or learned as a coach during the programme?
3. What difference has participating in the group made to your ability to achieve what matters to you as a coach?
4. Has your participation in this programme changed in any way the understanding and definition of what matters in a coaching context for you, your fellow coaches, and the club?
5. How do you think the coaching group could be modified to better serve its members?
6. What factors do you think will contribute to sustaining this concept in the club?
7. Do you have any other comments or thoughts to add?

APPENDIX N

SAMPLE CHECK POINT SURVEY

Coaches 'Check Point' – Post club coaches' induction meeting

Please complete all questions in this online survey and click submit.

- Please insert date the club coaches' induction meeting was held
Date/Month/Year

Gender Male Female Rather not say.

Age Range 18 – 24 25 – 34 35 – 44 45 – 54 55 – 64
≥
65

Number of Years Coaching?

- Less than 2 Years
- More than 2 but less than 5 Years
- More than 5 but less than 10 Years
- More than 10 but less than 20 Years
- More than 20 Years

Highest Level of Coaching Qualification?

- Introduction to Coaching Gaelic Games / Foundation Award (GAA/LGFA/Camogie)
- Award 1 (GAA)/Level 1 (Camogie/LGFA)
- Award 2 (GAA)/Level 2 (Camogie/LGFA)
- Award 3 (GAA)/Level 3 (Camogie/LGFA)

What code do you coach? You may select more than one from the list, if applicable.

- Boys Football Only
- Ladies Football Only
- Hurling Only
- Camogie Only
- Boys and Girls Football
- Hurling and Camogie
- A mixed of all of the above

What age group do you currently coach? You may select more than one, if applicable.

U6 U7 U8 U9 U10 U11 U12 U13 U14 U15
U16 U17

How would you describe your coaching role?

- Coach - with assistants
- An assistant coach
- Coach – with no assistants
- Unsure of role

Reasons why you became a Coach?

- My children started to play.
- Club needed coaches to take team.
- Sport is important/want to maintain involvement.
- Felt I could do a good job (better than others).
- Family members inspired me to coach.
- Inspired by former coaches.
- Told I would make a good coach.
- Next best thing after playing/competing.
- Teaching post in school.
- Pressured into it.

Experience

- **Participation in this coaches CoP session was a positive experience**

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

- **I can bring the learning gained from my experience to my current coaching practice.**

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

- **I am motivated to continue participating as a coach in this CoP group following this session.**

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Engagement

The catalyst chosen for this community of practice engaged all the coaches present. (The catalyst is the ice breaker or discussion starter at start of session i.e., where you were asked for your opinion on an article, video clip etc.)

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Everyone in the group contributed during this community of practice session.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

There were differences of opinion during the community of practice session.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Participation in this community of practice session benefited my social relationships with my peer coaches.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Interactions

Coaching topics identified for this community of practice session promoted good coaching conversations amongst the group.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Coaches explored and shared ideas for each topic discussed.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Strategies, techniques and/or solutions were developed/provided by coaches for each topic discussed.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Action points were agreed by coaches for each topic discussed.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Support

The conversations during this community of practice session were inquisitive i.e., use of questioning to gain better understanding of a topic.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

The conversations during the community of practice were encouraging (growth mindset adopted or coaches were open to new ideas and approaches)

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Everyone displayed a willingness to listen, help and learn from others.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Relationships

This community of practice session further developed a sense of Community between the coaches in the group.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

This community of practice session further developed relationships between the coaches.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

How has your learning from coaches CoP session 1 influenced your coaching approach or behavior?

What learning did you take from this community of practice session (session 2) that you will apply to your current coaching practice over coming month?

Any other comment you like to make at this stage?

Appendix O

Sample Reflective Journal Entry

Meeting: Semi Structured Interview #1

Location: Club 1 Clubhouse **Date:** 1/11/21 **Time:** 7pm

Participants: CF1 and Researcher

I felt a strong connection when we discussed the CoP due to my previous experience of the CoP concept when I was in my role as coaching officer in the club. Due to being a novice researcher and always my lack of experience conducting interviews, I felt it took time to develop a relationship but it improved as the interview progressed.

I noted some gestures and change in tone of voice when we discussed relationships between the coach facilitators. A sense of excitement of having the opportunity to meet new people and be surrounded by likeminded coaches was evident. I felt the participant was a little nervous at the start of the interview but became more comfortable as it progressed.

Before I completed the interview, I asked if there were any additional comments they would like to make. The CF re-emphasized the importance of coaches in the club across all codes engaging and interacting with each other on a regular basis. In addition, the CF spoke of how the CoP concept should be broadened and involve all coaches within the club.

I feel my role in my work as a development officer, being a current coach and my previous experience with CoP, is aiding the research process. It has enabled me to build rapport, establish trust and understanding with the CF. At the same time, I am conscious not to connect their experience with mine. This reflection has heightened my awareness of my own behaviors for future interviews and made me realize I need to be adaptable in my surroundings.

I feel it is important not to lead participants down certain avenues and this process of continual internal dialogue and critical self-reflection is constantly reminding me of my positionality. Learning moments for me going forward are:

- Be comfortable with silence
- Don't overload with too many questions in close proximity
- Probe when required
- Allow participant to conclude their point