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**From Student to Coach:
The Dynamic Nature of Professional Learning and Identity
Development of BSc Sports Coaching Students**

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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STATEMENT 1

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSc- Bachelor of Science

FADEUP- Faculty of Sport, University of Porto

FG- Focus Groups

HE- Higher Education

HEI- Higher Education Institution

PE- Physical Education

RA- Reflective Accounts

VD- Video Diaries

PUBLICATIONS

Journal publications:

R.L. Jones, **J. Fonseca**, L. De Martin Silva, G. Davies, K. Morgan and I. Mesquita (2015) The promise and problems of video diaries: building on current research. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 7(3), 395-410, DOI: 10.1080/2159676X.2014.938687

L. De Martin Silva, **J. Fonseca**, G. Davies, K. Morgan, I. Mesquita and R.L. Jones (2015) Understanding undergraduate sport coaching students' development and learning: The necessity of uncertainty. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20(7), 669-683

Book chapters:

Fonseca, J. and Mesquita, I. (2016). *Desenvolvimento da Identidade Profissional do Treinador Desportivo: Uma área a explorar* [Coach Professional Identity Development: an area to explore] In I. Mesquita (Ed.) *Formação de treinadores: desenvolvimento da aprendizagem e identidade do treinador de desporto*, Porto: FADEUP

Fonseca, J. and Mesquita, I. (2016). *O impacto da Estrutura Curricular e abordagens de ensino na (des)construção da identidade profissional do treinador no contexto da formação académica*. [Course structure and teaching approaches in the deconstruction of the coach identity in formal coach education] In I. Mesquita (Ed.) *Formação de treinadores: desenvolvimento da aprendizagem e identidade do treinador de desporto*, Porto: FADEUP

Mesquita, I.; Jones, R.L.; **Fonseca, J.**; De Martin Silva, L. (2012). *Nova abordagem na formação de treinadores; O que mudou e porquê?*. [New coaching education approach: What have changed and why?] In J. Nascimento and G.Farias (Eds). *Construção da identidade profissional em educação física. A formação á intervenção.*, (pp.41-60). Colecção Temas em Movimento: Florianópolis.

Conference Presentations:

Fonseca, J. (2019). Pedagogical lessons on Sports Coaching Students' development. Oral presentation given at the SHAS Research Day. St. Mary's University, London, United Kingdom. 10th May.

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Fonseca, J.; De Martin-Silva, L.; Morgan, K.; Mesquita, I.; Davies, G. and Jones, R. L. (2014). *Understanding Learning and Identity Development In Higher Education: Perspectives From Portuguese And UK Sports Coaching Students*. Oral presentation given at the ECER Porto 2014 (Main Conference), Portugal. 2-5 September. Available

from: <http://www.eera-ecer.de/ecer-programmes/conference/19/contribution/31262/>

Fonseca, J.; De Martin-Silva, L.; Morgan, K.; Mesquita, I.; Davies, G. and Jones, R. L. (2014). *Mapping intellectual development in sport coaching students*. Oral presentation given at the 2014 AIESEP World Conference. Auckland, New Zealand. 10-13th February.

Fonseca, J.; De Martin-Silva, L.; Morgan, K.; Mesquita, I.; Davies, G. and Jones, R. L. (2013). *My little sweet video diary: Exploring embodied experiences of sport coaching students*. Oral presentation given at the 2013 AIESEP Conference. Warsaw, Poland. 4-7th July.

Fonseca, J.; L. De Martin-Silva and R. L., Jones (2013). *Dialogues with a camera: problematizing the use of video diaries to explore coaching identities*. Oral presentation given at the 2nd International Coaching Conference. Manchester Metropolitan University, Cheshire, UK. 22nd-23rd June.

Fonseca, J.; Jones, R.L.; Morgan, K.; De Martin-Silva, L. and Mesquita. I. (2012). *Sports Coaching Students' Learning Experiences and Identity Development: Initial Results from a Longitudinal Study*. ICSEMIS, Glasgow, July.

Invited presentations

Fonseca, J. (2015). Desenvolvimento da identidade profissional do treinador na formação académica [Coaching professional identity development in higher education]. Invited presentation credited by IPDJ (Portuguese National Institute for Sport): “Formação de treinadores: Desenvolvimento da Aprendizagem e Identidade do Treinador de desporto” at Faculty of Sport, University of Porto, Portugal. 21st -22nd April.

Fonseca, J. (2014). Social interactions in the coaching environment. Invited presentation in the AeFadeup - IV Cycle of workshops at Faculty of Sport, University of Porto, Portugal. 5th April.

Fonseca, J. (2013). Learning experiences and identity development in Sports Coaching Students. Invited presentation in the “research methods” module (part of the Ph.D. programme in Sports Science) at Faculty of Sport, University of Porto, Portugal. 30th January.

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ABSTRACT

During recent years, Portugal has witnessed an increase in the provision of sports coaching programmes (DGES, 2019). The foundation of such a development has been the recognition of academic degrees as a qualified route for coach certification (IDP, 2010). Yet, despite such progress, little remains known about the actuality of the learning experience in those environments, and the impact of those experiences on the development of student-coaches ‘*knowledgeable*’ working identities (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Consequently, in spite of the growing recognition that coaches’ education requires a better understanding of social, cultural and historical factors (e.g., Townsend & Cushion, 2015; Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012), the influence of such features on personal ideologies, regimes of competence and practices exhibited by neophyte coaches remain largely unexplored. In response, the current study attempts to map the intellectual and social development of 16 undergraduate sports coaching students by examining how their *knowledge construction* and *sense of self* is shaped, reproduced, manifested and transformed, over the length of their 3 years undergraduate degree. Following an interpretivist paradigm, the research design used a mixture of focus group interviews, video diaries and written reflections to explore the students’ on-going experiences of change throughout their learning journey. The data were subsequently examined using inductive analysis inspired by Charmaz’s (2006) interpretations of grounded theory. The main results demonstrated that the students’ learning, as opposed to being a cognitive content-driven process, was predominantly social and relational in character; it being influenced by perceived authority sources and the external validation of knowledge. Simultaneously, the students’ professional (i.e., coach) identity development was directly linked to the academic curriculum and the staff who delivered it. Here, the contradictory and ambiguous environment of content and teaching approaches pushed the students to adopt more strategic and reflective positions as learners. Such findings come with a realisation that knowledge is relative and, therefore, making individual commitment and argumentative ownership is essential for coach identity creation and development. Overall, the study suggests the need to create learning environments that instigate an acceptance of ambiguity and stimulates a constant reflection on personal identities for the development of insightful coaches.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The start of the journey

My PhD journey started on a sunny day in May, in front of a self-service coffee machine, just outside the library. I was taking a break with a friend, after a long day of lessons, planning, and assessment reports, when Isabel walked by and joined us:

Isabel: Hey girls, how are you doing? Enjoying this last year?

Joana: Hi! Yes, it's going well, thanks!...a bit stressful at the moment but we will manage. We are reaching the end of the final semester at school. Lots of work to do now.

Isabel: You will finish in a 'blink of an eye', you will see! Just a few more months and you will be done. Any plans for the future?

Diana: Hmm, unfortunately teaching is out of the plan.

Joana: Yeah...there are not many teaching jobs around. I don't know what I'm going to end up doing. I need to figure it out soon! For now I will continue with my coaching job and see if I can find more hours in the health club... It's that or working in my mum's salon...(laughs)

Isabel: Oh no, I'm sure you will be fine. Have you ever considered pursuing further studies, a PhD for example?

Joana: Well, for a couple of years now, I've been working in the physiology lab, but I'm not sure if it's my thing. It is all very interesting but I'd like to be doing something more related to professional identity. I have been reading about it and it's helping me to understand my development and learning.

Isabel: Well, I have a couple of projects and ideas in my head. If you want, we could meet next week and explore some of these ideas. Come and talk to me if you want.

I have to admit that although this suggestion took me by surprise, I was immediately enthusiastic about it. It was a much needed 'nudge' that gave me the necessary confidence to attempt a different path. After a month of many informal

conversations, searches, and recommended readings, Isabel and I booked a trip to Cardiff so I could meet Robyn Jones.

I first got to know Professor Robyn Jones through his written work. Specifically, his seminal article '*Coaching redefined*' (2007) was the first to grab my attention. His presentation of sports coaching as a socio-pedagogical endeavour (Jones, 2007) certainly contrasted with the scientific and systematic approach I had been used to so far. Almost instantaneously, the fictional discussion between a scientific and a relational perspective of coaching captured in the article, triggered an introspective and cathartic analysis of my own experiences as a coach and student. In particular, through the perspective of the coaching scientist I could hear the voices of influential academics that had (in)formed my own rationalities, behaviours and thoughts about coaching. On the other hand, I found the portrayal of coaching as an educational relationship as a fair and articulate narrative that exposed the true reality of the coaching landscape. In Robyn's work I found a pragmatic voice that I didn't expect or know existed in the academic realm of coaching knowledge.

As I kept reading his work and the similar work of others' (e.g., Piggott, 2012; Chesterfield, Potrac & Jones, 2010), it took me back to my first year as an assistant coach, when I would leave training sessions upset because I couldn't 'win over' swimmers' attention or respect; or when I failed to convince a talented swimmer to compete again after watching him 'fail' in races. My academic education did not serve me well in these moments. At the time it was easier to blame my age and (lack of) coaching experience, although with hindsight, I also recognise that such failures were a consequence of my inability to recognise and act upon some of the contextual social forces that I was trying to control.

Throughout my education, I was led to believe that coaching was a systematic process, led by 'facts' and scientific rigour. The majority of the taught content was based on dualistic rationalisations of biological and technical knowledge, used to assert 'right and wrong' approaches. The curriculum was mainly delivered in labs and classrooms, with a focus on technical and tactical drills, and training protocols. Attention was mainly directed on the design of coaching and teaching plans, where the priority was to maximise time, resources and performance. Meanwhile, athletes' needs were usually introduced and discussed through physical and cognitive maturation models, while social discussions were limited to a wider philosophical analysis of the values of sport as a cultural phenomenon, and as a vehicle to human emancipation. Equally, teaching approaches were presented in the same positivistic style. That is, through standardised spectrums and didactical models of teaching with few opportunities given to apply and reflect upon such principles in realistic contexts of practice.

My interest in studying coach education was thus born here. I became particularly intrigued by the fact that, despite having been long committed to higher education, I felt ill-prepared to act efficiently in the context of practice. As a young coach, I found it hard, if not impossible, to transform the knowledge developed into action. However, my introduction to the social analysis of coaching, showed me that there was another way; closer to the way I actually felt! Still, the more I read, the more I realised I needed to further explore how student-coaches learn over time, what influences their intellectual and social development as coaches, and what are the catalytic influential vectors that promote a change of beliefs and behaviours. In order to achieve the impact desired, I had to align my research design with the setting I wanted to make a difference in (i.e., the preparation of coaches within higher

education). Hence, I decided to closely follow students along a three-year sport coaching degree to track their transformations ‘on the move’ and understand what was responsible for such changes. It was in this realm of personal aspirations that this research journey began.

1.2 Study background

1.2.1 Sports coaching in higher education

Sports coaching has only been recognised as a *bona fide* field of academic study from the turn of the millennium (Jones, 2000; Lyle, 2002). Yet, despite a late start, it has rapidly made up for lost time as demonstrated by the increasing number of academic publications, academic departments, and academic programmes of study offered around the world (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). In Portugal, such developments are particularly pronounced with the recent recognition of higher education institutions as one of the certified agencies to deliver coach education within the country (IDP, 2010). The influence of European frameworks (ENSSEE, 2007, 2009) developed to unify coaching awards and elevate sport coaching as a legitimate profession, paired with an augmented need to innovate the traditional coach education system and coaching programmes on offer (Rosado & Mesquita, 2007; Mesquita, Ribeiro, Santos & Morgan, 2014), was influential in leading such progress. Consequently, in recent years there has been a rise in academic sport coaching-related programmes in Portugal (Mesquita, Isidro & Rosado, 2010). Specifically, in the last nine years, the number of sport coaching routes at undergraduate level has grown from 24 to 37 programmes across a total of 32 institutions (DGES, 2010, 2019). Such an increase is also observed at the postgraduate level, with a current offer of 10 master’s degree programmes and 6 doctoral programmes across a total of 10 sport universities (DGES, 2019). Although

in the majority of these cases, sports coaching is not offered as a stand-alone degree, the growth of sports coaching as an academic area of study is particularly significant considering there are a total of 48 institutions that offer sport-related courses across the Portuguese academic systems (DGES, 2019).

For many years coaching certification in Portugal fell solely under the domain of sports federations (Resende, Sequeira & Sarmiento, 2016). Yet the recent decentralisation of certification powers from sports federations to the National Institute for Sport (IDP, 2010) led to a change in how coaches gain their certification for practice. Among these changes, coaches are now required to engage with certification programmes that not only focus on the technical and tactical aspects of the sport, but also offer a more rounded and holistic understanding of coaching knowledge. In addition to this, student-coaches have to participate in mentored work-placement experiences for a minimum of a competitive season and renew their licence every 5 years through engagement with continuous professional learning initiatives (IDP, 2010). Acknowledging that such requirements were already constituent parts of the majority of the academic programmes on offer, higher education institutions appear to have found no difficulty in fulfilling such requirements. Such demands have provided a great opportunity for academic degrees to demonstrate their ability to address some of the limitations and shortcomings associated with traditional certification programmes, and evidence their authority in offering a more informed, holistic and in-depth learning experience.

Nonetheless, although progress has been made and recognition given to academic degrees as valuable and competent educational systems through which coaching licenses can be obtained, the increase in variety and number of course

options have also brought additional complexity. In particular, a consequence of the increased number of curricula programmes and choices, which naturally involve a diversity of aims, methods and expertise has, in turn, imposed challenges to control the quality of such offerings (IPDJ, 2017). Although final year students' surveys and external examiner reviews provide an assessment of the quality of the courses on offer, little evidence exists about how the curricular experiences affect students; that is, what impact (if any) it has on transforming student's professional identities and propelling them on productive lifelong learning trajectories (Fenton-O'Creevy, Brigham, Jones & Smith, 2015). Indeed, although it is expected that students will increase their content knowledge from such courses, we have little information on how their ways of 'knowing' develop, including how they perceive and engage with their learning, and what is the impact of it in their development as learners and as coaches.

In contrast to other studies in this area, the ambition here is to focus less on students' preferred sources of learning (e.g., Rynne & Mallett, 2012; Rynne, Mallett & Tinning, 2010; Mesquita et al., 2010), and more about how students learn in these academic settings, and the impact this has on their identity. Such analysis seems to be key to identifying the catalytic elements that stimulate students' transformations at a social, emotional and intellectual level. It is in this context that this research project sits. A more detailed analysis of students' transitional journey during higher education is needed if we are to understand how specific academic learning experiences impact on students' epistemological thinking and sense of professional identity.

1.2.2 From student to coach: The nexus between learning and identity

Students that leave university today will find a world that expresses an “ever-widening uncertainty, challenge and conflict, bearing on the three domains of

knowledge, action and self” (Barnett & Hallam, 1999, p.149). This implies that future professionals will be exposed to relentless testing and constant change to the criteria of truth, ways of performing and sense of identity throughout their professional lives (Barnett & Hallam, 1999). Thus, academic sports coaching courses, although often claim a vocational focus, have, more-than-often, been framed in transferrable learning outcomes related to the development of problem-solving, considered communication and independent learning (Mesquita et al., 2010). For Cushion and Nelson (2013), this is what distinguishes sports coaching education programmes from sports coaching training. While sports coaching training is mainly focused on the acquisition of professional knowledge, sports coaching education entails the development of flexible, self-regulated and lifelong learning professionals. This emphasises the development of individuals who can cope with the demands of a ‘supercomplex’ and ever-changing society (Light, Cox & Calkins, 2009) and are able to contribute to the continued development of it (Gijbels, Raemdonck & Vervecken, 2010). In this context, the development of critical ‘self-directed’ and emancipatory learning skills that allow students to continue to learn and adapt new knowledge to new situations becomes a priority for higher education courses. In the words of Vanthournout and colleagues (2017), the key to prepare graduates for the future is to prepare them to “take their learning processes into their own hands” (p. 135). Although improvements in these competencies are recognised as fundamental to the development of any specialised 'trade' (Hagger, Burn, Mutton & Brindley, 2008), there remains a lack of empirical evidence to demonstrate the degree to which academic courses actually succeed in the promotion of more independent and deep learning professionals (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). So far, research in this area indicates that despite coaches often being seen as experts in replicating knowledge and perpetuating traditions, they appear

less prepared to operate in a constantly changing environment (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2016).

Specifically, within coach education courses, such learning skills become important, particularly when consideration is given to a more holistic and integrated view of coaching (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2003, 2004; Day, 2012). This is in addition to affirming the coaching role as an increasingly *bona fide* professional activity (Duffy et al., 2011; Taylor & Garrat, 2010; Taylor & McEwan, 2012). Hence, in order to pursue and realise such aims, many have pointed to the need for a better alignment between educational offerings and the complex and dynamic nature of the profession (e.g. Jones, 2000; Piggott, 2012). In particular, coaching programmes are expected to include work-based learning contexts that offer opportunities to explore professional roles, understand workplace cultures, and gain analytic skills that allow student-coaches to question and (re)construct previous and current experiences and knowledge (Trede, Macklin & Bridges, 2012; Cushion et al., 2010). Indeed, instead of perceiving learning as merely the acquisition of a curriculum, academics suggest a re-conceptualisation of learning in higher education as a self-transformative journey where students are stimulated to participate and actively re-contextualise their academic knowledge into specific work practices (Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014). Such understandings are aligned with situated perspectives of learning where the focus is not so much placed in reproducing a specific set of knowledge or practices, but importantly in developing a refined ‘knowledgeability’ that allows students to negotiate productive identities with respect to the various communities of practice that they interact with (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this view, learning is perceived as a process of becoming, involving the constant construction of coaching personas that

can be adapted to the professional environment in which they are trying to integrate (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). This is a process that requires an “emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structures of psycho-cultural assumptions have come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 6). Yet, despite acknowledging such aspects as a powerful means to attain personal and professional growth, information remains scarce about how such processes are realized in the context of an undergraduate course and how it affects students’ identities as learners and as professionals (Cushion et al., 2010; McCullick et al., 2009). Consequently, to improve coach education and, subsequently, coaching practice, a more complete understanding of learning trajectories and how novice coaches develop within formal educational settings is still needed.

1.3 Study aims and research questions

The general purpose of this study is to map the intellectual, social and emotional development of undergraduate sports coaching students by examining the interplay between notions of self, structure and agency within an educational establishment (Roberts, 2000). More specifically, the intention here is to explore the experience and perceptions of students along their three-year undergraduate degree and, simultaneously, examine the impact of such experiences on the development of their coaching identities. The following research questions constitute the framework of orientation that structured and fuelled the operationalisation of the proposed research agenda:

1. How do sport coaching students think about learning and carry out their studying throughout their degree?

2. To what extent does the knowledge and experience gained on the degree programme contribute towards the students' intellectual development, and why?
3. What role (if any) do teaching staff play in these developments? Why are they so perceived?
4. What identities, in terms of their own narrativizations (Gee, 2000), do they possess; who do they think they are and why do they think that?
5. How and why do these self-perceptions change over their time as students? What are the principal catalysts?
6. Who are the students when they leave? What are their self-understandings? (Sfard & Prusak, 2005).

1.4 Study significance

The value of this study can be summarised in three main arguments. Firstly, a research focus on learning journeys has much to offer in a bid to understand how students recognise learning and attribute personal significance to it (Vermunt & Vermetten, 2004). Therefore, the first contribution of this research is to address calls within the educational field to devote more attention on how 21st-century university students develop their learning conceptions (Richardson, 2011) and learning strategies (Vermunt & Endedijk, 2011) during their academic courses. Certainly, a better understanding on how students regulate their learning and why, would appear to be paramount in supporting students to interpret and better deal with their own learning experiences (Lonka, Olkinuora & Mäkinen, 2004). Furthermore, such insights appear to offer valuable clues to understand why students react differently to different

learning experiences and how such experiences, in turn, affect their holistic professional knowledge and practice.

Secondly, the thesis responds to Vanthournout and colleagues' (2014) call to adopt more longitudinal research designs which include multiple data collection points in the study of students' learning and professional development. This includes paying particular attention to the social and personal imbroglio of influences (i.e., communities, interactions, places, practices, values and boundaries) that form part of who we are (Wenger, 2010). Indeed, the ambition here is to "investigate not only whether change has existed, but also the complexity of how developments unfold" (Vanthournout, Donche & Gijbels, 2014, p. 22). In doing so, this work attempts to expose some of the familiar, taken-for-granted and usually unnoticed catalytic factors that shape students' learning trajectories (Wenger, 1998), and uncover how coaches-in-development view themselves across distinct landscapes of their practice, and at different stages of their development (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

Finally, the project offers a unique opportunity to observe how neophyte coaches develop a sense of professional identity that is both personally and socially valued (Stets & Burke, 2003). In this respect, this work addresses a much-needed angle of analysis in coach learning literature that recognises the need to explore '*who* is the coach', and how such coaching personas are negotiated within the different '*social landscapes*' of professional practice (Jones, Bailey, Santos & Edwards, 2012; Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2016). This particularly includes paying more attention to the professional-in-development whilst bringing to the fore the metamorphic '*presentation[s] of the self*' (Goffman, 1959) exhibited in students' rationalisation of their experiences (Jones & Wallance, 2005). As Nias (1989) explains, the person

cannot be dissociated from the craft, therefore, understanding how students rationalise ‘what they do’ in relation to ‘who they are’ and ‘who they want to become’ appears to be crucial point of analysis to further comprehend how coaches perceive the professional role and self-identify within it (Mockler, 2011a). By engaging in such analysis, this work further challenges representations of coaching as a de-personalised and a mere technical activity, and assists in the appreciation of the relational, emotional and political influences that also contribute in the shaping of coaching selves (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2016; Jones et al., 2012; Potrac, Smith & Nelson, 2017; Potrac et al., 2013).

1.5 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. In this first one (Introduction), a brief account of the personal and academic motivations that justified the study was presented. Following this, a more detailed explanation of the aims of the study and its significance was presented.

Chapter two (Review of Literature) encompasses a review of the literature that is organized under two main topic areas; that is, coach learning and coach identity. Within the first, an exploration of the different understandings of learning embedded within the discourse of coach education literature is presented. The intention here is to explain how different conceptualizations of coaching and coaching practice have shaped academic understandings about *what* and *how* a coach should learn. In addition to this, the section also attempts to explain the complexities of coaches’ cognitive and intellectual development, while bringing relevant educational literature to inform and expand understandings of coach learning research and practice. The second part, on the other hand, introduces and explores key concepts and theories of identity that have

become central to the study of professional development. This is followed by an examination of the literature in relation to coach education. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the ‘gaps’ within the literature and proposes a few suggestions for the future development of research in the area.

Chapter three (Methodology), outlines the ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological considerations that shaped this project. In addition to this, it also describes the *modus operandi* of the process of participant recruitment, data collection and data analysis, while simultaneously exposing some of challenges and dilemmas felt and addressed within the research along the way. The ambition here is to assert the ‘quality’ of the research process by promoting *transparency* in relation to the choices made and steps taken.

Chapter four, (Results) reports the main findings of the study in a chronological format. This way, readers can gain a better sense of understanding of students’ changes of perceptions and beliefs, particularly in relation to the experiences lived during their three-year degree. This chapter is divided into three main sections that represent each year of the degree course; namely ‘*The first steps into university: Welcome to the ‘grown-up world’*’ (Year 1); ‘*Jumping into uncertainty and starting to think like a coach*’ (Year 2) and ‘*The promised land: Will I survive there?*’ (Year 3).

Chapter five (Discussion), presents an analysis of appropriate emergent findings. The aim here is not only to discuss the students’ learning and identity experiences of development in light of current literature, but also to highlight how they progress that literature. In doing this, the findings are positioned within the current landscape of sports coaching education. Using the main research questions as a structural framework, this chapter is divided into four main sections, namely; ‘*The*

participating students' intellectual development'; 'The interplay between identity and learning experiences', 'The principal catalysts for change?' and 'Developing a knowledgeability' (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner 2015). The overall aim of this section is to explore how students transform and evolve their epistemological understanding about knowledge and knowing; while also focusing on the students' identity transformation during their three-year long journey. Here, the influence of both curricular and teaching approaches will be discussed in order to assess the impact of the programme on the students' cognitive and social development.

Finally, Chapter six (Conclusion) provides a summary of the primary research findings, before implications and recommendations for future practice are suggested. Here, the main aims of the study are revisited to ascertain and ensure that the original goals were addressed. The work draws to a close with a reflective account of my personal Ph.D. journey, where the intention is to 'capture' the impact of this project on my personal and professional development.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aspires to situate and frame the current thesis within the landscape of coach education. In particular, it draws upon literature from sports coaching, learning and professional identity development. The intention here is to introduce, synthesise and critically discuss the literature that informed my understanding about coaches' learning and identity development in the context of coach education. Thus, this review reflects my own personal "journey of discover[y]" (Steane, 2004, p. 126) through the "landscapes of knowledge" valued in the area (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p.5).

The review process started with an exhaustive search of the most relevant online databases available through the Cardiff Met Library catalogues (e.g. SPORTDiscus, Educational Research Complete, Cardiff Met library catalogue, MetSearch). This initial selection of sources was particularly focused on empirical research, framed by keywords that address the specific aims of this thesis (i.e., 'coach learning', 'coach education', 'novice coach', 'coach development', 'professional learning' and 'professional identity') as well as the year of publication (i.e., within the last 15 years). Later, as the chapter developed, additional sources were included to provide a more clear and informed understanding of the conceptual nature of the topics under investigation and simultaneously open up discussion around salient points of knowledge not yet explored in this area. For this reason, the second phase of the literature search was guided by relevance and suitability rather than the year of publication (Lyle, 2014). The intention here was to introduce literature from wider fields of research (e.g., sociology, psychology, pedagogy), that helped to inform and acknowledge particular perspectives of thinking associated with the intertwined

processes of learning and identity development not yet fully explored in the field of coach education.

The chapter opens with a general discussion of the current developments and challenges related to definitions of coach education research. These discussions aim to locate the subject field of research and establish some clarity and coherence in the use of the conceptual terms included in this thesis. Following this, the review is divided into two inter-connected pathways; a focus on both learning and identity. The purpose is not to introduce boundaries between these two related topics, but rather to provide a different focus in the analysis of the literature related to students' professional development. As Jarvis (2012) argues "Mind and self are [both] learned phenomena" (p. 54), therefore, it is always difficult to dissociate an experience of identity from an experience of learning and vice versa (Illeris, 2014; Wenger, 1998).

Subsequently, in the 'Learning' section, the focus of analysis is directed to the distinct epistemological perspectives of learning evident in coach education literature. Here, an appreciation is given to the growing work that recognises the social complexity of coach learning and attempts to promote a more critical and constructivist approach in the development of coaches' expertise. The 'Identity' section, on the other hand, aims to highlight the centrality of students' identity (i.e., how they perceive themselves as coaches and how [and who] they wish to become) in the development of a professional persona (Pinnegar, 2005). Professional identity research is explored both as an analytical lens to understand the processes of becoming a professional, as well as a resource for coaches to make sense of themselves in relation to others around them (Pillen, Den Brok & Beijaard, 2013). Accordingly, an exploration of conceptual definitions and theoretical principles are introduced first to

initiate a more informed discussion about the understandings of identity in the context of this work. From there, the narrative moves to explore how identity development has been investigated and used in the development of beginning professionals. In doing so, examples from wider social professions (e.g., nursing, teaching and social work) are used to complement and support the dearth of research developments in coaching. Considering that coach identity is still a new topic of research, this section argues the need to consider how neophyte coaches construct and exercise their professional identity, and how political and emotional nuances may influence the constant negotiation and reinvention of coaches' roles and positions in the workplace. Overall, it is hoped that broad conclusions drawn from this chapter can help to better define the precise intentions of this study and generate further routes of discussion concerning the coach's professional development within coach education settings.

2.2 Coach development, coach learning and coach education

In recent years the role of the coach has assumed a pivotal place, not only within the growing sporting landscape, but also in wider 21st-century society (Lara-Bercial et al., 2016; IDP, 2010; PATF, 2003). Alongside the academic recognition of sport coaching as a subject area worthy of independent study (Rangeon, Gilbert & Bruner, 2012; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Jones, 2000; Lyle, 2002), coaching has been widely proclaimed as a key element in the promotion of national and international agendas for athletic development, physical activity and inclusion (Lara-Bercial et al., 2016; IDP, 2010).

Such recognition of coaching and coaches as cornerstones in the development of sporting and social priorities has triggered a growing investment in the areas of coaching education, coach learning and coaching development (e.g., Stodter &

Cushion, 2017; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014; Mesquita et al., 2014; Piggott, 2013; Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012; Cushion et al., 2010). The main ambitions of this investment lie in gaining a better understanding on how to best support and facilitate coaches' learning as a way to guarantee the quality of future coaches and coaching practice (Purdy, 2018). Yet, despite the increasing focus on coaches' professional preparation and development, the enthusiasm experienced in the area has naturally reflected the complexity of the field under study, resulting in a proliferation of areas of interest and ambiguity in the terminology used (Cushion et al., 2010).

In particular, when discussing issues related to coach learning, knowledge and development, terms used in the literature include coach education (e.g., Cushion et al., 2010; Martens, 2004), coach certification (e.g., Wiersma & Sherman, 2005), coach development (e.g., Gilbert, Côté & Mallett, 2006), training (e.g., Smith & Smoll, 1997), coach learning (e.g., Lyle, 2002), learning initiatives (Purdy, 2018), and continuous professional development (e.g., Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003), in an inconsistent and uncritical manner (Nelson, Cushion & Potrac, 2006; Cushion & Nelson, 2013). For example, Abraham, Collins and Martindale's (2006) validation work on a 'Coaching schematic model' (a model designed to codify and improve experts' knowledge and decision-making) have framed their research under coach development, while others (e.g., Olsson, Cruickshank & Collins, 2017; Nash, 2003) focussing on the development of expert coaches' knowledge, have used mainly the term coach education.

In addition, the ambition to understand how coaches accrue and develop their professional expertise has also led many researchers to adopt a multitude of frameworks to discuss coach education, coach development and coaches' learning

(e.g., Nelson et al., 2006, Werthner & Trudle, 2006). For example, Nelson and colleagues (2006), influenced by the work of Coombs and Ahmed (1974), adopted the terms of formal, non-formal and informal learning to organise and review the existing literature in coach learning and coach development. Alternatively, Werthner and colleagues (Werthner, Culver & Trudel, 2012; Werthner & Trudel, 2006, 2009), inspired by the work of Jarvis (2009) and Moon (2004), used the terms mediated, unmediated and internal learning to organise coaches' learning experiences. Furthermore, most recently, Sfard's (1998) metaphoric framework of acquisition and participation (see Mesquita et al., 2010) has been equally used to organise coaches' learning and associated sources of knowledge.

In more detail, Nelson and colleagues' (2006) framework has become widely popularised in the literature (see for example; Mallet et al., 2009; Cushion et al., 2010; Purdy, 2018) to explore the multiple educational structures that characterise the preparation of coaching practice - a preparation that stretches from technical and tactical specialised knowledge to personal development and socialisation into the field (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). Accordingly, formal learning has been characterised as "institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured educational systems" (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8). This included large scale National Governing Body [NGB] courses or academic coaching programmes. Non-formal learning activities, on the other hand, represents organised and systematic learning activities that are external to the formality of the educational systems (Nelson et al., 2006). Into this category fall such activities as professional conferences, workshops and webinars. Lastly, informal learning illustrates the continuous and 'un-ruled' process of self-directed or incidental learning (Cushion et al., 2010), where individuals acquire knowledge through exposure to the environment (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974).

This may include learning through previous experience as an athlete, informal initiatives of mentoring, or interaction with athletes and other coaches.

Werthner and Trudel (2006), conversely, focused on the level of mediation between students' agency and curricular structure, in order to map the multiplicity of coaches' learning experience and sources of knowledge. This framework was first explored using a case study of an elite Canadian coach (Werthner & Trudel, 2006), and later applied to an extended qualitative enquiry that included 15 Olympic coaches from a variety of sports (Werthner & Trudel, 2009). In their work, the authors proposed that coaches' cognitive structures change and adapt under the influence of three types of learning situations: mediated, unmediated and internal. Mediated learning corresponds to experiences where learners do not have any power over the selection and transmission of the content being taught (e.g., formal coach education courses and coaching workshops). Unmediated learning, in contrast, is characterised by experiences where individuals are active agents in the search and selection of information (e.g., reading relevant literature, interactions with, and observation of, others). Finally, internal learning experiences represent the personal moments of mental organisation in which individuals have the opportunity to reflect on the information obtained from mediated and unmediated situations, thus striving for clarity and commitment of thought (e.g., reflective discussions with others, diaries or reflexive journals) (Werthner & Trudel, 2006; Trudel, Culver & Werthner, 2013).

Thirdly, Sfard's (1998) theoretical framework of acquisition and participation, has been used to present a more sophisticated view of (coach) learning processes, by being less concerned with the formality and mediation of the context in which learning takes place and more with the process of learning itself (see Illeris, 2017). According

to this perspective (Sfard, 1998), the acquisition process results from the transfer of knowledge from authority (i.e., educators, literature) representing an accumulation and subsequent internal appropriation of theoretical knowledge (see Piaget, 1959). On the other hand, the participation process encompasses the development of the neophyte learners through interactions with more experienced others within a professional community; this is where beginner coaches play an active role in participating, sharing and dealing with different learning experiences (Sfard, 1998).

In general, the variety of discussions about these different conceptual frameworks has, undeniably, contributed to the abandonment of a view of coach learning and development as a simple and linear pathway from novice to expert. This is because they acknowledge that coaches develop through a complex blend of sources and opportunities that are dependent on the specific coaching context in which they are placed (Werthner & Trudel, 2009). Nonetheless, this investigation into defining, describing and categorising coaches' learning experiences in relation to the degrees of formality and mediation (Piggott, 2015) have provided relatively few insights into coaches' conceptual understanding about knowing and learning. Furthermore, the use of these frameworks in the literature, more than often, perpetuates the idea that learning occurs automatically in a particular setting or context (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). Consequently, it appears that important empirical evidence surrounding the social mechanisms which may lead (neophyte) coaches to experience such intertwined learning process remain missing.

Overall, the multiplicity of perspectives and frameworks used to characterise coaches' learning experiences may have contributed to a messy, fragmented and incomplete picture at present. In agreement with Piggott (2013), this is perhaps an

unavoidable price to pay to achieve a ‘quality debate’ in such an emerging field. In particular, such debate has motivated many researchers to find clear boundaries between concepts such as education and training (Nelson et al., 2006), education and development (Côté, 2006) and learning and education (Cushion et al., 2010). Doing so, brings clarity to the field by establishing common understandings of key concepts.

Within this work, coach development, coach learning and coach education, although interrelated fields of research, will be presented as distinct foci of interest. In this respect, following Piggott’s (2013) conceptual organisation of the field, coach development will be associated with the wider process of socialisation into the coaching role (Nash et al., 2012). Coach learning, in turn, will be considered a subcategory of coach development, which includes the conceptualisations, processes of learning, and all the diverse situations experienced by coaches that have been broadly represented in the literature in terms of formal/non-formal or mediated/unmediated frameworks (Trudel et al., 2013, Cushion et al., 2010). Finally, coach education reflects a subcategory of coach learning associated with formalised educational systems or certification courses, designed to prepare individuals for occupational practice (Piggott, 2012). This includes both processes of learning through acquisition and participation that occur through mediated or non-mediated structures in formalised learning contexts. Coach learning in general, and coach education more specifically, will be the focus of the next section. Following this, coach development, in the context of coach education, will then be further explored under the ‘Coach Identity’ section.

2.3 Coach learning

Not so long ago, research on and around coaching was strongly influenced by positivist research agendas, mainly interested in presenting a product-orientated view of practice (Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002), with an emphasis on identifying ‘effective’ coaching behaviours (see, Tharp & Gallimore, 1976; Lacy & Darst, 1985; Claxton, 1988; Lacy & Goldston, 1990; Douge & Hastie, 1993; Lacy & Martin, 1994). Using systematic methods of analyses (see, Smith, Smoll & Hunt, 1977; Lacy & Darst, 1985), researchers were mainly interested in identifying, characterising and prescribing an efficient coaching profile that could be reproduced and replicated (Abraham, Collins & Martindale, 2006; Potrac, Jones & Cushion, 2007). As Day (2012) explains, academic developments at the time were mainly driven by a “performance pedagogy based on scientific functionalism, where the body is viewed as a ‘machine’ to be developed and improved” (p. 62). As a consequence, for many years coach knowledge, and related learning initiatives, were fundamentally developed on systematic coaching modelling approaches that tended to portray the coaching process as a progressive “knowable sequence” (Jones & Wallace, 2005, p. 121) and the coach as a mere “systematic method applier” (Jones et al., 2004, p. 2).

In retrospect, perhaps it can be argued that such research was an essential step to initiate discussion on the nature of coaching and related pedagogical practice (Price & Weiss, 2000). Nevertheless, such a portrayal can be criticised as being context-free and rather unproblematic which has contributed to the development of an oversimplified perception of coaching and coaching learning. As Jones and Wallace (2005) explained, by adhering to such a rationalistic view of the coaching role, researchers and coach educators were assuming;

“First, that it is feasible and desirable to establish a clear and uncontroversial set of fully achievable goals; second, that all necessary resources are available; and third, that the attainment of successful outcomes can be unequivocally measured” (p.121).

The consequent claims made on behalf of such critical reasoning was that sports coaching and concomitantly, coach education research needed a profound ontological reconstruction regarding the coaching process as a whole. At this stage, the use of more qualitative designs following a constructivist interpretation of the professional context was vital in accelerating progress towards this end (Jones, 2000; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Abraham et al., 2006; Bowes & Jones, 2006). As a consequence, by the end of the 20th century, new research (see, Jones, Housner & Kornspan, 1997; Saury & Durand, 1998; d’Arripe-Longueville et al., 1998, 2001), started to redirect a focus from descriptive accounts of coach behaviour (i.e., what coaches do), towards a deeper understanding of coaching knowledge from particular contexts (i.e., how coaches think and why). This shift in focus of the coaching role was crucial for the further development of research and associated pedagogical practice, since it consolidated realisations of the gap between (given) knowledge and the complex, ambiguous and unpredictable nature of practice.

Saury and Durand (1998) were pioneers in emphasising the uncertain and dynamic nature of elite coaches’ work when preparing athletes for competition. In doing so, they criticised the (then) linear and uncritical perspectives of coaching and related coach learning (referred to above) (Saury & Durand, 1998), recognising for the first time that coaching practice is more than a “functional undeviating framework” (Jones & Thomas, 2015, p. 66). Furthermore, the coaches observed and interviewed in this study expressed that they based their decisions on past experiences and practical

knowledge, rather than on any information gleaned from their formal training; an insight which greatly contributed to a shift in perceptions regarding coaches' learning and knowledge. From here, approaches that attempted to 'model' the coaching process in a logic and systematic manner (e.g. Franks et al., 1986; Fairs, 1987; Sherman et al., 1997; Lyle, 2002) began to be discarded because they were considered inefficient for the development of coaching effectiveness in practice (Cushion et al., 2003; Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006). Instead, coaching prowess and knowledge came to be considered as dependent on the interactions within and with the surrounding social context (Morgan, 2007).

Such a position was further strengthened by two particular studies conducted by d'Arripe-Longueville and colleagues (1998, 2001). These studies played an important role in reinforcing coaching as a sophisticated, complex and interpersonal process, as they deconstructed and compared athletes' and coaches' perceptions of concrete and specific interactions. Results indicated that such interactions were highly affected by political, cultural and business factors (d'Arripe-Longueville et al., 1998). Additionally, the findings from d'Arripe-Longueville et al., (2001) later claimed the coaching process as a dynamic and collective one, again calling into question the dominance of coaches' unfettered power in such an interactive process. This recognition of coaching as a critical pedagogical and sociological endeavour sparked a lively and enthusiastic debate about the nature of coaching knowledge and related coach learning which, to an extent, continues to this day (Jones, 2000; Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2002; Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002; Jones, 2006; Cushion, 2007, Cushion et al., 2010; Piggott, 2013; Jones & Thomas, 2015). Nevertheless, what cannot be denied is the increased inclusion of educational and sociological content knowledge in coach education programmes (e.g., Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012; Stoszowski &

Collins, 2014), and the development of more constructivist approaches to promote athletes' learning and development (e.g., Vinson & Parker, 2018).

Despite such advances, unfortunately, research on coach learning still maintains some positivist heritage with regards to how coach education courses are delivered and their impact (or lack of) on coaches' learning (De Martin-Silva et al., 2015; Lyle & Cushion, 2017). Despite the wider expansion of coaching knowledge at an academic level then, clear agreement on what coaches should know and how they learn is still far from being achieved (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003; Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2016). Hence, a prevalence of traditional discourses in formalised coach education programmes is still to be found, leading many to question the efficiency of formal learning experiences in promoting meaningful learning (De Martin-Silva et al., 2015). It is to these matters that the review now turns.

2.3.1 Coach learning and coach education

The literature on coaches' learning has been largely focused on understanding how coaches prefer to learn and in what context they learn best (Stodter & Cushion, 2017). General conclusions from such work echo the general belief that coaches learn in an idiosyncratic and unsystematic manner (Abraham et al., 2006; Werthner & Trudle, 2009), and through a variety of sources and situations (see, Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald & Côté, 2008; Nelson & Cushion, 2006; Abraham et al., 2006; Irwin, Hanton & Kerwin, 2004; Jones et al., 2003; Lemyre, Trudel & Durand-Bush, 2007; Schempp et al., 2007; Timson-Katchis & North, 2008; Wright, Trudel & Culver, 2007). Of those reported experiences, formal contexts of education occupy the lowest position on coaches' hierarchy of preferences (Mesquita et al, 2014). Instead, coaches tend to value the knowledge obtained from observations, interaction with peers (Jones

et al., 2003; Cassidy & Rossi, 2006; Vella, Crowe & Oades, 2013), and personal sporting experiences both as players and neophyte coaches (Cushion et al., 2003; Cushion, 2011).

Formal coach education settings, on the other hand, have been criticised for not realising the intentions related to coaches' learning and knowledge development (Cushion & Nelson, 2013; Chesterfield et al, 2010), as well as failing to prepare coaches for the multidimensional nature of their job (Nash & Sproule, 2012). In this respect, coach education programmes that continue to present coaching knowledge in terms of a set package of "gold standards" (Abraham & Collins, 1998, p. 71), provided and controlled by instructors, are unfortunately still evident in recent times (Chesterfield et al., 2010; Mesquita, 2010; Mesquita et al, 2010; Trudel, Gilbert & Werthner, 2010; Piggott, 2012; Cushion & Nelson, 2013).

For instance, in the United Kingdom, Piggott's (2012) neo-Foucauldian analysis of coaches' experiences of NGB courses, demonstrated that a great majority of the cases studied (10 out of 16), characterised coaching qualifications as a "series of rationalities, (re)produced by 'authoritative agents' who, through subtle disciplinary practices, produced 'docile bodies': coaches who felt unable to resist the dominant discourse" (p. 16). Similarly, Portuguese coaches describe the curriculum of their formal education system as 'heavily didactic', prescriptive (Serrano, Shahidian, Sampaio & Leite, 2013), and strongly centred upon a 'classroom-based approach' (Mesquita et al., 2010), where competencies such as problem-solving, decision making and innovation are largely ignored (Leite, Coelho & Sampaio, 2011).

Based on such experiences, studies focused on coaches' learning continue to evidence that a great majority of coaches do not particularly value the formal learning

setting (see Harvey, Cushion, Cope & Muir, 2013; Werthner & Trudle, 2006, Erickson et al., 2008; Lemyre et al., 2007; Gilbert, Côté & Mallett, 2006), considering such courses akin to ‘indoctrination’ (Cushion & Nelson, 2013; Chesterfield et al., 2010). Unfortunately, despite the efforts of some to develop an appreciation of the multifaceted and ambiguous nature of coaching, as opposed to it being structured by a set of determinate competences and direct assimilation (see Rynne & Mallett, 2014; Jones & Thomas, 2015), the shift initiated a decade ago towards the complexity and context-dependency of coaching is yet to be realised in professional preparation programmes (Cushion et al, 2010; Rangeon et al., 2012).

Further studies in the area reveal that coaches’ dissatisfaction is mainly related to a perceived lack of relevance of the content taught for their specific craft (Cassidy, Mallett & Tinning, 2008; Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2016; Townsend & Cushion, 2015), and the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching provided (McCullick, Belcher & Schempp 2005). Indeed, while some have argued that coach education programmes provide fewer opportunities to ‘learn from doing’ (Mesquita et al., 2014), others have accused such courses of ignoring the intellectual heritage and pre-existing beliefs that each participant brings to the educational context (Piggott, 2012; Vargas-Tonsing, 2007; Chesterfield et al, 2010; Stodter & Cushion, 2017). As a consequence, formal coach education attracts participants mainly for the qualification or certification value that is on offer, rather than for the purpose of developing expertise (Cushion et al., 2003; Piggott, 2012). As a consequence, a focus on the social aspects of learning has increasingly come to the fore.

In particular, researchers and coach educators have argued for the need to develop coaches from a social constructivist perspective (Jones et al., 2012;

Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014; Morgan, Jones, Gilbourne & Llewellyn, 2013; Mesquita et al., 2014; Nelson, Cushion & Potrac, 2013, Cushion & Lyle, 2010, Nash & Collins, 2006, Cushion et al., 2003). This view of coaches' learning contrasts with the rationalised and reproductive ways of more traditional formal coach education (Chesterfield, Potrac & Jones, 2010; Rynne & Mallett, 2014), by arguing that learning cannot be separated from the social behaviours, interactions and spaces through which knowledge is learnt (Mason, 2007). The intention here is not to ignore individual agency in the process of learning, but rather to acknowledge that self-intellectual development does not happen in isolation from external forces (see Hodgkinson, Biesta & James, 2008). In other words, this social view of learning sustains the idea that learning is a process of knowledge construction through participation in the social environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Based on these assumptions, the general conceptual consideration of (coach) learning has shifted from a linear understanding that considers it only as a process of acquisition (Sfard, 1998), accumulation (Werthner & Trudle, 2006) and reproduction (Entwistle, 2000), towards that of participation (Sfard, 1998), collaboration (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978) and transformation (Illeris, 2014; Mezirow, 2009; Entwistle, 2000).

By accepting this social constructivist paradigm, coach education (e.g., Nelson et al., 2006, 2013) has increasingly recognised learning as a “process of becoming a part of a greater whole” (Sfard, 1998, p.6), thus challenging coach educators to create and develop learning environments that are socially mediated and situated (Harris, 2010; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014). Subsequently, the call has arisen for ever more creative and meaningful pedagogical approaches to be used within coach education, with the intention of developing more reflective and insightful practitioners (Morgan, Jones, Gilbourne & Llewellyn, 2013b; Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012; Jones & Turner,

2006; Culver & Trudel, 2006). Such suggestions are usually focused on moving away from the competencies-based approach towards stimulating the development of a ‘quality of mind’. That is, to prepare coaches to better operate in the problematic and ambiguous practice (Morgan, et al., 2013b; Jones, 2000). It is to the exploration of these new coach education approaches that the discussion now turns.

2.3.1.1 Constructivist pedagogies and social learning

Jones and Turner (2006) were pioneers in experimenting with a socially mediated approach to coach education pedagogy. The authors used a problem-based learning (PBL) approach in a class of 11 third-year undergraduate coaching students over a period of 12 weeks. PBL is a pedagogy that makes use of problematic scenarios (constructed around real dilemmas) to ‘trigger’ students’ critical thinking and increase their understanding of the knowledge learnt (Jones & Turner, 2006). In this particular study, the problem scenarios used were relatively open-ended in nature. The intention was to offer more than a single ‘right answer’, so students could be stimulated to explore solutions and debate their ideas within given groups. By utilising such an approach, an effort was made to develop more holistic students, that is, students capable to “meet, interconnect and dissect” interdisciplinary coaching knowledge (Morgan et al., 2013b, p. 521). Within their groups, the students were expected to actively engage with the problem-based work, by planning, researching and reviewing collective understandings in order to reach a ‘solution’. Contrary to more traditional methods of teaching, the role of the lecturer was not that of an instructor (i.e., responsible for the transmission of the information), but rather of a facilitator who guided and assisted students’ exploration of each problem. Results revealed PBL as a particularly promising avenue for the development of (the thinking of) neophyte

coaches. By the end of the project, the students reported that such a pedagogical approach made them think differently about their coaching practice. In particular, the students believed they had developed an appreciation of the ambiguous and limited nature of coaching practice (Jones & Turner, 2006).

Another example of the use of social constructivist approaches in coaches' education lay in the academic enthusiasm associated with learning through communities of practice (CoP's) (see Culver & Trudel, 2006; Jones et al., 2012; Rynne, 2008). The notion of communities of practice was born in early works of Wenger and colleagues (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002), and was defined as "[...] a group of people who share a common concern, set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interaction on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). Based on seminal research into apprenticeships across a number of different communities, Lave and Wenger (1991) concluded that learning does not occur primarily through the transmission of information between masters and apprentices. Rather, that learning is best understood as a social phenomenon facilitated through engagement in a community of practice. In their words, "We propose to consider learning not as a process of socially shared cognition that results, in the end, in the internalization of knowledge by individuals, but as a process of becoming a member of a sustained community" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 65).

Within the coaching context, CoP's have been stimulated to develop coaches' abilities to recognise and resolve problems normally hidden within the professional landscape, and consequently, ignored within formal educational curricula (Rynne, 2008). Culver and colleagues (Culver & Trudel, 2006; Culver, Trudel & Werthner,

2009) were among the first to experiment with this perspective in terms of coaches' learning. They looked to understand how CoP's could help coaches co-operate, share and learn from each other while discussing problems that emerged from everyday coaching practice. Overall, the results revealed positive outcomes for coach development, particularly demonstrating that such an approach motivated exchanges of knowledge and (consequently) promoted the development of a more conscious rationalisation of practice. Yet, despite such reported benefits, such studies also revealed the necessity of having a skilful and knowledgeable facilitator in the moderation and development of group discussions. For instance, in the second phase of Culver and Trudel's (2006) study, the initial facilitator (i.e., one of the researchers) was replaced by one of the coaches. The subsequent group discussions soon became more focused on organisational and administrative matters, as opposed to the exploration of incidental learning experiences. Similarly, a later study (Culver et al., 2009) reiterated the same finding by demonstrating that an inappropriate choice of CoP moderator jeopardised the intended learning outcomes.

Following this initial work, a proliferation of other researchers 'tested' CoP's across a range of different coaching contexts to develop designs that could better accommodate the challenges faced (see Cassidy, Potrac, & McKenzie, 2006; Cassidy & Rossi, 2006; Lemyre, 2008; Callary, 2013; Bertram & Gilbert, 2011). Here the exploration of CoPs in formal coaching education has received considerable scrutiny and innovation (e.g., Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014, 2015; Stoszkowski, Collins & Olsson, 2015). For example, Jones and colleagues (2012) used an action research approach within a CoP framework to help postgraduate students 'bridge' theory and practice. Their curriculum design involved eight cycles of action research, which were constituted by initial moments of 'theory injection',

followed by the application and subsequent discussion of the theories in practice. The introduction of theoretical perspectives served to enlighten and deepen students' understanding of familiar (although, unconscious) phenomena. The students were then expected to use such conceptual lenses in their respective practice. The results demonstrated that the students better recognised and problematised how they worked, resulting in more insightful perceptions about their coaching experiences (Jones et al., 2012). Furthermore, similar to previous work (see Cassidy et al., 2006), this research also demonstrated that the on-going use of theoretical perspectives in practice was beneficial for the students' recognition of their agency and the boundaries of their knowledge (Jones et al., 2012). By the end of the intervention, students seemed to be satisfied with the impact that the pedagogical approach had on their learning, emphasising the value of the discussion generated in the CoP's to resolve work-related dilemmas.

Despite the success of such programmes to establish a stronger link between the practical and conceptual knowledge, the need exists to further explore the relations of power within the CoPs. Similar to suggestions made by others (see Mallett, 2010; Harris, 2010; Bertram, Culver & Gilbert, 2016), the findings from Jones and Turner's (2006) work also revealed that some students felt tensions between voices in the group, alerting the need to acknowledge and control the differences of power capital within the group. Such concerns have also been highlighted by Mallett (2010) in recognising that within CoP's the "individual [can be] marginalized and, as a consequence individual differences, [are] generally unaccounted for" (p. 130).

More recently, studies have been more critical of the 'taken for granted' benefits of such co-operative designs in wider learning contexts. For example,

Stoszkowski and Collins (2014) have questioned CoP's as a panacea for coaches' learning. In 2014, they explored the use of online blogs as a tool to support the development of a CoP among 26 undergraduate sport coaching students. Results revealed that although blogs seem to have an impact on the students' reflexive and critical thinking, the establishment of a virtual learning community among students did not materialize. Similarly, despite acknowledging that students prefer learning with peers (e.g., Culver & Trudel 2006; Erickson, Burner, McDonald & Côté, 2008), it has been found that the establishment of such interactions in the context of formal education is far from an easy and straightforward process. For example, Stoszkowski and Collins' (2014) found sport-coaching students did not take advantage of the collaborative and peer discussion on the virtual platforms established, despite having full access to them. Such engagement was rather quiet and passive (i.e., 'lurking') and, therefore, was unable to create and support the learning environment characterised by mutual engagement, shared knowledge, and common goals (Wenger, 1998). Additionally, Stoszkowski and Collins (2014) concluded that neophyte coaches found difficulty in 'taking the first step' in establishing interactions with peers, particularly when they did not recognise the value in those peers' knowledge, or did not have the time to build appropriate relationships.

Yet, despite such initial evidence, more recent studies (Stoszkowski & Collins, 2015; Stoszkowski et al, 2015) that have utilised group blogging have reported more satisfactory collaborations between participants, facilitating the development of effective CoPs. A principal strength of this online co-operative strategy appeared to be its ability to minimise the negative impact that traditional face-to-face interactions sometimes cause (e.g., voice, physical reactions). It was claimed that such a success was not only a result of the structural design, but importantly, a reflection upon how

tutors supported students' interactions and engagement within it. Similar to other studies (Knowles & Saxon, 2010; Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012), the importance of integrating some formality and explicit structure when using such collaborative tools was emphasised. Here, students were introduced and prepared for the module activities in the first five weeks of the programme. During the initial phase, for example, the tutors discussed the pedagogical value and conceptual meaning of critical reflection and its importance for students' practice. This was then followed by five periodic workshops, each focused on a theoretical perspective, supported by directed reading and tutor guidance (for more details see Stoszkowski & Collins, 2015). The researchers concluded that the formal scaffolding offered by the tutors alongside the students' cooperative experiences was critical for the success of the programme. For Stoszkowski and Collins (2015), such formality equipped students with the necessary structures to guarantee that blog interactions were open-minded and reflective. Furthermore, the provision of prior theoretical knowledge helped students to become more aware of the social norms that determined their coaching behaviours. Consequently, the students were better able to critically discuss and analyse their practices, thus progressing their professional knowledge. Such conclusions echo Cushion's (2006) recommendations that informal learning environments need to be supported by structure and reflection; otherwise the process of learning becomes "a product of ritualized performances rather than integrated understandings" (Cushion, 2006, p. 5).

Overall, the pedagogical approaches explored in this section offer evidence on how constructivist and co-operative learning environments can open 'closed cycles' of formal educational programmes (see Piggott, 2012), and thus promote a more dialectic construction of the dominant 'discourses of truth' (Foucault, 1970). Yet, it is

important to recognise that changes in this direction may take time and perseverance as both educators and students can often feel resistant to change their usual patterns of teaching and learning (Jones & Allison, 2014; Stodter & Cushion, 2014). This is particularly evident in Townsend and Cushion's (2015) in-depth interviews with 11 cricket coaches about their learning experiences in an elite coach education programme. Their findings showed that coaches were particularly resistant to knowledge that "challenged deeply held, traditional and self-referenced 'successful' approaches" (p. 10). The researchers subsequently argued that for coach education to have greater impact in progressing the field and informing practice, a need exists to create 'more critically transformative learning environments that challenge coaches' long-held beliefs and that unpack coaches' "taken-for-granted assumptions" (Townsend & Cushion, 2015, p. 15). A consequence of such insight and advocacy has been a movement towards formalised learning environments shaped around contextualised coaching practices, thus providing more realistic strategies to develop students' "professional artistry" (Schön, 1987, p. 13). Nonetheless, despite such contributions, developments in this area remain in an 'embryonic' stage (Piggott, 2013) as evidence on how coaches learn is still incomplete and poorly understood. An investment in research that focuses on how coaches construct meaning during their learning experiences then appears to be necessary to move the field forward and enhance professional learning (Cushion & Nelson, 2013). The next section will explore recent advances in this area.

2.3.1.2 Complexities of coaches' learning

Similar to events in other related educational fields (see Cannon & Newble, 2000; Ismail et al., 2013), literature in coaching has been criticised for being too

focused on what shapes learning without properly understanding how coaches learn (Stodter & Cushion, 2017; Piggott, 2012; Cushion & Nelson, 2013; Nelson, Cushion & Potrac, 2006; McCullick et al., 2009; Lyle, 2007). In particular, such work has been accused of “offer[ing] solutions to problems that are poorly understood” (Stodter & Cushion, 2017, p. 36); an issue that has weakened current understanding of how coaches interact with learning environments, and how they transform the information presented to them (Morgan et al., 2013b; Cushion & Nelson, 2013).

For many years, sports coaching has used ‘grand theories of learning’ (Biggs, 1993), categorised into behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism, to support recommendations as to how coaches should learn and in what settings they learn best (e.g., Cushion et al., 2010; Harris, 2010). However, in contrast to approaches that sought explanations about students’ learning and behaviour from an external viewpoint (i.e., as an objective observer), alternative approaches have increasingly attempted to achieve ‘ecological validity’, that is, to “understand what is involved in the learning process from the particular contexts and perspectives of the learners” (Entwistle, 2005, p. 11). Consequently, contemporary coach learning researches have concentrated on in-depth explorations of learning experiences in context (e.g. De Martin-Silva et al., 2015; Stodter & Cushion, 2014, 2017; Jones & Allison, 2014).

For some, the dichotomous and somehow perceived incompatible use of traditional learning theories with more newer ones (see Alexander, 2007), has prevented coach educators and researchers from considering a more eclectic understanding of coaches’ learning (Cushion et al., 2010; Stodter & Cushion, 2014). Interestingly, this is an aspect that has also been considered by wider literature related to learning (e.g., Hodkinson, Biesta & James, 2008; Mason, 2007). The common

critique that emerges from such reflections is directed at the non-existence of a theoretical framework that understands “learning from both the perspective of the individual learner, and that of the learning situation” (Hodkinson, Biesta & James, 2008, p. 27).

In agreement, many have advocated for more comprehensive and ‘grounded’ understanding of the processes involved in coaches’ learning (Nelson et al., 2006; Stodter & Cushion, 2014, 2017). Indeed, investments in this direction are deemed particularly relevant to understanding how coaches influence and are influenced by the complex ‘blend’ of learning situations they experience across their professional development. Hence, coach-specific learning theory has come to be considered as a necessary development to inform coaches and coach educators on how to enhance the effectiveness of learning (Abraham & Collins, 2011; Cushion & Nelson, 2013; Chesterfield, Potrac & Jones, 2010).

Recently, Stodter and Cushion (2017) have started to blaze a trail towards the development of a more empirically-based theory of coaches’ learning. By attempting to establish a more systematic picture of how coaches learn, the authors were able to add evidence to knowledge spread across the literature in developing a more integrative understanding of how coaches transform knowledge into practice. Such a contemporaneous map of coaches’ learning is a particularly useful asset to target implicit aspects of learning that can be used to enhance the impact and significance of coach education (Lyle & Cushion, 2017).

In particular, Stodter and Cushion (2017) employed a longitudinal research design of over a year, and utilised semi-structured practice-linked recall interviews, to explore how 25 English youth soccer coaches “actively constructed and adapted

knowledge for use in socially situated coaching practice” (Stodter & Cushion, 2017, p. 13). Similar to Townsend and Cushion’s (2015) conclusions, Stodter and Cushion (2017) revealed that the connection between knowledge and practice was closely related to coaches’ beliefs and considerations about ‘what works’. Here, the authors compared coaches’ learning to a metaphorical idea of a ‘filter’; a concept loosely explored by other researchers in the field (e.g. Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Leduc, Culver & Werthner, 2012; Cushion et al., 2003) to illustrate the complex mesh of biographical and contextual information that coaches use to compare, evaluate and validate new information. Any experience ‘lived’ by coaches then was considered to be filtered by a ‘double loop’ process constituted at both personal and a contextual level (Stodter & Cushion, 2017).

According to this model, firstly, coaches try to make sense of new information by considering if it ‘matches’, ‘mismatches’ or ‘fit in’ with previous knowledge, beliefs and understandings. If a match is confirmed, the adopted information will be strengthened and reinforced in practice. In contrast, if the new information mismatches coaches’ biography, the knowledge is rejected. Alternatively, in the cases where new information neither truly ‘matches’ nor ‘mismatches’, but can fit in with pre-existing conceptions, coaches would be willing to ‘try it out’ in practice.

Once through the initial level, coaches then move to a contextual level filter that acts “over and above biography” (Stodter & Cushion, 2017, p. 9). Here, coaches consider if new information would ‘work’ in their context of practice by pondering key elements such as, the athletes in question, the environment and the club structure. From such considerations, coaches decide to either ‘stick to what they know’ and reject the ‘new’ information or engage in the process of experimentation in practice.

According to the authors, in a favourable case, the experimental process is accomplished by a reflective feedback loop, that is, as a ‘reflexive conversation’ (Schön, 1987) between ‘what can work’ and ‘what does actually work’; a process that helps coaches ‘make their minds up’ about the success and applicability of the new information in practice. The outcomes of such feedback processes would then impose changes in existing understandings of ‘what works’ which consequently act as a new filter for future learning experiences.

Stodter and Cushion’s theory is particularly apt for highlighting important aspects of the learning process, which, despite being acknowledged by some others in the past, seem to have been forgotten or ill-accommodated by the educational system (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). For instance, the ‘personal filter’ can be related to earlier cognitive theories of human development that defined learning as a process of linkage between new experiences and already established mental ‘schemes’ (e.g., pre-existing memories, knowledge and understanding) (Piaget, 1964; Anderson, 1977). Central to such theories is the value placed on ‘what the learner knows’ as a determinant aspect of learning (Illeris, 2017). In the context of coach education, this perspective is particularly useful to explain, for instance, why coaches’ knowledge and engagement vary greatly despite being exposed to similar information and contexts of learning (e.g. Nelson et al., 2013; Harris, 2010; Jones & Allison, 2014). Simultaneously, the recognised influence of an individuals’ beliefs system on the process of learning calls attention to its essentiality, and utility, to enhance the impact of the learning experience. In particular, Stodter and Cushion’s (2007) study suggests that supporting learners to uncover and deconstruct underlying assumptions, values and beliefs about coaching, can facilitate more meaningful learning. In addition, Stodter and Cushion (2017) also bring a fresh perspective to the study of coach learning by exploring the

coach's dynamic interaction with learning in relation to their environment of practice. In contrast to earlier perspectives, particularly those centred on the individual, this work takes into account the influential power of 'learning cultures' (Hodkinson, Biesta & James, 2008). Such understandings seem analogous to situated perspectives of learning (previously explored in this chapter) that argue for the primacy of social practice as a generative learning phenomenon. In the words of Lave and Wenger (1991), Stodter and Cushion's (2016, 2017) work seems to move away from a view of the "individual as learner, to learning as participation in the social world, and from the concept of cognitive process to the more-encompassing view of social practice" (p. 43).

Thus, as Abraham et al. (2006) explain, concepts usually learnt in formal coach education settings have a shared, rather than an individual, meaning. Hence, to construct meaning, new concepts need to be 'tried out' and validated in the relevant contexts of practice before being internalised in the form of abstract conception, not the other way around (Abraham et al., 2006). The experimentation of new knowledge in practice is, therefore, an essential part of the process of learning (Lyle & Cushion, 2017).

Yet despite such acknowledgements, Stodter and Cushion's (2016) study highlights that coaches 'openness' to experiment with new and contrasting information is greatly dependent on the opportunities offered within their settings. Accepting that coaching is a very competitive practice, usually evaluated by performance outcomes, it is, therefore, understandable that coaches may be "reluctant to take risks or depart too far from the status quo of accepted practice" (Light & Robert, 2010, p. 113). Typically, coaching environments do not welcome active

experimentation which naturally constrains the dynamic flux of continuous learning and the potential for change (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). This is a particularly salient aspect within the literature, but is inadequately recognised in formal coaching educational contexts, where existing power influences have prevented neophyte coaches' innovative development (Gomes, 2016).

In relation to such matters, Stodter and Cushion (2016) argue that, although biographical knowledge is a determinant to and of learning, such a screen of influences can be bypassed if external circumstances are strong enough to influence coaches to 'see' the relevance and benefits of using any knowledge in practice. Indeed, as Nelson et al.'s (2013) study demonstrated, coaches attributed great value to teaching approaches that clearly demonstrated theoretical concepts being applied to practical scenarios. In the words of one of their participants "seeing is believing" (Nelson et al., 2013, p. 210), an idea further adopted by Stodter and Cushion (2016) to highlight the relevance of presenting context-specific content to enhance effective learning. According to the said authors, the provision of "clear demonstrations of the worth of different approaches, and ways to apply them in specific contexts, [appears to be more effective] than attempting to initiate change through shifting deeply ingrained values and cultures" (p. 11).

Nonetheless, it is important to remember that tried-and-tested practice will only produce significant meaning and a "change in the organization of the self" (Rogers, 1969, p. 158) if a degree of introspection and critical analysis is present. Superficial views of 'what works' or 'what doesn't work', without a profound understanding of why, will only stimulate the reproduction of practice instead of related innovation. As Abraham et al. (2009) suggested, coach educators should aim

to consider coaches' more akin to 'chefs' as opposed to mere 'cooks'. That is, professionals who have an open mind to see things in a different light and a predisposition to loosen and question accepted and reproductive recipes (Abraham, Collins, Morgan & Muir, 2009).

Thus, in an attempt to pursue such aims, many in the field (see Jones & Allison, 2014; Chesterfield, Potrac & Jones, 2010, Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014; Grecic & Collins, 2013) have argued for the need to pay more attention to the epistemological dogmas held by coaches about coaching knowledge and practice. This is because such considerations are a determinant of coaches' predispositions to accept 'new' knowledge and to explore the premises of what is 'not yet known'. Indeed, for Grecic and Collins (2013), coaches that lack self-awareness of personal epistemologies are more likely to continue to operate "within their comfortable current sphere of knowledge rather than taking the leap of faith and boldly going where they have never been" (p. 160).

Accordingly, if coach education is to move away from a competencies-based approach towards the development of a 'quality of mind' (Jones & Turner, 2006) that is 'always learning and thinking' (Lyle & Cushion, 2017), then coach education needs to promote a learning environment that not only informs (i.e., change what is known), but also transforms (i.e., change how it is known). The difference here is that while informative learning experiences only stimulate progress "within a pre-existing frame of mind", transformative learning, "reconstruct[s] the very frame" in which the informative learning exists (Kegan, 2018, p. 36). Such development involves a change of not just what we know, but also who we are and how we relate with the world around us (Illeris, 2014). As Mezirow (2000) explains, transformative learning is;

“the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference, to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective, so they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more justified to guide action.” (p.7-8)

For Taylor and Collins (2016), such an approach is key in making coaches more critically aware of their own and others’ ‘canons of coaching’, while helping to ‘foster new ways of thinking’ and “encouraging a democratisation of ideas and the valuing of alternative sets of beliefs.” (p.157).

2.3.1.3 Personal epistemologies: A terrain to explore

Coaching is an activity primarily guided by tradition, culture and social networks (Cushion & Jones, 2014; Williams & Hodges, 2005; Harvey et al, 2013). Hence, when students enter university, they are not expected to be epistemological “tabula rasa” (i.e., blank slates) (Crooks, 2017, p. 3). Indeed, their sporting experiences are likely to have already shaped their conceptions of coaching and coaching practice, giving them a sense of which knowledge to value and how they should go about understanding it (Kelly, 2006).

In the educational literature (e.g., Brownlee, Schraw & Berthelsen, 2012; Hofer, 2012; Banger, 2019), such ‘frames of reference’ (Mezirow, 2000) are referred to as personal epistemologies. Emerging from a branch of philosophy, personal epistemology attempts to ‘capture’ individuals’ theories and beliefs about knowing and reasoning, that is; what we know and how we know it (Pintrich 2002). Within the context of coach education, such an enquiry has been seen as a promising research area to develop students’ reasoning and critical thinking (Jones, 2019), as it attempts

to reach a more lucid understanding on how students progress towards more ‘sophisticated’ personal epistemologies.

Piaget (1950) was one of the first authors concerned with human epistemology. Genetic epistemology was the title of his well-known book about intellectual development theory. This work was particularly influential in terms of the movement away from ‘cold’ decontextualized cognition (e.g., information processing, computer analogies) and towards ‘hot’ situated cognition linked to specific experiences and contexts (e.g., beliefs, motivations). In an era characterised by behaviourism, Piaget re-introduced into studies of learning concerns about the process of knowing (initial excluded by earlier perspective) that were later essential in the development of theories to do with moral judgment and intellectual development. In particular, by proposing that already established structures (i.e., what has already been learned) are just as important for learning outcomes as newly introduced information, Piaget initiated conversations about individuals’ existing beliefs and patterns of understanding (Illeris, 2017). Despite such progress, Piaget’s research was more focused on the structural aspects of learning (i.e., how learning is processed) than on its dynamic aspects (i.e., the why of learning). Furthermore, his research also centred on learning during the early stages of life, leaving adult learning largely unexplored.

A revived interest for human epistemologies subsequently emerged in the early 1970’ grounded in William Perry’s study of college students’ intellectual development. Although somehow unintentionally, his explorations of students’ intellectual development provided a lucid understanding of how students transformed their beliefs about the nature of knowledge, as well as the source and justification for such transformations (Buehl & Alexander, 2001). Influenced by Piaget, Perry and

colleagues set out to study how Harvard (men's college) and Radcliffe (women's college) students interpreted and made-meaning of their collegiate learning experiences. Using a longitudinal research design, framed around a series of end of year open-ended interviews, Perry examined the impact of curriculum design, teaching methods and learning experiences on students' intellectual and moral development. The main contribution from this work rests on the presentation of a theoretical scheme of intellectual development that maps the "typical course of students' patterns of thought" (Perry, 1981, p.77) and exposes the transformation of students "abstract structural aspects of knowing and valuing" throughout their learning journey (Perry, 1999, p.16).

Until this day, Perry's influential work has become a major reference for personal epistemological studies in higher education. According to his scheme, college students' views on knowledge move through a series of nine fairly well-defined positions (see appendix 1, for more detail), which can be broken down into three basic epistemological stances; that is, dualism, multiplism and relativism. Dualism involves a dichotomous perception of the world (i.e., true/false; right/wrong) where knowledge is seen as certain and hierarchical. Students in this position feel the only way to achieve success is through hard work and adherence to authority.

Multiplism, as the next position of development, represents the stage where students become aware of existing pluralism and diversity of opinions and, therefore, come to accept that different points of view exist as equal and legitimate alternatives. Moreover, at this point, students notice that even authorities disagree on what is right and wrong and, therefore, consider that their stance in regard to a particular point is as

good as any other. Such an understanding creates uncertainty and insecurity in relation to knowledge and decision making (Perry, 1981).

Lastly, relativism refers to a stage of development where students recognise that knowledge is temporal and contextually dependent, therefore accepting responsibility for their own judgments and decision making. As students engage with more information on a given topic, they gain perspective and ability to better justify their positions in regard to a particular matter. For Perry, at this stage, students start to make a stronger commitment to what they believe, thus offering a privileged portrayal to their path towards identity formation.

The value of Perry's research for coach education is that it provides a framework to assess students' epistemic position and possibilities of growth (Moore, 2004). Furthermore, it invites researchers and coach educators to reflect on their own epistemic positions when considering their teaching material, assessment tools and pedagogic strategies (Clarkeburn et al., 2003). Such an understanding seems key to realise why some learning environments may stimulate students to adopt deeper approaches to learning than others (Hofer, 2001). According to Entwistle (2000), relativist learners, tend to be more focused on the application and underlining meanings of information presented (i.e., deep approach), while dualistic learners mainly focus on memorization of facts (i.e., superficial approach) (Entwistle, 2000).

Thus, to stimulate intellectual development, research within HE contexts has demonstrated that thought-provoking environments that present changing and contradictory ideas offer the best opportunities for learners to grow into higher epistemic positions, and consequently adopt more meaningful and useful approaches to studying (Perry, 1999; Cano, 2005; Schommer-Aikins et al., 2005). The promotion

of such environments requires teaching content and assessment instruments that reward critical thinking and personal argument-making (Entwistle, 2000). Moreover, like Vygotsky's (1962) idea of the zone of proximal development, Perry recommends that educators teach towards "the leading edge of [students]growth" (Perry, 1999, p. 241). This would create an environment that, simultaneously, fosters the doubt and "disjuncture" (Jarvis, 2006, p.16) required for internal questioning and change, while preventing resistance and frustration by going too fast and too far beyond familiar understandings (Bendixen, 2002).

However, it is important to note that not all students will be receptive to such cathartic transformations (Hofer, 2001). The development of a challenging and contradictory practice thus is not free from being unproblematic. Indeed, research in coach education has already shown that the pressure to conform to tradition and the social status quo is a major constraint for students' acceptance of new knowledge and development (e.g., Fenoglio & Taylor, 2014, Grecic & Collins, 2013). Here, instead of engaging with deeper approaches to learning, students may act in accordance with what lecturers want to hear to achieve higher grade boundaries in their assessments. Such practice is identified in the educational literature as a strategic learning approach (Entwistle, 2000); something captured by Chesterfield, Potrac and Jones (2010) in the context of a soccer UEFA 'A' education award. Results from this study demonstrated that student-coaches undertook " 'studentship', through impression management and image protection strategies" (p.20) to adhere to course expectations and pass their exams. Yet, once the assessment was concluded, the coaches reverted to their original thinking and methods, evidencing a lack of impact of programme on coaches' growth and development (Chesterfield et al., 2010).

In response to these challenges, research has called attention to the contested and negotiated nature of (coach) education, and the need to better recognise and act on students' pre-existing "culturally-influenced knowledge" (Chesterfield et al., 2010, p.21). As Ramsden (1988) notes, "learning difficulties experienced by new college students [are] not rooted in their lack of motivation, their study skills, or their ability; they spring from their view of knowledge itself" (p.18). Thus, it is important that educators (and students) acknowledge and reflect on the variety of held epistemic possibilities in order to align epistemic views to learning aims, content and assessments. For Biggs and Tang (2011), such a constructive alignment between epistemological conception, teaching methods and learning outcomes is essential to deconstruct perpetual misconceptions of what knowledge is, and to guide learners to a more informed and useful understanding of learning (i.e., learning as transformation).

2.3.2 Coach learning: Final note

The studies reviewed in this first section evidence how different conceptions of coaching have dominated the discourse and literature on coach learning and coach education. Here, tensions between different philosophical beliefs about coaching reality (i.e., ontology) and coaching knowledge (i.e., epistemology) has served as a springboard to discuss contrasting understandings on how coaches should learn within formal coach educational settings. Yet, despite clear signs of progression towards more situated, participative and transformative learning environments, research into and on coach education has yet to provide a more lucid understanding of the intricacies inherent in coaches' learning. In the words of Taylor and Collins (2016), "articulated

and detailed [explanations of] the process that individuals go through in and during learning are yet to be further studied and understood” (p.155).

In particular, more attention needs to be given to the transformative experiences of coaches; that is, how coaches’ perceptions of knowledge, learning and self alter as a consequence of their learning experiences (De Martin-Silva et al., 2015). Such an enquiry is deemed key to better ‘capture’ the complexities of students’ learning and its impact on students’ identity development. Thus, taking issue with ‘outside in’ perspectives, the academic field appears in need of studies that hold ‘ecological validity’ (Entwistle, 2005); i.e., studies capable of understanding the factors involved in students’ learning processes from their particular standpoints. This includes paying more attention to discourses, practices, regimes of competency, communities and boundaries that shape students’ “trajectories of learning and ultimately become part of who they are” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 19). In this context, research into students’ personal epistemological beliefs would appear appropriate in the search for more ‘ecological’ evaluations of educational initiatives. The particular concern here is to understand how individuals’ conceptions of knowledge and knowing are shaped and transformed by the content, teaching methods and assessment strategies on offer.

The next section examines the literature centred on identity. The intention here is not to separate learning from identity, but rather to focus more on the process of socialisation within a particular community; that is, how identities emerge, are developed, and maintained through social interaction.

2.4 Coach Identity

In parallel to that seen in coach education literature (see, McCullick et al., 2009), coaching research has also experienced a shift in focus from the usual areas of ‘what’ to coach towards ‘who’ is coaching (e.g., Jones, 2009; 2006). This is an agenda advocating that it is not so much what is said to athletes, or even how it is said, that is of utmost importance. Rather, it is who is saying it. It implies that the person behind the coach, much more so than the methods he or she applies, is a (or even the) crucial element in what constitutes ‘good’ or successful coaching. Such a perception naturally locates coaching within the realm of the social; a practice tied to notions of respect, trust and partnership; and the coach as someone capable of inspiring loyalty, compliance and ‘followership’ in others (Jones, Potrac, Cushion & Ronglan, 2011). In relation to such a sentiment, Agne (1999, p. 166) concurred, albeit in relation to pedagogy, by stating that, in general, “[children] learn by absorbing who you are to them, not memorising what you say”.

Despite an implicit recognition of the importance of ‘who’ is the coach, related professional development has yet to find its way into formal coach education programmes. Here, attention has remained focused on ‘how coaches prefer to learn’ (as earlier presented), as opposed to understanding how such learning transforms the coaches’ selves and their practice. Indeed, considering that coaches’ work requires a constant adaptation and reinvention of the person in the role, the lack of investigations on how coaches’ identities are developed, advanced, sustained or disrupted (Purdy & Potrac, 2014) in the context of formal education, is somewhat surprising.

Thus, to contribute to a better understanding of how coaches build their professional identity and how formal education can support and shape this

development, the following section starts by providing an exploration of the meaning of identity in the context of this work. Attention is then directed to the main theoretical frameworks associated with the term. This gives way to discuss how professional identity development has been explored in higher education with a particular emphasis on coach education research.

2.4.1 Self and identity

Self and identity are terms often used without distinction in the literature (Day, Stobart, Sammons & Kington, 2006; Stryker & Burke, 2000). This was the result of early theorisation that described identity in terms of the self (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 1999), considering it as a single, stable and fixed attribute of a person (Oruç, 2013; Day et al., 2006). Initially, the term self was defined as an individualised and distinct frame of attitudes and values, affected by internal subjective dynamics that remained constant over time (Widick, Parker & Knefelkamp, 1978). However, such a perception became outdated in light of theoretical advances from symbolic interactionism perspectives (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Day, Flores & Viana, 2007). Alternatively, the self began to be recognised as a creation of the mind, influenced not only by inner forces, but also by interaction with other social elements (Mead, 1934).

Within his influential work 'Looking-Glass Self', Cooley (1902) was one of the first to take issue with the belief that the self is a static and unchangeable concept. Instead, he believed that even though the self was considered to have some degree of stability, its formation was continuous; an on-going learning process of values, beliefs, behaviours and roles that each person accumulates over time (Day et al., 2007; Burke, 2006). In his exploration of the socialisation process, Cooley (1909) reminded us that

human nature is not in-born, but rather socially developed. In his words, “Man does not have [human nature] at birth; he cannot acquire it except through fellowship, and it decays in isolation.” (Cooley, 1909, p.30).

Remarkably, more than 100 years after its first publication, Cooley’s contribution to the understanding of the self remains popular among the social sciences. Through his innovative ‘looking glass-self’ theory, he pioneered the link between society and the mind that still influences work today (e.g., Sartore & Cunningham, 2012). To Cooley (1902), during social interactions, we are spectators of our behaviour and appearance towards others. In particular, he believed that while interacting with others, we imagine others’ judgments about our appearance, and based on that we experience positive or negative self-feelings that influence our following actions. In his own words,

“A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his [or her] judgement to that appearance and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. The comparison with a looking-glass hardly suggests the second element, the imagined judgment, which is quite essential. The things that move us to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this imagination upon another mind...” (Cooley, 1902, p.152).

This idea of social self was later defended and developed by Mead (1934) in his work ‘Taking the Role of Others’. Mead (1934) argued that the self was also a reflective and conscious agent, capable of seeing itself as an object, and consequently, categorising, controlling and changing itself in relation to context (Cinoğlu & Arikan,

2012; Giddens, 1992). As explained by Mead (1934), ‘me’ (i.e., how one absorbs the world) and ‘I’ (i.e., how one presents him/herself to the world) have a dialectic relationship in the development of the self.

In furthering this line of inquiry, Coser and Rosenberg (1954) stated that “human beings do not act towards each other as isolated individuals; they are parts of larger communities and groups whose members have some common agreements about the various social roles and their correct performances” (p.259). Therefore, individuals’ selves cannot be expected to be products of the mind only influenced by inner decisions. Instead, the self needs to be considered within shared values and agreements, which ultimately bind societies in which they are rooted. To successfully interact with others then, individuals need to integrate into their selves various segments of society that hold significant meanings for them, creating what Mead (1934) called a ‘generalised other’.

This idea of a generalised other led to a new understanding of how humans learn and evolve within their social groups. The generalised other allows individuals to define their attitude with reference to recognisable patterns identified within the social group(s) they occupy or aspire to be part of (Sherif, 1953). This explains the process of identification with ‘reference groups’ (Sherif, 1953); i.e., target groups, points of views or significant others that become the “major source of inspiration of the self” (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012, p.1116). Consequently, for the first time, it was suggested that the self could adopt different ‘faces’ in different social scenarios (Day, et al., 2007). Such an idea was further explored by Goffman (1959), who believed that each person has multiple contextual ‘personas’.

According to Stets and Burke (2003), if we assume different kinds of selves in society, we should have something that supersedes the self, and that can specifically designate such variations. Identity was introduced to serve such a purpose; that is, to describe the parts of the self used by an individual in his or her social environment (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012). Stryker (1980) subsequently defined identity as an “internal positional designation” (p.60) composed of meanings that individuals use to define their individualities, the role(s) they occupy, and/or the group they belong to (Carter, 2013; Stets et al., 2008). This means that for every role, status, position or group that an individual embraces in society (e.g., friend, coach, volunteer), he or she has an attached identity (McCall & Simmons, 1978; James, 1890). Such identity, therefore, is invoked in interaction with others, particularly when an individual perceives that the meaning attached to the presented social situation matches the meanings of an identity that he or she holds (Carter, 2013; Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012). Ball (1972) reinforced this by adding that the notion of identity can be split into being substantive (related to a more core and stable representation of the self, fundamental to how people think about themselves) and situated (related with the presentation of the self within context). Thus, when individuals interact with others, it is their situated identity that emerges, to reveal what one wants to be at that particular moment (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Based on such arguments, self and identity cannot be presented as synonymous. Although linked, such constructs are separate entities. In this respect, identity is a product commanded by the self which, in turn, adapts to the environment and the expectations of others (Stets & Burke, 2003). As such, identity as a “relational and dynamic phenomenon” (Oruç, 2013, p.207) involves an on-going negotiation of the self in accordance with circumstances, audiences and contexts.

The following section provides an analysis of the major theoretical perspectives on identity and its contributions to a more informed understanding of the processes associated with its development.

2.4.2 Theories of identity

Although recent work has attempted to establish a more fully integrated view of identity (Deaux & Burke, 2010), the majority of academic studies in the area continue to utilise traditional frameworks. These have been largely restricted to the disciplines of sociology and social psychology, and can be classified at three levels: (1) identity as a common identification in relation to a collectivity or social category (i.e., social identity theory); (2) identity as part of a self, particularly related to the roles that one occupies (i.e., role identity theory); and (3) identity referring to a more personal and individualised perspective (i.e., personal identity theory) (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012).

Consequently, while some comprehend that identity is primordially the result of a collective process, and therefore, is an offspring of culture (i.e., Social Identity theory), others stress the agential power of the self in the process of identity and self-identity formation (i.e., Role Identity theory) (Stets & Burke, 2000). Recent debate has focused on the apparent divergence (and convergence) between the perspectives (Stets & Burke, 2000; Hitlin, 2003; Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012). Here, although differences are recognised, as “a matter of emphasis rather than kind” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p.234), group, role and person are recognised to be the structural pillars of any identity conception (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012). Consequently, it makes little sense to separate such factors when new understandings about identity are pursued. Rather, it seems more appropriate to categorise each theory or perspective as a partial

explanation of the same phenomenon. Stets and Burke (2000) support such a stance suggesting that, particularly, social identity theory and role identity theory have far more in common than may appear at first reading. For these authors, all identities function in a similar manner, only differing in terms of the basis of identity used (i.e., role, group/ group category, or person).

At the most elementary level, identity is an expression of how people make sense of their experiences, and how the meanings attached to those experiences are communicated to others (Kelchtermans, 2009). Depending on the locus we occupy in relation to others or to the larger society, such meanings are internalised and rationalised according to personal and social demands. Hence, we are able to understand “who we are within a context of all that we might be” (Josselson, 1987, p.27), thus defining our identity in that particular moment. This means that individuals can never be seen as independent agents, but rather as agents of society (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012). It also means that their identity can only exist within all the identities contained in the world they know. According to Adler and Adler (1989), by accepting this co-relation between self (agency) and society (structure) in the development of identity, we expect that the diverse characters of the society will be replicated in the character of the self and vice versa.

From a sociological perspective, identity theory (e.g., Burke 1980; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1968; Turner, 1978) and social identity theory (e.g., Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982, 1985; Turner et al., 1987) are the commonly frameworks used to explain notions of self-concept, identity and identity development. This is because they place a particular focus on the impact of cultural and social constraints upon the self (Stryker, 1968, 1980; McCall & Simmons, 1978).

Personal identity, on the other hand, is particularly concerned to understand the effect of personal characteristics on individual identities; that is, those that are not linked with social or communal involvements (Stets & Serpe, 2013). Baumeister (1986) illustrates this conceptual divide through a comparison with individuals' contemporaneous lives. For him, individual identities are divided into personal and public spheres; that is, aspects of self that are open and exposed to social observation and control, and other more reserved aspects that are restricted and personal. Acknowledging the fact that the nature of this current work essentially relates to the public side of participants' lives; focusing in particular on the impact of a social structure (i.e., university) on the development of professional identities, the intellectual heritage of this research supports more socially situated identity approaches (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Ball, 1972). Such approaches will be now discussed in further depth.

2.4.2.1 Social identity theory and identity theory

Social identity theory emerged at the beginning of the 1970s, through the work of Henri Tajfel. Tajfel first conceptualised the notion into four main subheadings: social categorisation, social comparison, discrimination and intergroup conflict. He was one of the first to claim that social phenomena cannot be merely explained as expressions of personality or individual differences (Tajfel, 1974). Instead, he believed that social forces have a significant impact on human action and, therefore, an emergent need existed to explore and explain such influences (Hogg, 2006).

Rooted in the idea that society is organised by groups of people that share the same social identity, Tajfel (1974) developed the notion of social identity based on the structure of social groups. For him, each group existed in opposition to others, living

in a constant competitive environment to achieve positive status and prestige in the social world. Consequently, to understand individuals' identities, Tajfel claimed that we needed to pay more attention to the social groups that individuals are associated with and, in doing so, he suggested that identity can be explained from a group membership perspective (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012). In his words, individuals hold a social identity that is defined by the "individual's knowledge that he belongs to a certain social group together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (Tajfel, 1972, p. 292).

Initial work in and on social identity was, therefore, focused on intragroup relations, and how group beliefs contribute to social behaviour (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This became known as the "social identity theory of intergroup behaviour" (Turner et al, 1987, p.42). Yet, Turner and his graduate students soon assumed that such a focus was not enough to truly understand individual identity development. Consequently, they changed the focus of their attention to the role of the categorisation process on social identity. This resulted in the emergence of the concept of self-categorisation (Turner, 1985; Turner et al., 1987) which, in essence, added a cognitive dimension to the traditional social identity approach. According to self-categorisation theory, individuals' needs for a rational assessment of the social world and acceptance by others forces them to engage in a constant process of self-comparison and self-identification. In doing so, they develop their identity in association with those who are similar to them (i.e., an in-group). This perspective, known as the "social identity theory of the group" (Turner et al., 1987, p.42), is sustained by the belief that social identity is the result of referent informational influences (Turner, 1982); that is, individuals learn and internalise group norms and behaviours from appropriate in-group members, enacting these values as part of their own social identity.

Having said that, self-categorisation theory does not negate the value of intra-group comparisons in the development of social identity. In fact, such a categorisation process also encourages individuals to disband themselves from those who do not belong to their group (out-group), fortifying the definition of ‘us’ and the concept of ‘others’. It is particularly this dialectic tension between ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ that explains and boosts group social identity, creating a sense of uniqueness amongst the members of the same group (Turner et al., 1987).

In contrast to social identity theory, identity theory does not recognise identity as a result of a collective process; rather, it assigns power to the agency of the self over the social structure (Stets & Burke, 2000). Here, internal dynamics are believed to be more influential on the self and its behaviour than shared cultural factors (Tsushima & Burke, 1999). In particular, this theory emerged from the need to explore and explain individual variability in behaviour, motivations and interactions (Stets & Burke, 2003). According to such theory, social structure is situated in character, as individuals’ social perceptions and meanings are the results of the interactions they establish with others at a particular time, place and circumstance (Blumer, 1969). During such interactions, individuals engage in situated activity, i.e., an ongoing process of “establishing, affirming, modifying and sometimes destroying situated identities” (Alexander & Rudd, 1981, p.274) in an attempt to fit their lines of action with others and accomplish their personal goals (Stets, 2006).

Hence, from this perspective, identity is seen as a phenomenon of constant (re)construction that emerges through social interactions in particular situations (Blumer, 1969). In such encounters, consciously or unconsciously, we take our self as an object and interrogate it with questions such as: What matters to me? What goals

do I want to pursue? How am I expected to act /behave by others? Who do I want to be perceived by? And, what are my beliefs? Such self-enquiry leads individuals to the core of their selfhood, thus providing them self-understanding and sense of direction (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Mead, 1934). In addition to this, individuals become more aware of their social practice and critical of the things that need to be taken into account to succeed in their future social encounters (Stets & Burke, 2003).

In short, Stryker and his collaborators (Serpe & Stryker, 1987; Stryker & Serpe, 1982, 1994) focussed on how social structure affects an individual's identity and behaviour; while Burke and colleagues (Burke & Cast, 1997; Burke & Reitzes, 1981, 1991; Burke & Stets, 1999; Riley & Burke, 1995; Tsushima & Burke, 1999; Stets & Burke, 1996, 2000) were concerned with the role of the internal dynamics within the self and associated behaviour.

Although recognizing that theoretical developments remain active, a common ground seems to exist among the various versions of the identity theory. That is, individuals interact under a social structure, where each person is categorized by the position or role that he or she occupies in society. The categorisation of the self as an occupant of a role is, therefore, perceived as the core of any identity (Stets & Burke, 2003). By incorporating in the self, the meanings, expectations and patterns of action associated with the role (Stets & Burke, 2000), each individual engages in the process of merging the role with the person (Turner, 1978), creating an identity based on the role; a role identity.

Yet, this does not mean that social structures are widely open to subjective interpretations and unlimited possibilities by the self. In fact, we cannot fail to recognise that some possibilities are more probable than others. In this respect, society

presents stable and durable characteristics that in multiple ways constrain humans' beliefs and actions (Stryker, 2000). Human behaviour reflects social regularities (Stryker, 1980), hence, to better understand the link between self and society more attention needs to be paid to those behavioural patterns (Stets & Burke, 2003). As Stets and Burke (2003) explain, if we followed one individual's behaviour over time, we would be more likely to define that person. However, if we extended our analysis to search for similar behavioural patterns across other individuals, we could also start to define groups. How the behavioural patterns of these groups interplay with each other provides an insight into what we term social structure (Stets & Burke, 2003). Such social structures and the dynamics contained within them are the particular focus of social identity theory (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002) and identity theory (Stryker, 1980; McCall & Simmons, 1978). However, while social identity theory is more concerned with understanding how social group relations (in-group and out-group) influence individuals' identities and shape behaviour; identity theory centres more on how people perceive their role in a particular situation and interact with others to confirm their associated identities.

Nevertheless, because identity theory and social identity theory are somewhat differently conceptualised, the differences between the two are perhaps easier to notice and less complex to explain when discussed separately. Yet, those differences do not conceal the fact that both recognise similar aspects of identity development. In fact, research in social sciences has already established bridges between both theories, with the intention of pursuing a more realistic and complete understanding of identity (see Hogg, Terry & White, 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000; Deaux & Martin, 2003; Deaux & Burke, 2010).

2.4.2.2 A '*unified*' understanding of identity

Burke and Stets (1998) were pioneers in proposing a unified theory of identity. For these authors, although each existing position presented a contrast to the other, each also offered at the same time the possibility of complementarity. Stets and Burke's (2000) subsequent work presented three central areas where convergence between the two positions could be explored: (1) the differences on the bases of identity (that is, the categories or groups for social identity theory and the roles for role identity theory); (2) understandings related to the activation of identities and the concept of salience; and (3) explanations of the processes aroused once an identity is activated. The following discussion will begin with the conceptual similarities of both theories.

Firstly, in relation to notions of the self, as touched upon earlier, both social identity theory (Turner, 1985) and identity theory (Stryker, 1980) see the self as reflexive: that is, it is capable of looking at itself as an object and also able to self-categorize it as a social category or role (Cooley 1902; Mead, 1934). An agreement, therefore, exists that individuals' self-views mirror the social notions attached to the group or role with which they are associated (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980; Turner, 1987). When individuals engage in such cognitive activity of self-association (and social comparison), the shared meanings evident within a social group or role are incorporated to develop a new identity within the individual self. Both theories describe this self-association as the primary cognitive process responsible for initiating identity formation, yet they named it differently. For social identity theory this process is called self-categorisation (Turner et al., 1987) while for identity theory, identification (McCall & Simmons, 1978). A self-categorisation in

terms of a group membership perspective (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012) is how identity is defined by social identity theory. On the other hand, identification with a specific social role or position is how identity theory defines identity.

Self-association is essential to individuals to allocate themselves in the social world and to create a sense of belonging with others (Burke, 2004). Therefore, in a search for acceptance and self-esteem, individuals portray their identity through common and shared patterned ways of thinking and behaving. Specifically, they make use of cognitive abstractions to construct their identities (Stets & Burke, 2000); i.e., abstract images to which individuals compare themselves, and that represent the central features, meanings and expectations associated with a specific social category or role. Social identity theory defines such abstract references as prototypes (Hogg et. al, 1995; Turner, 1987), while identity theory refers to it as role identity (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980) or identity standard (Burke, 1991a).

When an identity is activated (that is, when one is in the process of matching a cognitive abstraction), individuals' social 'elements' become stronger (or at least more evident) than their personal features. Hence, on the one hand, although such effort can contribute to a successful self-categorisation process, on the other, it can also produce a depersonalization phenomenon (Turner, 1985; 1987). For social identity theory, self-associative processes promote cognitive depersonalization in both in-group and out-group members (Hogg, 2006); i.e., it encourages individuals to become increasingly reflective of their groups. This particularly happens because, firstly, self-categorisation incites individuals to see themselves as category representatives (Hogg, 2006) that think and act like others in the in-group. This is claimed to develop both self-esteem (Turner, 1987) and group cohesion (Hogg, 1987).

Secondly, it also enables the ‘seeing’ of others (an out-group) by their alternative group membership and not by personal individualities. In turn, this encourages the creation of stereotyped classifications that are commonly used to characterize other members in society (Hogg, 2006). Furthermore, as Turner et al., (1987) have highlighted, a sense of ethnocentrism also emerges alongside the social categorisation process. This is because individuals tend to make “use of one’s culture as a yardstick for judging the ways of other individuals or societies” (Henslin, 2007, p.37).

Likewise, within identity theory, depersonalization describes the process of seeing the self in terms of role (Stets, 2006). Accordingly, to maintain a role identification, individuals are sensitive to relevant meanings and clues that emerge during interaction with others. Based on such perceptions, they evaluate their performances in terms of alignment with expected identity standards (Burke, 2004). When an individual experiences mutual self-verification with other members, cohesion, commitment, self-esteem and self-efficacy are said to occur (Franks & Marolla, 1976; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983). However, when the perceived meanings no longer match with the identity standards, individuals will act towards re-establishing the link between the meanings perceived and the identity standard (Burke 2004). In this way, individuals secure verification from others. However, it is important to note that for these dynamics to occur, individuals need to be aware when an identity is not being verified. This may be a case of social incompetence (Lemert, 2012), or a defensive strategy to protect the self (McCall & Simons, 1978).

In general terms, depersonalization and self-verification processes demonstrate that in order to become part of a social group or role, one needs to create an identification with the social category in question and behave according to the

expectations of that category (Stets & Burke, 2000). This means that, although identity formation may be considered a personal development, it is not original or independent. Both theories implicitly suggest that the self is, simultaneously, a creator of and influenced by society. This is because individuals portray their identity through socially shared meanings, incorporated in their identity standard and, by doing so, reaffirm such social meanings (Thoits & Virshup, 1997).

A further analytical link between the two theories relates to individuals' self-concept and the acceptance of multiple identities (Stets & Burke, 2000). Here, both perspectives agree that if individuals tend to occupy more than one social category or role, it is also expected that they have more than one identity. In other words, each person has as many identities as self-categorisations and the set of all the identities that each person holds is how both theories define self-concept (Stets & Burke, 2000).

If multiple identities are acknowledged and somewhat considered inevitable in the postmodern world (Burke & Stets, 2009), it is nevertheless not expected that all identities stay evident at the same time in the same circumstances. In fact, both theories agree that a hierarchy among identities needs to exist, one that determines the degree of salience of each identity in a particular social situation. However, each theory or position presents a slightly different answer to the question: how and when do identities become activated in a situation? (Stets & Burke, 2000).

In social identity theory, it is claimed that an individual's identities are normally allocated at different levels that vary depending upon the context and salience of the different classifications (Turner, 1987). For example, on a micro-level, an individual may consider himself as the principal coach, in contrast to other staff members. However, at an intermediate level he may see himself as a member of the

elite team, as opposed to any other group or sports team that may exist within the club. Ultimately, at a macro level, the same individual may be perceived as a member of X club, in contrast to any other existing sporting clubs in the area. For social identity theory then, the emphasis is placed on the situational salience, highlighting the range of possibilities that the environment provides. A salient identity is, in this sense, an identity that has been activated in and by a particular situation (Hogg, 2006; Turner et al, 1987).

Conversely, in identity theory, the focus is not so much on the impact of a particular situation, but on the hierarchy of identities that exist within the person (Deaux & Burke, 2010). According to Stryker and Serpe (1982, 1994) then, identity salience is related to commitment; the higher the commitment to an identity, the higher the probability of identity becoming activated in any given situation. Commitment, in this context, is considered a combination of two important elements: a quantitative one (i.e., the number of persons that one is associated with through an identity) and a qualitative one (i.e., the strength and depth of the association with others). From such a perspective, salience is recognised as a characteristic of an identity itself, and not dependent on any particular situation (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Finally, the differences between both identity theories are also explained in terms of how individuals hierarchically structure their multiple identities. In social identity theory, two distinct concepts are presented (Stryker, 1980; Stets & Burke, 2003) to explain how individuals structure their multiple identities within the self: prominence hierarchy (McCall & Simmons, 1978) and salience hierarchy (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980). The prominence hierarchy, sometimes called the ideal self (Stets, 2006), designates individuals' priorities that serve to guide behaviours and

actions across different situations over time (Burke & Stets, 2009). In particular, this concept focuses on how individuals like to see themselves given their values, motivations and desires, and how it affects their identity development (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012).

To place an identity in a position of prominence, McCall and Simmons (1978) describe three critical characteristics through which individuals judge the value of their identities: 1) the degree of support that the self receives from others; 2) the degree of self-commitment given to the identity and 3) the degree of intrinsic and extrinsic reward provided by the social structure. In simple terms, the higher the levels in each of these indicators, the higher the levels of group acceptance and group participation. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this reciprocal game of influences does not only occur in relation to new members of any group, but also with existing ones particularly when a need exists to adjust them to new or changing group perspectives (McCall & Simmons, 1978). In this process, all group members are evaluated in a similar manner although not evenly so (McCall & Simmons, 1978).

According to McCall and Simmons (1978), because, in some circumstances, individuals tend to activate less prominent identities, the theory of identity prominence fails to adequately explain how individuals behave. Consequently, they proposed a new hierarchy of identity theory; a salience hierarchy. The salience hierarchy, rather than focusing on the ideal self, emphasises the situational context that the self is being presented with (Stets, 2006). Identities' hierarchical positions, therefore, depend on (1) prominence, (2) the need for support, (3) personal needs for extrinsic or extrinsic rewards gained for performing an identity; and, (4) the perceived degree of opportunity to enact the identity in a particular situation. Here, McCall and Simmons

(1978) re-evaluated their previous notion of an enduring and stable hierarchy proposing that salience hierarchy needed to be adaptable, as they noticed that role identities became temporarily salient in different situations.

Around the same time, Stryker (1968, 1980) developed an alternative salience hierarchy theory that added a further perspective to McCall and Simon's (1978) thesis. Stryker's salience hierarchy was aimed at explaining the rationale behind individuals' identity choices in a situation when more than one role may be appropriated (Stryker, 1968). For Stryker and Serpe (1982), identities are organized by their probability of being invoked in a person's social settings. In other words, salience hierarchy theory attributes a greater agentive character to individuals in the process, by proposing that people seek opportunities to enact a highly salient identity. In the words of Stets and Burke (2000, p.231) it is not a "matter of an identity being activated by a situation, but rather of a person invoking an identity in a situation and thereby creating a new situation". Therefore, the higher identities are positioned in the salience hierarchy, the more likely they are of being activated independently of situational cues (Stets & Burke, 2000). For example, first-year college students may organise informal matches with other students as a way to keep their athlete identity alive both in their own minds and in the minds of others.

This notion of higher salience identity is particularly related to the power of 'master status' as described in the sociological literature. A master status is the most evident status that overrides all other identities a person may have (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012). For example, in Stryker and Serpe's (1982) study, individual religious identity was seen as a defining link with other identities, such as being parents, friends or professionals. The same may be expected to happen with college students. Here,

cultural identity may influence the traditional student identity. Nevertheless, the idea of having a master identity that influences others should not overlook the fact that such hierarchical positioning may change dependent on the situation. Also, because modern societies force individuals to hold multiple identities, it is expected that some conflict between identities may occur.

2.4.3 Professional identity

Professional identity is no more than one of the ‘sub-identities’ of the self that is associated with a specific professional role or social status (Gee, 2000; Dubar, 2006). It represents a common code of meanings, values and functions, which confer distinction and purpose to a certain professional group (Danielewicz, 2001). Thus, similar to any other identity trend, professional identity is based on individuals’ position(s) in society and the meanings created in interaction with others (Geijsel & Meijers, 2005; Sutherland, Howard and Markauskaite, 2010). Its development implies a constant work of (re)interpretation and negotiation of personal values and meanings in order to fulfil a self-image of adequacy and satisfaction expected during the performance of a specific role (Ewan, 1988).

Higher education, as a primordial space for the development of professional roles, is usually viewed as a central structure for the introduction and support of students’ professional identities at the beginning of their careers (Trede, 2012; Trede, Macklin & Bridges, 2012; Bramming, 2007; Clouder, 2005; Cushion et al., 2003). Specifically, academic degrees are expected to prepare students for their future working roles by developing, not only disciplinary knowledge (i.e., subject knowledge) but also professional dispositions that foster dominant professional values, ethics and norms in workplace cultures (i.e., know-how) (Reid, Dahlgren,

Petocz & Dahlgren, 2008). However, if subject knowledge dominates the curricula (because it is easier to consider and control in a pedagogical context), the development of professional identity and know-how awareness often suffers; being usually considered as a natural result of the mere involvement of students in professional practice.

Thus, although ‘learning by doing’ is deemed as an essential part of the socialisation process and, therefore, key for professional identity development, experience is not in itself a sufficient condition for students’ professional development (McElhinney, 2008). The integration of the professional role into one’s sense of self is also deemed an essential aspect to be developed if a successful integration of students in their working environments is to be targeted (Beijaard et al., 2004).

In recent years, research in the context of teacher education has been key to advancing understanding of professional identity and the process associated with its development. Here, reflection and mentorship seemed to be the most common strategies recommended to support students’ professional identity work. In particular, personal reflection on ‘ideal’ future-self has been highlighted as a key aspect to aid the progress towards preferred identities (e.g. Hamman et al., 2013, Ryan & Carmichael, 2016; Gilardi & Lozza, 2009). As Lasky (2005) explains, such reflexive considerations about a future self are useful pedagogical tools for identity development because it prompts individuals to define their professional identities “to themselves and to others” (Lasky, 2005, p. 901), thus enhancing their sense of self-identification and belonging to the professional role.

Gilardi and Lozza (2009) provide an example of how to implement such strategy in their assessment of the impact of an inquiry-based teaching approach on

undergraduate students' professional identity. Their findings show that reflective and 'reflexive' (i.e., awareness of self-in-practice) conversations between tutors and peers, about their current and future selves, helped them to create a stronger sense of professional identity. According to the authors, by reflecting openly about their performance in practice, students gained an awareness of the 'intentions, hesitations, confusions, hypotheses, [and] choices' associated with their actions and, as a consequence, found "different ways of proceeding and interpreting a problem" (p.254).

Similarly, in a study by Hamman et al., (2013), the use of forward imagination of one's self in practice was also explored. Here the authors supported the benefits of reflecting on teachers' possible selves, by focusing on desired and feared identities. As they explain, such an exercise helps direct and motivate students towards their goals as it provides "self-relevant targets for regulating effort, persistence and direction of behaviours" (p. 309). In addition to this, they also highlighted the value of such discussion in understanding identity changes and the reasons as to 'why' some identities may differ among students. For instance, in a previous study developed by the same research team, Hamman and colleagues (2010) identified the differences between student-teachers and newly qualified teachers by exploring the expected and feared selves in both groups. According to their findings, in-service teachers were "more able to look beyond the everyday tasks and consider a more abstract, value-laden future self" (p. 1356), while university students centred their identity in procedural and visible tasks of the job.

However, in spite of the value of such contributions to a better understanding of how students' identities can be developed, a further exploration of the external

mechanism by which students are influenced to change needs to be undertaken (Hamman et al., 2013). A review developed by Trede, Mackilin and Bridges (2012) subsequently argued for a more comprehensive analysis of individuals' identity development within the higher education context. According to this review, not many studies have ~~yet~~ explored the impact of external structures (i.e., learning context, working environment) on students' professional development.

Considering the current understandings of identity as a relational and situated learning phenomenon (Oruç, 2013), it is surprising that not many researchers have yet attempted to explore the relationship between identity and particular educational environments. In relation to this point, Handley and colleagues (2006) noted that students do not develop their identity in a vacuum, neither does the site for their development exist within only one structural environment. Thus, according to Handley and colleagues (2006), identity development does not only need to be examined in regard to particular communities, but also “in the spaces between multiple communities” (p.650). In agreement with others (e.g., Fenton – O’Creedy et al., 2015), the negotiation between as well as within identity boundaries has much to offer an understanding of how students develop their professional identity. As Reid and colleagues (2011) better explain;

“The development of professional identity should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon that takes place at university or in the work context, but rather a dynamic relationship between different life spheres” (p.91)

In addition to such critiques, the literature also evidences the lack of longitudinal study of student identity trajectories. As an example, Beauchamp and Thomas’s (2010) study only used two interview moments to explore the shifts in

students' sense of identity during the early months of their initial practice (7-8 months). Thus, although such an approach served somewhat to 'capture' the 'changes', an on-going exploration on why such changes happened was not engaged with. Similarly, Britzman and Greene (2012) argued that in the development of a professional identity, the journey is as important as the final destination. Thus, professional identity should not be understood as a unique moment of change, but rather a continuum that involves constant "scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one wants to become" (p.31).

To achieve a deeper understanding of students' on-going identity transformations, it has been argued that educators should pay more attention to the emotions and meanings that emerge from significant interaction with others (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). In particular, the relationships established with relevant others (and the emotions generated from such interactions) have been claimed as powerful catalysts in identity development processes (Malderez, Hobson, Tracey & Kerr, 2007; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2012). For example, Timoštšuk and Ugaste's (2012) study evidenced the value of positive interaction and emotions in the positive identity development of pre-service teachers. In their study, they argued that student-teachers that focus on the positive experience of their practice cope better with the challenges of the professional role, whilst being more more creative in their teaching approaches. Furthermore, related studies in higher education have also demonstrated that students' identity is highly influenced by the way they perceive their educators, and how, in turn, they interact with them (Burn, 2007; Loughran & Berry, 2005). Specifically, these studies show that, particularly at the beginning of their careers, other teaching staff are seen as 'ideal' role models for students, thus having a significant impact on how the students see themselves in the future. Despite such evidence, exactly how

‘significant other’ teachers influence students’ possible selves has remained largely unexamined.

2.4.3.1 Coach professional identity

Although, as stated earlier, despite initial inroads being made into ‘who is the coach’ being as important as knowing ‘what’ coaches do or ‘how’ they do it (Jones, Bailey, Santos, & Edwards, 2012), little attention has been paid to coach identity (Purdy & Potrac, 2014; Purdy, 2018). In particular, limited information exists about how novice coaches experience their work environment, how they relate and interact with others, and how education and working environments influence their respective identities and careers (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002, Norman, 2010, 2012, 2013; Potrac & Jones, 2009; Purdy & Potrac, 2014).

For Mockler (2011b), such a state of affairs is related with an academic preference for aspects of the practice that “are easier to quantify, measure, and mandate” (p.525), which in turn, neglects attention to the development of “reflexive, politically aware” professionals (Mockler, 2011b, p.525). However, considering the value of identity in understanding individuals’ experience and interaction with the world (Lawler, 2008), such developments can no longer be ignored. An understanding of how neophyte coaches’ experience coaching practice and view themselves in it then, would appear to be of utmost importance to assess how coach education can best support students’ transition to coaching careers (Jones at al., 2004; Potrac & Jones, 2009; Purdy, Potrac & Jones, 2008).

According to Purdy (2018), neophyte coaches, at the beginning of their careers, are not ‘free to choose whatever persona [they] want’. Instead, they need to

consider and negotiate their persona in relation to others, through daily interactions. Thus, close attention to the ‘landscapes of practices’ through which students negotiate their identities needs to be undertaken to better understand the specific challenges and possibilities for development in such contexts (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Here, a deeper understanding of how new coaches deal with the vulnerability and fettered agency of their role is crucial, particularly when considering the competitive and hierarchical characteristics of coaching environments (Cassidy et al., 2016).

Despite the current lack of focus on the development of neophyte coaches’ identity, some research has started to pave the way into studying coaches’ identities, principally by exploring the complex and intense emotional investment that coaching practice demands (Potrac et al., 2013; Purdy 2018). For instance, Purdy and Potrac (2014) used a narrative-biographical approach to explore some of the critical elements that influenced Maeve, a high-performance athletics coach, in the “creation, development, and, ultimately, questioning” of her coaching identity (p.5). The contribution made by this study lies in its unearthing of the relationship between self and environment. According to the authors, career transitions (i.e., role changes) can have a profound impact on coaches’ perceptions of what constitutes ‘good’ coaching practice and how they should conduct their interaction with players/coaches, parents and other important stakeholders. The authors also found that Maeve’s changes of roles, resulted in a questioning of her competence and desire to continue to invest in her coaching career. This study serves as proof of how coaches’ identities provide a sense of purpose and direction, as well as having implications for coaches’ self-esteem and overall satisfaction in their role.

Alternatively, other sociological analysis of coaches' landscape of practice have also provided further insight into how coaches' identities are affected by the social environment. For example, Cushion and Jones's (2014) work demonstrated how coaches' identity can be shaped by the perpetuation of a 'hidden curriculum' (i.e., culturally accepted ways of perceiving, evaluating and behaving). Here, although the focus was not necessarily centred on coach identities, but rather on the impact of cultural-bonded social practices on young football players, the findings offered an insightful view on how social structures 'oppress' and 'rule' coaches' identities. Overall, their results showed that coaches tend to objectify players by focusing coaching practice on the transformation of players "bodily capital into football capital to win games" (p.19). According to the authors, such an analysis reveals what coaches' value in a particular context, and how such values are exposed and negotiated in practice. Within the afore mentioned study, the play between agency and structure was deconstructed to highlight how players' development was affected by a perpetuation of a hidden curriculum established by coaches' discourses and approaches. Subsequently, the study brought into question how much coaches were reflectively aware of the impact of their identity upon their practice.

In a similar vein, Jones, Potrac, Cushion and Ronglan's (2011) also provided insight into how social interactions can be informative about the identities coaches bring to the role. In particular, the authors drew attention to coaches' selected 'fronts' (i.e., visible performances imploded in the execution of a role) in order to explain how they strengthened relationships and secured 'buy-in' from players. These included expressing oneself in a confident manner, exuding an aura of calmness or authority, using humour, showing they cared or, instead, adopting a 'mean' attitude to reprehend behaviour. Such insights explain how coaches manipulate their settings, appearance

and manner to negotiate their ‘ideal self’ within their encounters with players and other relevant stakeholders. However, despite being beneficial in informing coach development, so far, not much attention has been given to the influence of coach education in the shaping of such coaching ‘fronts’ (i.e., identities).

Such a perspective was also evident in Thompson, Potrac and Jones’s (2015) work who used a case study approach to capture the experiences of a newly appointed coach in a new football club. Goffman’s work on impression management and stigma, Kelchtermans’s micro-political perspective and Garfinkel’s notion of status degradation, were subsequently used to make sense of Adam’s (fitness coach) perceptions and actions. Their results demonstrated how Adam’s role identity was not only a product of his own agency but also shaped by the “socially crafted interaction[s]” he established with relevant others in context (p.13). As a result, the study provides further evidence of the “uncomfortable, anxious, and, at times, humiliating moments” (p.15) experienced by a neophyte coach and his inability to read the micro-political landscape around him. The case is then made that an exploration of the less ‘spectacular’ side of coaches’ experience is particularly useful to illustrate how mundane coaching interaction does not always enhance coaches’ role and social identities. Thus, the unrealistic perception that experience by itself can promote the development of a stronger sense of professional identity should be challenged.

Finally, in an attempt to assess the impact of educational settings on the development of expert coaching, the work by Nash and Sproule (2009) offers insight into how coaches’ expertise can be further developed. Using a retrospective approach, the researchers asked participants to recall their career experience(s) considering their

current positions as expert coaches. The findings revealed that mentoring and the observation of others played an important role in the development of these coaches' identities. However, because the findings are based on experiences, an appreciation of the on-going learning moments that specifically contribute to the development of current identities remains elusive.

Overall, the research reviewed here serves to highlight that although some researchers have started to open 'discussions', the literature has yet to fully engage with how neophyte coaches perceive themselves (and others), and what values and principles govern their behaviour, and sense of self (Purdy & Potrac, 2014). For coach education, such an understanding of identity is central to the analysis of variations in coaches' work, lives and effectiveness (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2016). In addition to this, identity emphasises the similarities and differences between individuals and groups (Carter, 2013), providing a better understanding of what coaches are, in addition to what they are not (Josselson, 1996). Doing so, can assist coaches identify their identity, in addition to the counter-identity associated (Burke, 1980). Here the counter-identity not only makes the boundaries of their own identity more evident, but also gives individuals the chance to note, evaluate and readjust their identities as appropriate (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012; Cooley, 1902).

2.4.3.2 Coach identity development and experiential learning

Coaches' preference for informal and practical learning (Mesquita et al., 2014; Trudel, Gilbert & Werthner, 2010; Trudel, Culver & Werthner, 2013) has strengthened the call to include experiential practice into academic coaching courses (Cushion et al., 2003; Jones, 2000; Trede et al., 2012). However, the process of coaches' identity development in relation to such learning environments, that is, the process of self-

identification with a professional role (i.e., the notion of feeling and becoming accepted as a coach), has remained largely unexplored. Similarly, understanding the role of active participation in real contexts of practice, in terms of ‘who the learner is’ in relation to ‘what the learner knows’ (Wortham, 2004), has also not been engaged with. This would appear to be a significant neglect, as professional experiences in ‘live’ contexts have long been considered fundamental opportunities to embody professional roles and transform forms of action and thinking. As Carver (2003) explains in the context of teachers’ education, such an environment allows students to consider ‘what one is’ and ‘what one wants to be’, thus inviting students to become more self-aware of their evolving identities. Similarly, such experiences allow such coaches to ‘feel’ the professional group, while assessing the similarities and differences between social roles (Carter, 2013).

As previously mentioned, work developed in coach education has pointed to the relevance of the communities of practice notion as an important strategy in facilitating students’ development of a sense of coach identity (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Jones et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2007). This was a position supported by Mesquita (2013) and Gomes et al., (2016), who argued for the pairing of experiential learning with subsequent sharing, reflection and discussion to raise awareness about what coaches do, how they do it and more importantly, why they do it. The authors here claimed that such a strategy holds the potential to explore coaches’ ways of being particularly in relation to specific incidents of practice.

However, despite the credit given to experiential initiatives, situated learning opportunities for student coaches’ professional development cannot be left to fate (Cushion, 2006; Mesquita et al., 2014; Thompson, Potrac & Jones, 2015). Hence,

many have argued (Stoszkowski & Collins, 2016; Mesquita, 2013) that the promotion of experiential learning must be distinguishable from common participation in sports contexts, and intentionally objectified to incite transformation of knowledge and beliefs. Such a process needs, in part, to be orchestrated by a ‘more capable other’ (Vygotsky, 1978) that supports the passage of those from peripheral to more central positions, as well as stimulating the injection of new perspectives to the discussion (Mesquita et al., 2014).

Accepting such caveats, it has been argued that implementing such ideas and principles in higher education can help students deconstruct practical phenomena that are frequently seen as familiar or insignificant. In doing so, the implicit is made explicit (Harris, 2010). For instance, in Jones, Morgan and Harris’s (2012) study, the students that participated in communities of practice managed to increase their ability to problematise, discuss and deconstruct actions and events usually taken as tacit and routine. Thus, reflection and interaction with peers in addition to the presence and actions of ‘a more capable other’, constituted important mediators between experience and identity (De Weerd, Bouwen, Corthouts & Martens, 2006). In agreement with this, Jones and Allison (2014) suggested that to impact students’ development, pedagogical strategies need to be more than “communities of security” (p.119), where value was only placed on sharing ‘what works’. As Rogers (1951) argues, students must have opportunities to question and negotiate new (theoretical or conceptual) knowledge in an individualised and meaningful way in order to promote a cathartic “change in the organisation of the self” (Rogers 1951, p. 390). Here, the instigation of students’ epistemic beliefs about coaching knowledge and coaching practice (as discussed earlier in this chapter) may encourage such developments through “inner ways of learning” (Hunter, Laursen & Seymour, 2007, p. 67). Nevertheless, precisely

how this should be done still remains a point for debate. The next section will briefly attempt to explore this in further depth.

2.4.3.3 Mentoring and reflexive practice

In the context of coach education, the mentor (usually a designated tutor in the placement context) is more-than-often a ‘more able’ component that supports and advises students during their professional development (Parsloe & Wray, 2000; Roberts, 2000). In this respect, this person holds the responsibility to mediate teaching processes, learning and professional development (Vygotsky, 1978). Essential to this position, is the ability to guide students to confront their problems in practice and help them to find suitable solutions through appropriate interventions (Brookfield, 2012). Thus, mentoring has come to be considered a fundamental element in the preparation and integration of students within the professional community (Gomes et al., 2016). As Trede (2012) argues, because workspaces are not neutral spaces, students need guidance through the complex set of interpersonal and professional relationships that require them to be both active and strategic. Consequently, reflective practice, supported by mentorship, have come to be heavily advocated as essential training elements for those entering the workplace (Knowles et al., 2014), and to find better ways to negotiate their position within the professional community (Billett, 2009; Cropley & Hanton, 2011).

For Gomes (2016), an inquisitive, supportive mentor is essential to promote development, because inexperienced coaches, when left alone, tend to act within existing role frames (inspired by their personal biographies) without attributing any intellectual rationality to their practices. A similar case was also made by Cassidy, Jones and Potrac (2016) who found that novice coaches tended to mimic the practice

of those they respected as the ‘right way’ to coach, without giving further consideration to contexts of practice and individual characteristics of athletes. Consequently, to impose change and development, students need someone that prompts them to question their practices and beliefs.

Indeed, although the perpetuation of practices may be justified (particularly at the beginning of coaches’ careers) as a natural attempt to establish social integration to the professional group (Tajfel, 1974), an engagement with reflective practice is key for the development of a legitimated and conscious professional identity. For Trede (2012), “An unquestioned practice will breed an unquestioned identity” (p.166). According to the author, such reflection involves the constant re-evaluation and re-construction of knowledge, values and professional goals; actions that provoke identity development.

Despite such acknowledgements, the application of such rhetoric in practice is not straightforward (Cassidy et al., 2016). In fact, many have been critical of how such practices are promoted in the context of formal education. Such concerns are particularly related to how coach education has used reflective practice in and on courses (Huntley et al., 2014; Knowles et al., 2006). For instance, Huntley et al. (2014) argued that the inclusion of reflective practice as part of the assessment was counter to its original intention of promoting open and meaningful experiences of learning. Additionally, according to the researchers, “strategic responses or even hostility” (p.10) may result as a consequence of ‘forcing’ students to reflect as part of their assessments. In agreement with this, Hughes, Lee and Chesterfield (2009) argued that self-reflection (typically promoted in coach education courses) does not contribute to coaches’ learning and thinking, as such reflections are restricted by personal

knowledge and conceptions about coaching. In addition, Knowles, Borrie and Telfer's (2005) study suggested that coach education has not been particularly efficient at helping students to understand the value of reflection and how to use it. Here, the reduced time and space given to developing reflexive skills was usually referred to as the key contributory factor to the simplistic analysis of practice and superficial learning (Cushion et al., 2010). As a consequence, many within the literature have called for more empirical studies that focus on the 'how to' of reflective practice (Huntley et al., 2014; Picknell et al., 2014).

The case has recently been made that a combination of reflective practice and mentorship can be beneficial to promote meaningful and transformative learning (a fundamental condition to promote identity development) (e.g., Knowles et al., 2001; Hughes et al., 2009; Partington et al., 2015). In opposition to isolated self-reflective accounts, the promotion of conversational reflective practices between learners and others seem to facilitate deeper and more critical levels of reflections. This is because it has the potential to reveal more about what one advocates to do (i.e., espoused theories) in comparison to what one actually does (i.e., theories in use) (Argyris and Schön, 1974). Here the use of video technology (Hall & Gray, 2016; Partington et al., 2015) and reflexive cards (Hughes, Lee & Chesterfield, 2009) have been suggested as beneficial tools to structure reflective conversations and promote changes in coaches' self-awareness.

In addition, recent literature has also called attention to the promotion of more positive strength-based reflective practices (Dixon, Lee & Ghaye, 2016; Peel, Cropley, Hanton & Fleming, 2013). According to Dixon, Lee and Ghaye (2016), instead of focusing attention on the 'problems' and 'deficiencies' that need to be

‘fixed’, reflective practices should also instigate positive appreciations of coaches’ strengths in both their performance and character. In their work, Dixon, Lee and Ghaye (2016) refer to such an approach as a ‘pedagogy of abundance’; as it emphasizes the identification and development of coaches’ talents. Here, an essential link between reflective practice and identity development is established. According to Dixon et al (2016), a “pedagogy of abundance” has the potential to “reveal new insights and understandings about who we are, what we do and why we do it” (p.13), thus offering “deeper understanding of one’s own learning agenda, sense of self, self-knowledge, self-efficacy and purpose” (p.10).

Despite evidence that mentoring practice, sustained in reflective conversations, can help coaches to develop their self-awareness, the literature has not yet dedicated particular attention to the impact of such practice in the development of professional identities. Furthermore, the role of the tutor in this process has also not yet been truly defined and established (Hall, Cowan & Vickery, 2019). Indeed, according to Nash (2003) different and contradictory understandings regarding students’ and tutors’ roles and responsibilities within the education environment still exists. Consequently, there is a need to better understand how respective mediation actors and processes operate within learning environments.

2.4.4 Coach identity: Final note

This ‘identity’ section serves as a starting point for the exploration of an emerging theme in the field of sports coaching: coaches’ identity development. The purpose has been to explore theoretical frameworks associated with definitions of identity, and to discuss their value for coach education research. Overall, a pivotal aspect emerging from this review is that ‘identity’, as a theoretical construct, is equally

useful as a pedagogical tool as well as an analytical framework of research. As a pedagogical instrument, identity has been recognized to having the ability to unlock unique and unknown forms of action that often live below the level of conscious thought (e.g., Cushion & Jones, 2014; Purdy & Potrac, 2014; Thompson, Potrac & Jones, 2015). In addition, it can provide a sense of purpose and direction (Manza et al., 2013), thus giving more credibility to the power of (neophyte) coaches in terms of their own professional growth and development. It can also aid (student) coaches to explore elements of creativity that break the “constitutive rules of everyday behaviour” (Goffman, 1974, p.5), thus making room for innovative action. In relation to such action, the literature discussed in this section suggests that reflective conversations about current and future selves are an important catalyst to promote self-awareness and change. Also, mentorship support sustained on the idea of a ‘pedagogy of abundance’ (Dixon, Lee & Ghaye, 2016) can help coaches to recognise their qualities and gain further insights into who they are in relation to what they do.

As a research agenda, identity allows for more rigorous examination of coach behaviours and social representations, thus instigating an understanding of how coach identities are developed, disrupted or advanced, inside and outside the professional group. The formation of a professional identity, specifically regarding that of the sports coach, is complex and closely mediated by factors related to agency and structure (Giddens, 2000). It is, therefore, necessary to continue to develop “rational, social and emotional accounts of coaches’ work” (Purdy & Potrac, 2014, p.3). Indeed, despite an increased recognition that coaches do not enjoy unfettered agency in the execution of their role (Cassidy et al., 2016; Purdy, 2018; Jones et al., 2011), a deeper understanding on how coaches negotiate and reconstruct their identities through ongoing interactions is needed. This involves exploring how objective and dynamic

forces control and regulate the beliefs and actions of coaches. Such an agenda becomes of particular importance if we wish to understand how neophyte coaches engage with the complex process of developing their coaching identity, particularly at the beginning of their careers.

2.5 Moving forward: Final reflection on coach education research

The preparation and development of sport coaches has become a popular area of discussion and interest among policymakers, coach educators and researchers alike (e.g., Stodter & Cushion, 2017; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014; Mesquita et al., 2014; Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012; Cushion et al., 2010). Such interest can be seen as a response to earlier critiques that accused coach educational programmes (and, concomitantly, coach educators) of lacking both an understanding of how coaches learn (Abraham & Collins, 1998) and an awareness of the dynamic and ambiguous contexts in which coaches operate (Jones, 2006). Consequently, scholars have begun to explore new avenues of advancing related practice through the use of wider theories and frameworks of analysis (see, Trudel & Gilbert, 2006; Werthner & Trudel, 2006; Nelson et al., 2006, Abraham et al., 2006). However, the resulting work has, to a degree, reflected the complexity of the field, occasioning a proliferation of studies with ‘highly variable’ interests and ambiguity in terms of the terminology used (Cushion et al., 2010). Consequently, the field remains, to a considerable extent, underdeveloped and undervalued (Nelson et al., 2006; Jones, 2006; Nash & Sproule, 2012; Piggott, 2012).

The limited impact of researched recommendations on practice appears to be a particular point in question (Abraham & Collins, 2011; Trudel & Gilbert, 2006; Nelson, Cushion & Potrac, 2006, Lyle, 2007). On the one hand, it has been claimed

that researchers have not provided a clear and structured frame of knowledge for practice (Abraham & Collins, 2011); a belief which has made the necessary communication between theorists and practitioners problematic. On the other hand, however, coach educators appear to have been reluctant to move away from standardised curricula presented as a set of ‘gold standards’ that focus more on technical skills than cognitive development (Abraham & Collins, 2011). Hence, as pointed out by Jones, Edwards and Viotto Filho (2014), divergences of epistemological perceptions about knowing and learning seem to prevail.

Research in coach learning has recently attempted to overcome such challenges by investigating what coaches’ value in their education and what types of learning environments they attribute more significance to (e.g. Nelson, Cushion & Potrac, 2006; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2016). Such exploration has been conducted within diverse contexts of practice including; US performance coaches (Gould, Giannini, Krane & Hodge, 1990; Gould, Greenleaf, Guinan & Chung, 2002; Gilbert, Côté & Mallett, 2006); Canadian high school coach-teachers (Camiré, Trudel & Forneris, 2012; Winchester, Culver & Camiré, 2011; 2012), elite coaches from the UK (Jones et al., 2004; Nash & Sproule, 2009; Chesterfield, Potrac, & Jones, 2010) and high-performance coaches from Portugal (Mesquita, Isidro & Rosado 2010), Ireland (Bertz & Purdy, 2011), Canada (Lemyre, Trudel & Durand-Bush 2007) and Australia (Rynne & Mallett, 2012; Rynne, Mallett & Tinning, 2010). Although such investigations have been generally welcome, many have argued that the landscape of knowledge in coach education remains far from coherent (Piggott, 2013), leaving much to be understood about the nature of learning itself (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). This has been particularly true in terms of the inadequate understanding of the essential features of learning and knowing before advocating prescription (Stodter & Cushion,

2017; Grecic & Collins, 2013). Furthermore, the predominance of literature focused on expert coaches makes it harder to retrieve meaningful information in regard to the process of construction and development of novice coaches into experts (Cushion et al., 2010). Hence, generalised research conclusions have been made without adequate exploration of the particular intricacies of the population and the contexts of learning studied (Nelson & Cushion, 2006).

For instance, research has claimed that of all the different types of learning experiences valued by coaches, formal coach education had the lowest impact on professional development (see Werthner & Trudle, 2006; Erickson et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2004; Gilbert, Côté & Mallett, 2006). Nonetheless, a closer look into such research shows that this proclaimed lack of impact appears slightly misleading. For example, a quantitative inquiry into 44 Canadian coaches (Erickson et al. 2008) demonstrated that almost half the participants would have liked more opportunities to learn from formal coach education despite also preferring ‘learning by doing’. Similarly, other studies have indicated that coaches at initial stages of development (Lemyre, Trudel & Durand-Bush, 2007; Vargas-Tonsing, 2007; Erickson et al., 2008; Mesquita, Isidro & Rosado, 2010; Nash & Sproule, 2011), or those that have experienced courses with more flexible and critical pedagogical designs (McCullick, Belcher & Schempp, 2005; Cassidy, Potrac & McKenzie, 2006; Piggott, 2012) also tend to place more value on formal education. Hence, some have argued that it is now time to move beyond merely stating that coaches learn from a complex mix of learning experiences (e.g., Deek, Werthner, Paquette & Culver, 2013; Cushion et al, 2003) and begin to unearth what in particular coaches learn from different learning situations, why they prefer some over others, and how such learning experiences influence practice (Piggott, 2012; Stodter & Cushion, 2017).

In response, research on coach learning has paid particular attention to learning strategies, developing interesting insight into how coaches perceive their learning experiences in particular structures. For example, an interest has developed in exploring the effectiveness of (formal) learning in relation to course design (e.g., McCullick, Belcher & Schempp, 2005; Cassidy & Kidman, 2010; Demers, Woodburn & Savard, 2006; Van Klooster & Roemers 2011), course materials (e.g., Lyle, Jolly & North, 2010), curricula (e.g., Cassidy & Kidman, 2010), visual feedback (Partington, Cushion, Cope & Harvey, 2015), reflection (e.g., Peele, Cropley, Hanton & Fleming, 2013; Knowles, Tyler, Gilbourne, & Eubank, 2006; Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie, & Nevill, 2001), problem-based learning (Jones & Turner, 2006), communities of practice (Gomes et. al., 2016, Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014; Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012; Culver & Trudle, 2006), ethno-drama (Morgan, Jones, Gilbourne & Llewellyn, 2013), mentoring (Jones, Harris & Miles, 2009; Olsson, Cruickshank & Collins, 2017), and virtual coaching networks (Stoszkowski & Collins, 2015; Stephenson & Jowett, 2009; Nash & Sproule, 2011; Trudel et al., 2013). However, it is still unclear as to the link between such strategies and coaches' practice (Cushion et al., 2010). Furthermore, such research has focused on isolated moments of development that inhibit any insightful understanding of learning from more holistic and temporal perspectives.

Knowles and colleagues' (2006) research is a clear example of such limitations. In this study, the researchers used single semi-structured interviews (20-45 min) to explore how 6 sports coaching students made use of reflection in their coaching practice following the completion of their undergraduate studies. Despite efforts to address gaps in the literature through empirical evidence, the results mainly focus on the difference between academic experience and current reflective practices,

thus lacking an exploration of how students moved from institutionalised to personal models of reflection. Similarly, Stephenson and Jowett (2009) drew conclusions about factors that influence coaches' learning and development simply based on 13 individual interviews with English youth soccer coaches.

Consequently, a need exists to explore other methodologies that enable a profound analysis of coaches' learning not only sourced from momentary coaches' perceptions (Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014). This is particularly so if we want to take into consideration that 'desirable difficulties' (Bjork & Bjork, 2011) promoted in educational settings are not always welcome at first and require time and resilience to be appreciated. In this respect, more attention needs to be paid to why certain approaches are preferred and how such learning situations impact on (these) perceptions (Lyle, Jolly & North, 2010). In particular, longitudinal studies that include a mix of different methods of data collection have been advocated as a way to enrich and elucidate the processes of understanding coach development (Cushion et al., 2010, Stodter & Cushion, 2016). Such designs allow researchers to engage with the variations and transformations of the learning processes, allowing a more realistic and credible illustration of professional development to emerge (Stodter, 2014).

Jones and Turner's (2006) study (previously explored in this chapter) provides an example of such a temporal design. For 12 weeks, the researchers explored how problem-based learning helped 11 third-year undergraduate students embrace the complex and holistic nature of professional practice. Data were collected through observations, lectures, reflective accounts and semi-structured group interviews held at the end of the module. Such a methodology enabled the researchers to better understand hidden, but intrinsically important, details of the learning process,

illustrating the potentialities, challenges and dilemmas experienced by the students (Jones & Turner, 2006). The design was also reproduced to evaluate the learning on an MSc Sport Coaching unit (Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012). Similarly, the researchers here used on-going observations and focus group interviews with staff and students to understand how a pedagogy based on both action research and ‘communities of practice’ helped students establish a better link between theory and practice.

Most recently, Gomes et al (2016) tracked the learning journey of coaches over an even longer period (nine months) to gain a better understanding of the precise changes to students’ professional development at work. This and similar studies aimed to evaluate the learning experience as a whole, thus gaining insights not only into the quality of the educational programme on offer, but also how students learn and interact within such contexts. For instance, Stodter’s doctoral research (2014), and the subsequent work that emerged from it (Stodter & Cushion, 2017), was particularly innovative in repositioning the focus of the study on the learning and development processes of coaches in situ (Wellington, 2000). Here, a mixture of semi-structured interviews, systematic observations, video-based stimulated recall interviews and course observations were used to track the wider learning of 25 participant coaches on an NGB formal education course. Data collection took place at specific points over an 18-month duration (pre-course, during-course, and post-course) to present a clear picture of coaches’ learning processes and why they took place as they did. Similarly, Gomes et al. (2016) explored what and how 8 student-coaches learned on their work placement experiences. In particular, the student-coaches were both interviewed and observed over the course of a nine-month sporting season. Data allowed insight into the limitations of student learning within high-performance sporting environments,

with recommendations made to take better account of developing students' micro-political literacy (Gomes et al., 2016).

To conclude, despite the recent rise of undergraduate and postgraduate coaching courses (Bush, 2008; DGES, 2019), as yet, not many studies have been undertaken that clearly 'capture' the nuances of on-going learning and identity development of neophyte coaches. Most certainly, the (certification) powers held by national governing bodies, in many, if not most countries, has been an obstacle in this development. However, with the recent restructure of the Portuguese coaching educational plan (IDP, 2010) (that recognises higher education institutions as certified coach education centres), an evaluation of how such courses' impact on coaches' knowledge is essential. Furthermore, such developments will help to determine how coaches are being formed within such coach educational structures and who they are when they leave.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The overarching ambition of this chapter is to demonstrate the adequacy and competence of the adopted methodological approach in answering the main research questions (Swain, 2017). It is hoped that by exposing my philosophical commitments (as a researcher), methodological decisions and axiological procedures, readers will gain a better understanding of the process of research conducted and the subsequent interpretation of findings. Furthermore, the chapter also provides an opportunity for reflection and assessment of investigative conduct by exposing the alignment between research beliefs and actions (Creswell, 2014).

This chapter is organised into several separate, although interlinked sections. Following this brief introduction, the first section presents the work's philosophical assumptions in an attempt to expose the alignment between ontology, epistemology and methodology. This is then followed by a methodological or 'research design' section that includes a description of the study context and recruitment procedures. Methodology here is taken akin to a "contextual framework for research" (Kara, 2015, p.4), before moving to an outline of the procedures and practicalities employed in the data collection and subsequent analysis. Ethical concerns, through an Axiology section, in relation to the study are then addressed. Finally, an assessment of the quality of the research produced is provided by focusing on key concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba, 1981), and in particular reflexivity to ensure the work's trustworthiness.

3.2 Philosophical assumptions

"What a man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also upon what his previous visual-conceptual experience has taught him to see"

(Kuhn, 1970, p.113)

Along with my academic studies, I have been exposed to a number of philosophical and theoretical positions that have oriented and shaped my “particular ways of thinking about knowledge and reality” (Tinning & Fitzpatrick, 2012, p.54). Although I was not always conscious of it, I now recognize that the results of such exposure have become deeply engrained in my understandings of research, thus impacting greatly on my related decisions, practices and interpretations (Creswell, 2013). Hence, before exploring the practicalities of the methodological decisions made within this study, it seems appropriate to make explicit the often-hidden philosophical assumptions that underpin the work (Punch, 2009). In agreement with Waring (2017), having ownership over the articulation of personal assumptions serves not only to promote transparency of what was done and why, but also to “enhance the ability to critique and appreciate one’s own research position and that of others” (p.20). In addition, Garrett (2013) suggested that a full understanding of the philosophical roots of any work can prompt researchers to “challenge [and advance] the boundaries of methodology in the context of coaching research.” (p.10). In this regard, the value of this first section of the chapter lies in exposing the philosophical assumptions that guide the research process in this study.

The academic literature often uses terms such as paradigms (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, Mertens, 2010), philosophical positions (Smith, 2010), worldviews (Creswell 2014; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006), research traditions (Gratton & Jones, 2004), metatheories (Higgs, 1995) and research frameworks (Tinning & Fitzpatrick, 2012) to identify and discuss the common beliefs and agreements, shared by different scientific communities about “how science should be done” (Punch, 2009, p.16). Although there are no definitive ways to categorize the diverse paradigmatic positions

adopted across the wider fields of education and sports research, positivism, constructivism-interpretivism, pragmatism and critical theory are, commonly, the most popular positions presented (e.g., Cohen et al., 2011; Armour & Macdonald, 2012). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), research paradigms are ‘belief systems’ that are framed by hierarchical and interconnected philosophical assumptions (i.e. ontology, epistemology and methodology). Together, such assumptions communicate views on what particular researchers believe to be “scientifically possible and what is not” (Higgs, 1995, p.3), influencing, ultimately, methodological design decisions.

In more detail, ontological assumptions reflect researchers’ beliefs about the nature of the reality, how reality is believed to exist, and what can be known about it (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Epistemology meanwhile concerns the nature of knowledge, how knowledge can be known, and what is the relationship between the knower and the reality to be known (Punch, 2009). As Patton (2002) explains, ontology prompts researchers to question if reality exists in “a singular, verifiable reality and truth ... [or in] socially constructed multiple realities” (Patton, 2002, p. 134), whereas epistemology asks researchers to debate “the possibility and desirability of objectivity, subjectivity, causality, validity [or] generalisability” (Patton, 2002, p. 134). The positions established both at an ontological and epistemological level then, become central to communicate researchers’ fundamental beliefs about reality and knowledge which, in turn, influences the type of design employed and data gathered in the pursuit of new knowledge (Patton, 2002) (i.e. methodology).

In the first chapter of this thesis, I started to engage with such reflections as I explored the host of influences and circumstances that led me to initiate the project. As I recalled, as a student I was led to believe (and accepted) that knowledge was a

collection of definitive truths, principles and laws. Thus, to develop my expertise in any topic area, I would focus on the retention of information in a linear and simplistic manner. Such an approach proved to be successful in the achievement of higher-level GCSEs and a place in my chosen degree programme. Consequently, when I started university, I had no intention to change my learning approaches. To resolve issues presented in practice, I would recourse to ready-made methodologies and coaching principles that offered security and the confidence I needed at the start of my professional development. Yet, as I became increasingly involved with teaching and coaching roles, I become progressively aware that such certainty was not serving me well. My exposure to coaching literature helped me to realise that such experiences were not unique, and that I needed to reframe and develop my outlook if I wish to increase my ability to learn and develop my practice. Such a paradigmatic shift resembles the broader academic history of coaching literature, explored at the beginning of Chapter Two. Recognizing that coaching is as much a social and emotional endeavour as it is a technical and tactical craft, helped me to move beyond a simplistic understanding of knowledge and embrace the complex, multifaceted and relativist characteristic of coaching practices and, subsequently, coaches' learning. Now, as a researcher, I take the same stance and embrace the ambiguous nature of coaches' learning and development through a more subjective and situated approach.

Acknowledging that the inherent intention of this research project was to explore students-coaches' perceptions of their experiences of leaning and identity development, an interpretative paradigm (also known as constructivist) was adopted. Such a perspective accepts and recognizes that the reality here studied (i.e., learning and identity development) is "socially constructed and culturally organized" (Ma, 2016, p. 22) and, therefore, can only be subjectively interpreted (Lerum, 2001). Hence,

in contrast with more positivist perspectives, it is not the intention of this work to focus on a reality that has been created as “knowable”. Rather it is to extend and explore the chances of knowing the unknown by exploring the relative and subjective understanding of students’ experience and perceptions (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009). Such an approach holds the potential to appreciate students’ “multiple perspectives and versions of the truth” (Thanh & Thanh, 2015, p.25), while exploring the catalytic transformations of students’ perceptions in their particular context and time. The interpretive paradigm then, offers a better way to accommodate the desired research intentions in relation to the phenomenon under study. It also allows a more personalized, meaningful and rich understanding of the real impact of coach education on students’ cognitive and social development. Such ambition implies an understanding of the reality under study as multiple, contextual and co-created by participants and researcher(s) since the results here reported emerge from the interaction between them (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011).

3.3 Research design

“...the art and the science of the research is to be aware as to the relative strengths and weaknesses of each selected method and link it to the most appropriate design.”

(Smith, 2010, p.40)

In order to address the objectives identified in chapter one, it was decided to use a longitudinal research design within a constructivist framework. This means that emphasis would be placed on the on-going changes and transformations in the students’ understandings and construction of meaning of their educational experiences during their academic degree. Here, it was anticipated that the use of a flexible and

interactive design would allow me, as the researcher, to be open and adaptable to the settings and subjects under investigation. Using a selection of intertwined qualitative research methods, within a broad ethnographic frameworks, would similarly allow an exploration of the complexities of coach learning through studying the students' individual experiences and sense making of them in a close, yet non-participatory manner. Equally, caution was utilised not to pre-empt the findings with already established firm concepts, thus influencing the generation of the most preeminent and relevant factors that catalysed the students' experience and development. Such an approach has been termed 'methodological eclecticism' (Hammersley, 1996), which emphasises the practical nature of research as the driving concern to ensure an appropriate fit between the method and the research question. Therefore, video diaries (VD), reflexive accounts (RA) and focus group interviews (FG) were the three specific methods selected to collect data. The table below illustrates the scheduled moments of data collection throughout the project.

Study Calendar	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.
	Video Diaries & Reflexive Accounts											
Year 1 2011-2012				FG 1 x4		FG 2 x4		FG 3 x4		FG 4 x4		
Year 2 2012-2013		FG 5 x3				FG 6 x3		FG 7 x3		FG 8 x3		
Year 3 2013-2014			FG 9 x3			FG 10 x3				FG 11 x3		

Table 1: Study Calendar

3.4 Study context

The study was conducted in Portugal, at the Faculty of Sport, University of Porto (FADEUP). It is an institution recognized as one of most prestigious sports HEIs in the country, with an international reputation for the quality of its academic,

professional and research work. During the time of this project (the first year of the project), the Faculty comprised a total of 1662 students across its undergraduate and post graduate programmes. Nevertheless, for this study, only undergraduate students from the BSc in Sports Science were included.

In 2011 (1st Year), the BSc course had 184 students enrolled in the first year. Yet at the beginning of the 2nd Year (2013), only 150 students were enrolled. Of those students, 101 opted to follow the Sport Coaching pathway, 2 the Sport and Special Population pathway, 27 the Health and Exercise pathway and 20 the Sport Management pathway. Among the 101 sports coaching students enrolled in 2013, 10 students choose to have their ‘methodology’ (i.e., sport specific) module in volleyball, 5 in basketball, 7 in handball, 5 in swimming, 7 in gymnastics, 53 in football and 14 in athletics. In the present study, all students selected followed the Sport Coaching pathway.

3.4.1 Structure of the course

Each curricular year was divided into two semesters, corresponding to 60 (ECTS) credits. The first three semesters were common to all students. However, from the 4th semester (that is, in the 2nd semester of the 2nd year), students had to choose a specialization, within a set of available offers (e.g., Sports Coaching, Sports Management, Exercise and Health, Sports or Special Populations). In addition to this, between the 2nd and 5th semesters, students were also given an opportunity to choose an optional module per semester. The intention was to provide students with some power of choice in relation to their academic development (See appendix 2).

The Sports Coaching pathway comprised 3 modules named Sports Methodology I (4th semester), Sports Methodology II (5th semester) and Sports Methodology III (6th semester). Within this strand, students had to choose a ‘sport discipline’ (i.e., football, volleyball, swimming, athletics, gymnastics, handball and/or basketball). ‘Sports Methodology I’, aimed to introduce and consolidate specific knowledge of the sport selected, particularly in relation to planning, implementing, conducting and evaluating training sessions and competition performances. (Mesquita, 2009). In Sports Methodologies II and III, professional placement opportunities (i.e., ‘training centres’) were provided in local sports clubs, associations and federations (Mesquita, 2009). Such ‘training centres’ were understood as placement spaces where students were confronted with the problems of professional practice. Here, the students were accompanied by a supervisor (i.e., the lecturer who specialised in the particular sport in question) and by a tutor (i.e., an experienced coach based at the host organisation). The curricular teaching hours of the units Sports Methodology II and III comprised thematic seminars and discussion of the students’ work placement experiences (Mesquita, 2009) (See appendix 2).

3.4.2 Teaching format and assessment regulations

Most of the theoretical modules were delivered through lead lectures to large numbers of students with the exception of ‘Practical Studies I and II’, which were naturally taught in practical settings (e.g., sports complex or outdoor sports camps). Here, the students were divided into smaller groups, usually organized by gender, in order to create a more homogenous learning environment.

In term of assessment, students had to pass all the modules on the degree in order to receive a final degree qualification. To progress every year, 75% attendance

was required, and a minimum mark of 10 (out of 20) in each module had to be achieved. In most cases, students were given the option of being assessed through a final exam or through distributed exams throughout the semester. However, the ‘practical studies’ modules were again an exception. Here, because of the specificity of the content delivered, the assessment was usually split between practical tasks and theoretical exams. The theoretical exam would focus on technical knowledge of the sport (rules, sport principles, technique and tactical skills, etc...) while the practical tasks related to a physical performance test, where the students had to demonstrate a determinant number of practical skills related to the specific sport in question. To give an example; within ‘Practical Studies I- Gymnastic’ the students had to complete a theoretical exam (30%) and five practical tests (70%) to pass this specific module. The practical tests included: (1) composing and performing a floor routine; (2) composing and performing a sequence of six jumps on a trampoline; (3) composing and performing a full routine in one of Artistic Gymnastics apparatus (option to select the apparatus); (4) performing a “forward handspring” on the Vault and (5) a “glide kip” on the High Bar.

3.5 Recruitment procedures

Participants were selected using network and purposive sampling techniques (Patton, 2002). The intention here was not to get a representative sample of the student population, but rather to gain further understanding of the particular educational journeys followed. To fit the recruitment criteria, therefore, students had to be in the 1st year of their BSc and had to demonstrate a committed intention to choose the Sport Coaching Pathway in the second year of study. Due to these loose criteria, a larger sample was selected for the study than originally intended, although doing so took

somewhat into account the possibility of academic dropout and provided an opportunity to consider which students had the potential of being ‘rich cases’ from which I could deduce and decide about their learning and professional development (Patton, 2002).

The recruitment of participants was initially facilitated by the fact that the project was presented in a formal setting, with a collaboration of staff members. Their support, position and institutional power determinately influenced initial participation interest. However, at the first meeting with those who had declared such interest I was aware that I had to distance myself from the teaching staff in order to develop greater trust and rapport with the participants. To do so, I invested time in informal encounters, often intentionally engineered, where I had the opportunity to know them better and more importantly, let them know me. I also used my experience as a student and coach to establish a close rapport with the students and gain credibility both for the project and for myself as a researcher. Initially, I even deliberately started to avoid being seen with particular staff members, thus developing my role as an ‘insider’ as opposed to an authority influenced ‘outsider’. This allowed me to construct and fortify an image of a mature student, perceived as a confident friend. As someone who was once a student in the same environment, and, hence, was capable of understanding their academic experiences and related emotions.

The initial sample used in the study comprised a group of 20 (2 girls and 18 boys) undergraduate students from the Faculty of Sport, at the University of Porto, Portugal. However, by the end of the first year, some of the students had opted to follow different paths in their academic studies (somehow expected), reducing the sample group to 16 students (2 girls and 14 boys). These 16 were then tracked through

their final two years of study. The students came from different points within the country and, at the beginning of the university lives, were not known to each other. Most of the participants entered university straight from secondary school, hence had an age range of between 18 to 19 years old. A single exception here was one student who enrolled on the degree course two year after completing his secondary school, and hence was 21 years old. In addition, all the participants were enrolled as full-time students and were actively involved in sport activities as athletes (1 Volleyball, 3 Karate, 1 Figure Skating; 1 Tennis, 1 Hockey Skate and 7 Football). Consequently, although they all had the intention of become sport coaches, none of them had yet assumed functions as coaches.

During their first academic year, most of the participants created strong friendships with each other, which undoubtedly facilitated group discussion during the data collection, as also influenced some of the opinions created and developed during the course. Additionally, their integration into the project made them, in some way, feel as if they belonged to a 'group' (i.e., this project), which increased considerably during the second year, when their specify pathway into sport coaching started. In their second year of study, two of the students opted for doing their 'methodology' (i.e., specialized in) in volleyball, two in handball, seven in football and three in athletics (although in this group one of them had decided in his 3rd year do his placement work in a hockey skate club where he was currently playing).

3.6 Methods of data collection

3.6.1 Focus groups interviews

Focus group interviews have been described in the literature as a method that permits participants to make meaning of their life experiences (Hollander, 2004;

Krueger, 1998; Wilkinson, 1999), whilst allowing researchers access to such views and attitudes (Levers, 2006; Morgan & Krueger, 1993; Morgan, Krueger & King, 1998). Commonly used in qualitative studies (Teufel-Shone & Williams, 2010), this kind of methods helps participants to articulate their thoughts by reflecting upon and evaluating their concepts during sessions. Similarly, Parker et al. (2012) argue that by voicing a thought, or hearing others' opinions for the first time, participants start to build a better understanding of their own thoughts and those of others. In this way, through making meaning and reflecting more deeply on their own and others' experiences, insight is developed (Parker et al, 2012; Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Such a justification is often given for the use of focus group interviews over individual interviews; that is, the ability to produce insights that would be less accessible without group interaction (Morgan, 1988,1996; Cohen et al., 2011; Hu et al., 2007).

Although, Hydén and Bulow (2003) suggest that focus group interviews produce less data than one-to-one interviews with the same number of individuals, the social dynamic they promote allows an interactive process of co-analysis and critical reflection of individual responses (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The format also permits researchers to better understand the differences and similarities among groups (Zacharakis et al., 2011). With this method then, participants are encouraged to reflect and describe their own experiences in their own words, promoting a naturalistic environment that not only incorporates participants' discourses but also "emotions, ironies, contradictions, and tensions" (Gruden-Schuck, Allen & Larson, 2004, p.1-2)

Based on this assumption and justification, focus group interviews were used to engage in dialogue with the participants in order to elicit their personal descriptions and perceptions of themselves and their understandings of identity development (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Subsequently, the interviews were focused on concrete

events and instances which the students felt important to their development, in addition to their feelings and experiences about their evolving selves. This enabled me to interact directly with the participants and review points or ask questions about information collected by other more individual methods of data collection (i.e., video diaries and reflective accounts) in a more focus and timely manner (Cohen et al., 2011). Yet, despite such advantages, care was given to the management of group discussions to minimise the predominance of opinionated and leading voices. Here, ‘quieter’ voices were constantly encouraged to contribute to the discussions, particularly on points of potential disagreements and contention (Patton, 2002).

In using the focus groups as opportunities to reflect on, and further develop, the data collected from the other means, it was somewhat inevitable that they would become the principal means of data collection. In this way then, they served as means of clarification and contention to what had already been reported, in addition to joint sense making forums.

3.6.1.1 Modus operandi

In this research eleven semi-structured focus group rounds were conducted along the three years, providing the opportunity for participants to relate their personal understanding of events, perceptions and context (Powney & Watts, 1987). Working on the assumption that smaller groups are more productive (Kieffer, 2005, Krueger, 2000, Fen, 2001), by giving more time and opportunity for each participant to discuss views and experiences on a determined topic, in addition to allowing the moderator to more easily control the active discussion (Morgan, 1992), the size of each focus group was never bigger than 6 or smaller than 4 people. During the first year of focus groups (1st year), 4 groups of 5 participants each were created. This was reduced in the second

year to 3 groups (comprising 5, 5 and 6 participants) in response to the slight drop off in participant numbers, and also to avoid some “theoretical saturation” (Morgan et al. 1998); i.e., a point where information provided appears to be easily predictable, thus no longer generating new information (Morgan, 1996; Parker et al, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Zeller, 1993).

The homogeneity of each group was also guaranteed during the sessions to allow affinity among participants. This, it has been argued, promotes self-disclosure and reduces the tendency towards contradictory differences (Parker et al., 2012; Hollander, 2004; House et al, 2006; Hughes & Dumont, 1993; Knodel, 1993). A further rationale given for such an arrangement was that within a small socially connected community, participants tend to be hesitant to disclose experiences with ‘strangers’ (Teufel-Shone & Williams, 2010; Smithson, 2000). These were real considerations to be engaged with within the current project. Hence, the structure of the groups was so informed as to better generate such convergence and (social) comfort. The following citation expressed by one of the participants’ illustrated this:

Can I change? I had never been with the next group and I would like to! This group doesn’t understand my thoughts or points of view because they do not know me and I don’t feel comfortable to engage in a discussion with them. That is why I stay speechless and just directly answer your questions. If I had the chance to change groups I’m sure that I would be able to contribute more to the project, because the other students (next group) are my personal friends and know me. (Pedro, informal conversation [at the end of the 5th FG Session], 9th October 2012)

Additionally, the use of an ‘insider’ to moderate the session (myself) was viewed as helpful in generating a more comfortable and natural process of information sharing and discussion (Smithson, 2000). This was done by empathetic interacting and questioning thus giving the participants a feeling that they were talking with someone

who understood their experiences and perspectives (Hughes & Dumont, 1993; Teufel-Shone & Williams, 2010; Parker et al., 2012)

Furthermore, being semi-structured in nature, the interviews allowed a framework of questions to be followed whilst remaining free to probe beyond the immediate answers given (Krueger, 1994, Merton et al, 1990). This offered the flexibility for gaining additional information on issues deemed important, enabling both clarification and elaboration to take place (May, 1999). The interviews were also loosely structured on the students' unfolding (reflective) blogs and video diaries, providing an opportunity for participants to communicate their own understandings, perspectives and attribution of meaning (see appendix 3).

3.6.1.2 Conducting the sessions

Although the research design was clear and explicit, 'how' the data gathering process was conducted was equally crucial in ensuring the desired quality of data (Morgan, 1996; Krueger, 1993; Parker, 2012; Agar & MacDonald, 1995; Saferstein, 1995). In this respect, my role as a researcher merited particular scrutiny. For example, the risk of self-disclosure that could limit the participants' responses (Morgan, 1996), inadvertently soliciting certain responses to specific question, or conveying approval or disapproval on the choice of language used in the questions, could all distort the data and interfere with the group dynamic (Zacharakis et al., 2011). Being aware of such dangers, I decided to undertake two pilot tests, or 'dry runs' before starting the main interviews. Conducted in the same environment (FADEUP), with a similar sample that was used in the main study, and supervised by experienced researchers (supervisory team) that evaluated and constructively criticized my performances, I had the opportunity to develop my skills as a focus group moderator. In response, I

improved my communication skills, avoiding judgemental actions or expressions and developed strategies to keep the discussion on track and ‘smooth’, while providing opportunities to involve all group members (Del Rio-Roberts, M., 2011; Teufel-Shone & Williams, 2010).

Script development in terms of an interview framework formed a considerable part of this process. Consequently, informed by participants’ and evaluators’ feedback, I rebuilt and developed the interview script. Firstly, I set grounded questions related to the aims and purposes of the project, separated by two main headings: Learning and Identity. From the feedback received, this was amended to include sub-objective prompts and questions, expressing somewhat different ways of exploring the given themes in more depth. Also, during the development of the research, I progressively reduced the volume of the questions within each session to maintain a focus on the important topics, providing time for deeper discussions. Such developments are in line with Rosaline Barbour’s work (2007, p.82) who recommended “brief questions and well-chosen stimulus material [methods] to provoke and sustain discussions”.

In my first focus group sessions, I used a more structured and directive style of interviewing which gave me a level of security and focus as a moderator. However, as soon as the discussions loosened up, with the environment becoming increasingly comfortable for participants, I became less directive and more responsive, thus moderating the majority of the sessions by “‘who’” and “‘why’” questions. This strategy allowed me to achieve deeper understandings of participants’ thoughts and to avoid misunderstandings of what was said. Additionally, it helped to intensify the ‘group effect’ desired in the focus group session (Carey, 1994; Carey & Smith 1994) allowing the students to be the main agents in and of the discussions.

Finally, concerns regarding the venue where the interviews took place were also taken into account. In this respect, the focus group sessions took place in private rooms, far away from social/leisure centres (i.e., the gymnasium, the sports centre and bar) and staff offices. This was done to avoid distractions and possible constraints upon the students' responses. Consequently, before the start of each session, tables and chairs were arranged in circles allowing all participants to face each other, thus facilitating the desired 'openness'. Audio recording equipment was activated and placed in the middle of the group. Additionally, food and drinks were also provided at the beginning of each session to demonstrate some gratitude to the participants whilst also serving to encourage a more relaxed atmosphere (Barbour, 2007). Following each focus group session, transcription and analyses were started in order to provide new/amended themes for subsequent discussions.

3.6.1.3 Recording and transcription procedures

All the interviews were audio recorded with an Olympus digital voice recording device. In general, the procedure followed was thus; as the participants arrived to the interview room for the focus groups, they were invited to sit at a round discussion table with the recording device placed in the middle. Here, following informed consent, recording of the session started from the arrival of participants to the interview room to avoid breaking the flow of conversation during the transition from introductory interactions to more relevant study-focus discussions. In addition, such a strategy served well to capture small comments or spontaneous exchanges between the participants often related to relevant episodes of their academic journey prior to the interviews. The recording device was always visible to participants and, as stated, they were made aware of it as they entered the room. They were also reminded of their ethical rights as participants at the beginning of the session.

During the interview, minor notes were taken to facilitate further exploration of emergent points made by the participants thus aiding the process of data analysis (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Here, a conscious effort was made not to disturb the flow of the conversation in relation to what participants were discussing, thus allowing the data to be largely “participant-led”. Once the participants left the room, the notes were used to frame the writing of more extended memos that later acted as prompts to further facilitate both the process of data analysis as well as my reflexivity over the research process. The next steps involved saving the audio files in a password safe computer and to initiate the process of verbatim transcription and translation.

In relation to the latter, the data were initially transcribed by myself, being fluent in both Portuguese and English. This allowed a further familiarization with the data set (Silverman, 2005). In addition, a full translation of the first cycles of interviews (from Portuguese to English) was completed to allow my supervisors to get a further insight into what they revealed and future lines of investigation. Nonetheless, as I become more confident within the process of data collection and interpretation, the decision was taken to contract an outsourcing company to transcribe the audio files, so more time could be dedicated to the process of data analysis. The full Portuguese transcripts were then analysed with only certain chunks of data being translated for discussion with the supervisory team. The translation process was kept as literal as possible with the exception of minor modifications to specific words or expressions in order to preserve conversation style and more accurate contextual meaning. For instance, often students referred to ‘lectures’ as ‘*professors*’ despite their graduation level or hierarchical ranking in the university. Furthermore, because of the existing differences on the structure, semantics and syntax between Portuguese and English languages, the length of spoken sentences and punctuation was often adapted

for purposes of clarity and fluidity without obstructing the accuracy of meaning. Additionally, on occasion, information was added to the quoted extracts to improve clarity. For example;

1) Original extract:

Uma coisa que gostei muito foi da acção da professora de pedagogia do desporto, quando ela nos deu a visão geral da opinião que a sociedade têm do desporto. Por exemplo, problemas, entre aspas, que ela têm naquelas reuniões que ela vai e é sempre a última a falar. Coisas assim que nos dão uma ideia que somos todos de Desporto, mesmo sendo do treino ou do Ensino. Há sempre aquela coisa de queremos mudar a opinião da sociedade em relação ao desporto... que o desporto não é uma coisa secundária que só serve para emagrecer ou coisas assim. Desporto é mais que isso!

2) Direct translation of extract:

One thing I really liked was the action of the sports pedagogy teacher, when she gave us an overview of society's opinion of sport. For example, problems, in quotes, that she has in those meetings she goes to and is always the last to speak. Things like that give us an idea that we are all from Sports, even if it's from training or education. There is always that thing that we want to change society's opinion in relation to sport... that sport is not a secondary thing that only serves to lose weight or things like that. Sport is more than that!

3) Final extract used in this thesis:

*I really liked when the pedagogy lecturer spoke to us about how sport is socially perceived. I mean, the “problems” faced at meetings, for instance when she is always the last to speak [**symbolising a lack of recognition and importance**]. Stories and experiences like that, give us an idea that we are all sport professionals, as coaches or teachers. We all want to change the public and social opinion in relation to sports...we*

don't want people to think sport is a secondary thing that is just useful to get fit and lose weight. It is more than that!

(Duarte, year 1, FG1G1, December 2011).

3.6.2 Video diaries¹

To engage with the effort of mapping students' learning and identity development processes, video diaries were used to access everyday experiences and their potentially disorganized 'streams of consciousness'. Such means afforded the possibility to empower students to talk, produce and embody their own stories (Pini, 2001).

The students here were free to utilize any electronic device capable of recording video (e.g., video camera, phone, and computer) and there were no established rules in relation to 'where' and 'when' the videos would be recorded. The videos were guided by two principal themes, learning experiences and identity self-reflections. The participants were asked to keep a video diary where they reported stories, experiences and thoughts about their lives as students, and reflected on 'how' and 'why' these events had affected them. After each recording, the students uploaded the video into an individual online cloud storage service (i.e Wuala or DropBox) that was password protected and only accessible to the research team. As soon as possible after the videos were available, they were analyzed to prevent losing the best time to discuss, question and widen the understandings of the hidden meanings in the

¹ Some content included in this section was published by Jones, R.L.; Fonseca, J.; De Martin-Silva L., Morgan K., Davies, G and Mesquita, I. in 2014. For further details see reference list.

students' reflections. Similar to the focus group data, this information was then used to inform the discussions in the following focus groups and/or individual web forums.

The use of video diaries as a research method is quite recent and, although some have questioned its authenticity (Buchwald, Schantz-Laussen and Delmar, 2009), others claim some interesting findings from its use (Gibson 2005; Chaplin 2004; Holliday 2000, 2007; Rich et al., 2000; Bottorff 1994; Pini 2001; Pink 2001). Contrary to the majority of other studies that have used video as a methodology (e.g. McKenzie & Croom, 1994; Holt, Kinchin & Clarke, 2012; Hatten & Christensen, 2008; Zetou, et al., 2011), the quality of the videos was not considered to be an important factor within the current study. Instead, the principal intention was to access students' authentic opinions about their learning and identity development. The aim here then was to extend the richness of the data through the powerful "representations" (Pink, 2007).

Considered by some to be a valuable addition to the data collection and analysis armoury (Mason 2006), video diaries can be considered a rich research tool that allows aspects of 'being' and 'becoming' to be explored by recording the "immediacy of events whilst providing opportunities for replay and reflection" (Roberts, 2011 p. 679). For some authors then this methodology is more successful than written diaries (Robert, 2011; Pink, 2007) or personal interviews (Holliday, 2007; Noyes, 2004), as they have the potential to 'show' rather than just 'tell' (Riessman 2008). In doing so, they provide an opportunity to analyse verbal and non-verbal elements, giving the possibility to have a more holistic view of the students' social background and context. Furthermore, the fact that video diaries are been produced

and recorded by participants create opportunities for researchers to view the participant's world through their own eyes (Phoenix 2010).

The use of this kind of method also allows the possibility to revisit and 'make sense' of nonverbal data over time (Bottorff 1994), thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the changes occurring during the process, whilst helping to detect factors that motivate those changes. For Ruth Holliday (2007, p.261), video dairies are also a great opportunity to capture the "performativities' of identity" in relation to "how" students embody and represent their own lives to the camera. Similarly, Cherrington and Watson (2010, p. 270) in their study demonstrated a concern for empowering participants to tell their own stories, whilst focusing on their "embodied identities in the context of everyday lives". Video diaries then appear to be an instrument to access students' evolving identities over time, much more so than mere facts in relation to personal developments could ever do. Although this method seemed, for the reasons outlined above, to be an appropriate fit with the design of the study, some caution was also noted. According to Pink (2007, 124):

"Ethnographers usually re-think the meanings of photographic and video materials discussed and/or produced during fieldwork in terms of academic discourses. They, therefore, give them a new significance that diverges from the meanings invested in them by informants, and from meanings assumed by ethnographers themselves at other stages of the project. "

Nevertheless, the same author (2007, p.175) contends that "video has a special potential to represent the inevitably embodied and multi-sensory experience of ethnographic fieldwork and evoke other people's sensory experience to an audience/reader". In this way, it holds the potential to persuade audiences to "bear witness" to the lives filmed (Holliday 2007, p.61). Hence, the participants in the

current were encouraged to be active agents in the construction, interpretation and related meanings of the data collected (Cherrington & Watson 2010, Carless and Douglas 2009, Enright and O'Sullivan, 2012).

3.6.2.1 The dynamics of recording a video diary

As Cherrington and Watson (2010 p.270) identified, video diaries are a “kind of interaction between the participants and ‘the camera’ which offer us an intimate portrayal of participants’ sense of self and identity in personalised, private and special contexts”. However, this is not as simple a process as it first seems. Access to such private information is not for everyone, and requires time. Indeed, if it is hard for one to expose thoughts and feelings to someone they know, it is even harder to expose them to someone who does not belong to their ‘circle of trust’. Individuals possess a unique identity, which is reflected in their own way of thinking, feeling, seeing and reacting. Therefore, if we are to understand any research participants, a relationship has to be developed based on trust. In order to achieve this, one of my first goals as a researcher was to become part of the group and be, relatively at least, accepted as one of them.

Because of the age difference and the position I occupied in the University structure (PhD Student), the students perceived me as a member of staff; as someone who could judge or expose their confidential information. In fact, despite all correct ethical procedures engaged with, this was a challenge. As such, organised informal events seemed to be the best way to develop a closer interaction hence I arranged meetings in the university’s bar, had dinner together, and played team sports during free time. As an outsider in those particular environments, I quickly understood that I

had to take the initiative. Sharing my own thoughts and opinions appeared to be an important aspect of this process.

With time and consistency, the students became more comfortable to share their thoughts and feelings. However, this was more evident in the focus groups than in the video diaries. An example of this was when one of the participants completed her video diary entry reading a paper hidden from the view of the camera. Even believing that what the student recited was sincere, I could not see what Cherrington and Watson (2010) describe as “tacit forms of communication”, i.e., a communication that cannot be completely translated into words (Collins, 1981) but can lead us to a better understanding of the value and the impact of particular everyday stories.

It became obvious that talking to a video for most of the students was problematic; there was constant feedback that informs us of the impact of speech. In video diaries, such interaction simply doesn't exist. Hence, the participants reported difficulty in talking to a machine that didn't react or express feelings in anyway; it was more difficult than they, or I, had expected. Becoming familiar with the camera and capable of reporting and reflecting their experiences then was a lengthy process. It was soon understood that the diaries had to be a familiar and enjoyable process to commit participants to complete them with care and interest; explaining the aims and expectations related to this approach was not enough.

Far from recording spontaneous thought as often claimed in the literature, because the method enabled them to watch themselves afterwards, the students were often tempted to re-record the videos; they became rehearsed performances. Additionally, the students started to ask for more guidance on how they should complete the videos thus expecting feedback on whether what they have done so far

was acceptable. Some structure was, therefore, important to orientate them towards the study's objectives, hence, they were provided with topics to guide their reflections (i.e., "what expectations did you have for this year", "tell us how your day in university was", "what is your conception of coaching"). This helped to lead the participants towards the project aims whilst also motivating them to complete more video diaries, and further engaging them with the process.

3.6.3 Reflective accounts

From time to time, each participant was also asked to provide some written reflective accounts in relation to specific topics that were considered as needing further exploration. The emphasis was on reflection upon personal experiences, reactions, ideas, questions and self-evaluation. The main purpose was to get participants to consider their own personal development over time; a process taken akin to mediating experience and knowledge (Schön, 1983). Through such accounts, it was anticipated to gain further insight into students' views of their own learning and evolving identities.

In qualitative research, written reflective narratives continue to be a popular method of data collection, largely because they are both cost effective and personally insightful (Chase, 2005). Particularly within the sports literature, written accounts have traditionally been used simultaneously as a pedagogical tool for promoting reflection and learning (e.g., Dixon, Lee & Ghaye, 2013) as well as a method of data collection (e.g. Irwin and Hramiak, 2010; Snee, 2010). To give a few examples, written accounts have been used to explore professional identities (Irwin and Hramiak, 2010), understand undergraduate students' experiences of different pedagogical

approaches (Luguetti et al., 2019), and to explore the student-coaches' learning within work placement experiences (Afonso, Azevedo & Mesquita, 2016).

In the context of this study, reflexive diaries acted as a complementary and alternative method of reflection that allowed the participants to deepen their self-understandings in relation to the research aims (see, Chapter I) without compromising the freedom or spontaneity in the writing process (Prinsloo, Slade and Galpin, 2011). Thus, in order to achieve this, participants were only asked to reflect upon topics that may not have been covered or captured by the other methods of data collection. Here, Bell and Waters (2014) remind us that to ensure commitment to these tasks, researchers should ensure there is an agreed time span (e.g., week, month) and explicit instructions about the aims, expectations and procedures for each reflection. Furthermore, the same authors caution that care should be taken with regard to the time and frequency of such demands or expectations. Acknowledging that the participants of this study were full-time students, consideration was given to 'how often' and 'when' reflections were requested, or could realistically be expected, thus avoiding busy exam or study periods which held the potential or likelihood to decrease the students' motivations for engagement with the task. Furthermore, at the beginning of the data collection process some prompts (again based on research aims) were given to help students initiate their written reflections. The intention here was not to undermine the potential for spontaneity and originality, but rather to help students familiarize themselves with the task, thus avoiding short, superficial or irrelevant responses (Bell & Waters, 2014).

To manage the process, the collection of the written reflections were done via email. Here, a private institutional email account was created specifically for the

project, to guarantee the safety and security of the information. Having such interaction via email, also enabled a ‘keeping in touch’ with the participants about a number of issues over many months and considerable distances (i.e., between Wales and Portugal). In this respect, follow up questions and additional e-conversations were regularly and more easily held that further served to develop and enrich the produced student narratives (Beattie, 2009).

3.7 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is often seen as an artful sense-making skill that requires engagement from the outset (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). For interpretivists, this stage of the research process requires researchers to become “analytical bricoleurs” (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p.115) that give sense, structure and meaning to un-linear, multi-layered and messy sets of data (Taylor, 2014). Consequently, qualitative approaches to data analysis tend to lean towards more flexible and adaptable analysis processes that can better match the fluidity and dialectic nature of qualitative forms of enquiry. This is because, for many (e.g., Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Wolcott, 2008) reducing analysis to standardised stepwise procedures is rather limiting as it fails to appreciate the evolution of the data set and may lead researchers to miss hidden or interconnected aspects of that data set (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

In this study, such a flexible approach was followed to allow a constant ‘back and forth’ between data collection, interim interpretations and research aims. Such a continuous and iterative process is defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a comparative approach whereby data analysis processes influence and are influenced by data collection. As a result, themes and trends were identified and followed by recursive reviews of the data, so the changes and transformations of the participating

students' cognitive and social development could be better captured. In this respect, the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016; Clarke & Braun, 2018) and grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006) were considered to analyse the data retrieved from the focus groups, video diaries and personal accounts. Having said that, the aims of the project still acted as the overruling framework to structure the process of analysis throughout. Consequently, it would be accurate to say that an ongoing iterative process was engaged in where the analysis undertaken neither followed a truly deductive or inductive path.

More specifically, following Charmaz (2006), a predominantly inductive coding-to-thematic exercise was engaged in; a constant comparative exercise which also involved a reflexive examination of my own personal interpretations as a researcher. This also involved critical discussions with my supervisors in terms of interpreting, organising and reorganising the data in order to generate an original analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Hence the data collection and analysis processes were conducted 'hand-in-hand' in order to ensure both data familiarisation and a sense of direction for the subsequent cycles of data collection (Bryman, 2016).

In more detail, an initial effort to reduce and organise the data collected entailed an inductive code creation process related to incidents or segments of the data that provided a meaningful account of the participants' professional learning and identity development journeys. The ambition here was to associate symbolised constructs that attributed meaning to sections of the data that could later be identified as patterns (Saldana, 2013). Hence, to stay close as possible to the participants' 'voices' an effort was made to follow Charmaz's (2006) suggestion of "starting from

the words and actions of the respondents' (p. 49). This is referred by the author to as *in vivo* coding (p.55). Some examples of this initial coding process are provided below:

- *Strategies to learn - Memorization does not lead to knowledge:*

Rui: For 'X' module we had a lot to memorize...

Carlos: Absolutely! Memorization was everything we had to do. I'm glad it's over now. I think it was useless.

Antonio: Yes, that was our last exam [of the semester] and we had to memorize a lot of stuff. Because of that I don't think I now remember much of it.

Daniel: Well, **when the study process becomes a memory exercise, knowledge is easily lost!**" (FG4G4, Year 1)

- *Teachers' approaches- Lectures' actions demonstrate 'what not to be':*

This is completely inappropriate! We worked hard over a long period to achieve a specific objective and on exam day, he decides to change the rules!?!?I do not think that is fair; I think in terms of teaching it is completely inadequate!" Honestly, what happened, made me think about my future role as a coach. I hope not to make this mistake in future. If there is anything I learned, it is not to be like him" (VD4, Lara, Year 2)

The initial coding was performed as soon as possible following data collection, to facilitate discussions with the supervision team and to inform subsequent rounds of data collection. Once this initial coding process was over, the highlighted data were transferred to an excel spreadsheet to facilitate the grouping of recognised similarities across the dataset. At this stage, a decision was made to keep the data organised by year to avoid obstructing or blend our understanding of how students formed and positioned their learning and professional identities along time. The table that follows (see, Table 2) provides an overview on how the most preeminent initial codes identified in Year 1 were grouped (focused coding) and subsequently aligned to the aims and timeline of the research, in an effort to provide a grounded, contextualised and time bounded presentation of main findings.

Academic Year	Initial coding	Focus coding	Aims	Results Presentation
YEAR 1	Athletic identity	Personal identity	Aim 4	More than anything, I'm a 'sporty' person!
	Self-identification with role			
	Understanding of coaching role	Social identity		
	Social discredit of professional role			
	Difference between secondary school and university	Preferred Teaching Approaches	Aim 1 & 3	You are the expert. Just tell me what I need to know!
	Need for content structure and assurance from lectures			
	Connection between theory and practice			
	Consumerist Identity	Superficial/passive approach to study	Aim 2, 3 & 5	It wasn't the best way to learn, but it was an effective one!
	Focus on memorization of knowledge			
	Focus on assessment	Strategic approach to study		
	Last-minute approach to study			
	Assessment focus on memorization	Assessment strategies	Aim 1, 4 & 6	I learned a lot, but not much about coaching. I can't wait for the next year!
	Expected to be provided with all content			
	Wake-up call - memorization does not lead to knowledge	Change of learning Epistemology		
	Accepting some agency in the process of learning			
	Deeper approach to study			
	Changes on how they see their role in university	Change in Learners Identity		
	Frustration with examination assessment strategies			
	Curriculum does not focus on Coaching			

Table 2: Thematic table (Year 1)

Along this process, I naturally had to assume an active role in the analysis of the data by taking decisions in terms of finding commonalities, formulating new codes, while discarding any data that did not adequately relate to the objectives of the study (Charmaz, 2006). Additionally, alongside this I completed and developed an analytical notebook of informal memos that initiated transition of the descriptive process to more

a critical and theoretical analysis of the data. These memos thus served to highlight and clarify observations of the data whilst facilitating knowledge exploration without imposing any theoretical framework. Such work also promoted a reflexivity above levels of relative neutrality required in the analysis of the phenomenon under study (Saldana, 2013).

Following this, as touched upon earlier (see page 101), a lighter theoretical engagement was decided upon in the final discussion of the data. In pursuing the intention of give primacy to the data set collected over three years, to indicate the journey experienced by the cohort of student-coaches featured in the project, a conscious intention not to bury the data and what they represent under thick layers of ‘sense-making’ theory was decided upon. This, however, is not to claim a totally inductive approach was employed within the study. Rather, that sensitising concepts from existing established theory were used as and when they seemed to have the potential to make sense of the findings and further the analysis, rather than being imposed on the study at the outset.

3.8 Ethical procedures

Any academic research requires intellectual rigour, honesty and care about the results presented (Blee & Currier, 2011). Thus, a discussion about ethical concerns tends to have a central location in research (Patton, 2002), specifically around issues that arise from the relationships between researcher and participants (Bryman, 2004). This section intends to acknowledge the ethical procedures conducted at the beginning of this research and explains how the study followed the norms and guidelines from Cardiff Metropolitan University’ ethics committee. The sections that follow will

discuss in further detail about how consent was gained from participants and how issues regarding anonymity were communicated. Here the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Statement of Ethical Practice from the British Sociological Association (2002) served as structural guidance for the ethical consideration given in the development of the work.

3.8.1 Consent form

Considering the general scope of this study, consent was first granted from the Faculty of Sport at the University of Porto where this study was conducted (see appendix 4). Following this, the students that demonstrated an interest to participate were invited to an initial informative meeting. Here, the specifics of the research project were explained in ‘layman’s terms’ and the opportunity to ask questions was given. At the end of the session, each participant received a consent form and an information sheet that highlighted the procedures, commitments and potential risks associated with the study (see appendix 5). The students were then given a week to return the signed consent forms agreeing to participate (or not). As part of the agreement, students were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without the need for justification or fear of penalty. Also, the guarantee was given that any data collected would be kept safe, in a password-protected computer accessed only by the researcher. In addition to this, the students were reassured of their right to access their personal data whenever requested (Data Protection Act, 1998)

3.8.2 Anonymity issues

Due to the methods used within the study the anonymity of the individuals’ identity could not always be assured, due to the characteristics of some of the methods

used in the study (i.e. video diaries). The same applies to the academic institution since the identification of the particular context was essential to understand the reality where students lived their experiences. Although this might seem a transgression of the most basic ethical procedures, according to Mellick and Fleming (2010), the alternative options to omit rich descriptions or include spurious details, could risk the development of a written report that was “less authentic and the analysis less persuasive” (p.301). Thus, despite recognising the responsibility to protect sources and any sensitive information (BSA, 2002) it was relevant for this study to disclose specific details that can indirectly disclose anonymity, in order to ground the analysis and discussion of the data in specific contexts, circumstances and practices

Consequently, despite the use of pseudonyms in this work, students were fully informed of the potential risk of recognition of their identity in specific quotes or video clips (mainly used for public presentation in conferences or workshops). Here, the researcher gave accurate dissemination of the risks to all participants involved and appropriate negotiations of how the research would be used were agreed between the researcher, director of studies and the participants every time there was the need to use some of the clips. Surprisingly to what was expected, the degree to which they would be afforded anonymity and confidentiality was not necessarily seen as a problem by participants. Similar to what Patton (2002) noticed in regards to other research, the participants in this study saw this project an “opportunity to gain empowerment through telling their stories and perhaps becoming a catalyst for social changes” (p.411) and therefore felt proud every time one of their videos or quotes were asked to be used.

Additionally, along with this study, participants were confronted and asked about the veracity of the researcher interpretation of the data. This not only allowed me to keep participants informed about how the information was being treated, but also contributed to avoiding trustworthiness and validity deviations. Moreover, this also helped to minimize the power relations between me as researcher and the participants, contributing to the building of quality relationships and establishing a closer rapport with them. After all, this kind of research “grows out of the evolving relationship cultivated with the people in the study community”; therefore, participants in this study were not just participants but also “partners” or “collaborators” in the research process (Angrosino, 2007, p.88) whilst recognizing that research directions’ are ultimately dictated by researchers.

3.9 An assessment of the research quality

For some time now, interpretivist researchers have been contesting the ‘truth criterion’ (i.e., a theory confirmed only by objective measurements of reality) as the definitive benchmark regarding the quality of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Contrary to positivists, interpretivists are not interested in identifying causal laws, but rather in understanding peoples’ “multiple constructed realities” (p. 295) through direct and prolonged contact with individuals in specific contexts (Creswell, 2013). Consequently, quality assessment criteria based on positivist ideals of ‘accuracy’ and ‘truthfulness’ sit uncomfortably with relativist researchers, because they express a “naïve realism and a linear causality”² that do not match the relativist

² Smith and Caddick (2012, p. 70) explain naïve realism as the believe ‘ that researchers can have direct unmediated knowledge of the world’, and linear causality as objectivism, that is, ‘a believe that there must be permanent, ahistorical and a prior benchmark or foundations for judging the trust of any claim’.

and subjective positioning of qualitative forms of enquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 293). Thus, although in the past some may have argued that the use of traditional terms such as validity and reliability facilitate the discussion and acceptance of qualitative research (e.g., LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Golafshani, 2003; Creswell, 2013), more contemporaneous views advocate that such criteria are inappropriate to judge the quality of such work (see Sparkes & Smith, 2009; Shenton, 2004).

Alternatively, many have claimed and established more suitable criteria to assess the standards of qualitative research without compromising the guiding assumptions and values of relativist positions (Burke, 2016). For example, in their seminal work, Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduce the term ‘trustworthiness’ as a more naturalistic axiom to represent qualitative ideals of validation³ and, in doing so, proposed the constructs of credibility, confirmability, dependability, transferability and authenticity as equivalents to the traditional criteria of validity, reliability and objectivity. Following this, many others have proposed parallel standards to guarantee value and trust in qualitative studies. To mention a few, Lather (1993) presented an alternative reconceptualization of qualitative validity through four key ‘frames of quality’, namely; *ironic validation*, *paralogic validation*, *rhizomatic validation*, and *voluptuous validation*. Alternatively, Bauer and Gaskell (2000) proposed the term ‘accountability’ to discuss aspects associated with confidence and relevance of any study, while Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001), in an effort to synthesis 13 relevant perspectives, proposed ‘credibility, authenticity, criticality and integrity’ as

³ Creswell (2013) defines qualitative validation as an ‘attempt to access the “accuracy” of the findings as best described by the researcher and the participants’ (p.249)

primary criteria, with ‘explicitness, vividness, creativity, thoroughness, congruence and sensitivity’ as secondary ones.

Recently, the rise of postmodern perspectives has witnessed a further move away from traditional notions of research validity established in and through ‘golden standard’ criteria, to the changes and challenges experienced by researchers in the investigative process. This includes a researcher’s ability to establish an ethical relationship with participants, and to question the impact of personal assumptions on related decision making (Richardson & Pierre, 2005; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Thus, instead of establishing a set of standard criteria to judge the quality of research, such scholars draw on a metaphorical image of crystal to “reflect and refract the process of research, such as discovering, seeing, telling, storying and representing” (Creswell, 2013, p. 249). In the words of Richardson and Pierre (2005, p. 963);

“the central imaginary for “validation” for postmodern texts is not a triangle – a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi dimensionalities, and angles of approach. What we see depends on our angle of response—not triangulation but rather crystallization.”

Although the criteria adopted to judge good practice in qualitative research is diverse, an engagement in such discussions is undeniably important to inform both the fidelity and trust of any research report. Here, a common ground exists in terms of; prolonged familiarity with participants and culture, frequent debriefing, triangulation (of data, methods of data analysis and theoretical frameworks), negative case analysis and member checking (Shenton, 2004). In this study, the work of scholars such as Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011), Treharne and Riggs (2015), Finlay (2002), Tracy

(2010) and Sparkes and Smith (2009) was used to bring such considerations to the fore. The intention, however, was not to follow a specific universal set of standardised criteria, as such an approach would go “against the subjective and constructivist” philosophical position of this work (Smith & Caddick, 2012, p.70). Rather it was to highlight some of the strategies used to guarantee the work’s transparency (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) and authentic confirmability (Guba, 1981).

In this regard, reflexivity was a primordial strategy used to enhance the trustworthiness of the work. According to Finlay (2002), reflexivity is defined as the ability to be critically aware of the self as a researcher, and its influence on the interaction with the studied subject. In other words, it is an active inspection into how a researcher’s roles, privileges, personal circumstances, experiences and locations inform the collection, selection and interpretation of the data (Willig, 2013). Such engagement helps to clarify “who speaks, for whom, to whom, for what purposes” (Lincoln, 1995, p. 282), allowing clarity, transparency and credibility.

Consequently, throughout this work, an on-going process of introspection about myself as a researcher was promoted through the frequent use of a journal diary, where particular moments of doubt and decision making were reported. These accounts, written in a very informal and personal manner, were essential to expose not only the emotions and perceptions experienced at particular stages of the research process, but also to pay more attention to the decision making undertaken in the analysis of data and formulation of conclusions. Indeed, such a reflexive activity forced attention upon my *self-in-role* and my development as a researcher. This allowed me to recognise my voice in the process and shift my position as a researcher from a passive to a dynamic one (Day, 2012).

In addition to this, an engagement with reflexivity was also essential in bringing to attention the power dynamics inherent in my position, and my personal relationships with others in the educational environment. Similar to other researchers in the area (e.g. Purdy & Jones, 2013; Santos, 2016), I felt the need to consider how I managed my positioning in the research field in order to avoid overshadowing, oppressing or silencing participants' voices and the sense of their experiences. Crucial to attain this was my familiarity with the culture of the organisation and the ability to establish a good rapport with participants from the beginning of the study (Shenton, 2004; Mannay, 2010). Naturally, my earlier academic experiences in the same academic institution easily allowed me to position myself as an insider and establish a closer relationship with participants, staff and academic structure. However, consideration was also given to my academic experiences at a different moment and time, and that my more recent educational experiences in another culture equally classified me as an outsider in this study. Thus, a constant reflection on my dual position as an insider and outsider in the field was essential in developing a trustworthy relationship with my participants, whilst maintain a degree of satisfaction between the findings and the analysis of the phenomenon under study (Charmaz, 2006).

In parallel with such reflexive activity, the methodological design has also helpful for developing trust in the research. In particular, the use of video diaries, reflexive logs and focus groups, enabled me to capture the phenomenon under study from different angles and explore contradictory and/or complementary insights that emerged along the way (Flick, 2009). Such a strategy was particularly useful to establish the confirmability of the findings and deepen the understanding of particular issues under study (Jones, Brown & Holloway, 2012). In addition, it enabled me to

explore convergences, complementarities and dissonances of experiences and resulting emotions (Erzberger & Prein, 1997).

Finally, the recurrent meetings with my supervisory team were also essential in finding such a balance between “ self-insight and looking outwards ” (Treharne and Riggs, 2015, p.61). Our discussions stimulated me to question and resolve internal doubts in relation to my practice and interpretation of findings. Here, the subtle suggestions provided by my supervisors in the form of open-ended questions were particularly useful in instigating my own reflexivity and on-going search for commitments in my interpretations.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The present chapter reports the key findings of the study in chronological order. The intention is to provide a sense of time and event sequence in relation to the students' experiences over the three years of their course. Hence, the data presented in this chapter represent a '*winnowing*' (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012) of the temporal transitions of the phenomenon under study, where only pre-eminent themes associated with the objectives of the research were regarded. As mentioned earlier (see page 108), data retrieved from the focus groups interviews feature more prominently in this section. The principal reason for this is that such events or gatherings not only provided information in and of themselves, but also served as opportunities to bring together and further discuss data gathered through other means (i.e., video diaries and reflective logs) for further clarification and development. In this respect, they also served to further examine and deconstruct the individual information detailed in the submitted video diaries and reflective accounts. However, this is not to discount the importance of, or say that individual accounts were not taken into consideration. Rather, that the featured data examples or quotations were selected for their representativeness and clarity to evidence the feelings, emotions and understandings regarding the communalities and differences within the student cohort.

The chapter begins with a prologue to set the scene and unveil the first impressions and feelings I experienced at the start of data collection. From there, the narrative is organised under three main subheadings that relate to each of the academic years, namely; 'The first steps into university: Welcome to the 'grown up world' (Year 1); 'Jumping into uncertainty and starting to think like a coach' (Year 2) and 'The promised land: Will I survive there?' (Year 3). To conclude, students' self-perceptions

of their learnings and identity developments is presented in a final section named ‘The final assessment: what have I learned, who have I become?’

4.2 Prologue: Where are we? Perceptions and feelings of an ‘old’ student

“Here I am again! Not much time has passed since I left. Not even a year! But...I feel different. I am now a Ph.D. student, and feel proud of my achievements so far. I walk in with the confidence of someone that feels on a ‘good track’. I’m doing well and feeling euphoric at the start of this new academic chapter. I see a group of students with wet hair, wearing tracksuits and ‘flip flops’; there’s the smell of chlorine in the air that I strangely missed! I don’t know them, but, just seeing them, I get nostalgic. They must be ‘freshers’, and surprisingly, already look more ‘at home’ than me. This university used to be my ‘home’ too. So far, the best moments of my life were lived here. They say this is one of the best sports university in the country, but in my heart, this is a family home.”
(Personal note, 14th November 2011)

The beginning of my journey was marked by a mix of sadness, nostalgia and enthusiasm that I now relate to the initiation of an identity transition from student to researcher. It was not easy to distance myself from the people and places that for five years had supported my academic development. Yet, I knew the particular topic I proposed to study demanded that I become somebody else. I could no longer be one of them.

As a first step, I decided to wear more formal clothes. I wanted to be perceived as an ‘external’ researcher, and not just another student. I was aware, however, that such idealistic ‘camouflage’ would be difficult to maintain, as people knew my name and even my nickname, which would give away my connection to the place and people. Still, the recruitment and first meeting with the student-participants required

an almost unnatural degree of formality, partly because it was organised and delivered in collaboration with another staff member in a classroom environment. Undeniably, such formality proved to be beneficial in guaranteeing considerable commitment to the project, yet simultaneously, it also became a concern. To develop the necessary rapport, I proudly emphasised my student identity through regaling personal episodes and experiences of my time as a student. I wanted to establish a friendly and close enough relationship so the students could feel understood and safe within our interactions. The beginning of my data collection then was consumed with micro-management and *orchestration* of such relationships where I consciously manipulated my appearance and discourse to approximate towards the outcomes desired.

The institution under study is of one of the largest and most well-established universities in Portugal. It comprises 14 faculties, 70 scientific research structures and a student population of nearly 31,000. Sport students were located in one of the newest campuses equipped with large sports facilities, including a gymnasium, fitness and conditioning suite, a swimming pool, two performance halls, a squash court, a football pitch, a grass pitch and an athletics track. On the top floor of the main building there is the library, the staff offices, laboratories and the classrooms. On the bottom, meanwhile, there is the coffee shop, the students' union, changing rooms, administrative services and sports facilities. The uniqueness of this building allowed for the development of a close community where staff, students and administrators regularly interacted with each other. Additionally, (and relevant to this study) the institution only had one undergraduate course in Sports with a total number of 116 first-year students enrolled at the time⁴, which further facilitated close connections.

⁴ Data retrieved from <https://sigarra.up.pt/fadeup/pt> regarding the 2011/2012 academic year.

The School of Sport, where the student-coaches were located, was organised into 20 teaching and research departments, which were, in turn, directly associated with particular areas of knowledge. Here, seven departments were sport-specific related (e.g., handball, football, swimming,), another seven were related to core ‘harder’ sports sciences (e.g., biomechanics, anatomy, biology, statistical analysis, physiology) and six to the so-called ‘soft’ sports sciences (e.g., pedagogy, sociology, psychology, sport management). The particular message transmitted by staff, and portrayed by students, was that the course was general and broad offering a complementary and eclectic view of sport-related areas to future professionals.

Allied to their academic studies, students also involved themselves in many social initiatives ranging from national and international university sporting championships, musical groups (i.e., *tunas*), to volunteering and thematic events. In particular, during their first-year students involved themselves in traditional initiation rituals called ‘*praxe*’ (i.e., social activities that portray tradition, humour and parody). The *praxe* is considered part of Portuguese university culture, and although detached from any academic structure or control, is considered an important aspect of student academic life. It is intended to help students ‘*feel welcome and part of something*’ (Telmo, year 1, FG4G1, June 2012), as such it instigates connections of support and cooperation between students across the years. It was within this relatively closed and traditional environment that this study was conducted.

4.3 The first steps into university: Welcome to the ‘grown up world’ (Year 1)

This section explores the students’ first year of academic studies. The results relate to students’ initial impressions about themselves, the course and their learning. Additionally, the findings in this section also highlighted students’ development of

understandings of studying and learning, and how the curricular structure of the course supported and contradicted such understandings. The section is structured under four main headings namely, ‘More than anything, I’m a ‘sporty person’’; ‘You are the expert! Just tell me what I need to know!’; ‘It wasn’t the best way to learn, but it was an effective one!’ and ‘I learned a lot, but not much about coaching. I can’t wait for next year!’.

4.3.1 More than anything, I’m a ‘sporty’ person!

From the beginning, students’ ‘sporty’ identities were a visible part of who they were, how they spoke, and how they perceived their academic experiences. Externally, their clothes, their big sports bags and distinctively relaxed appearance(s) made them stand out from the thousands of other students that inhabited the university campus. They wore their identities as ‘sporty people’ very proudly. After all, this was the course they had chosen. In the words of one of them, ‘*certainly, no one is here because they were forced to be*’ (Afonso, year 1, FG1G1, December 2011).

When asked about why they had chosen their undergraduate course, a great majority of the students referred to their experiences as athletes. In this respect, their decision on what to study was a way of maintaining a connection with a world they already felt comfortable in;

I always had a very sporty life. My parents wanted me to be active and sociable. So far, I played football, then judo, tennis, water polo, and swimming. So, sport has been part of my life and I want it to remain that way. Sport is my passion. (Nuno, Year 1, RL1, January, 2012)

My passion for sport started when I was 7 years old, in artistic roller-skating. Since then, I have put all my efforts and energy into this, achieving National and International titles. My strong links with the sport have had a huge impact on my life and, naturally, influenced my career choice. (Duarte, Year 1, RL1, January, 2012)

For the majority of the students then, their past experiences as athletes were influential in shaping their perceptions of sport. They had personally invested in it and measured much of their self-worth in relation to it.

All my life I have been involved with sports in general, and Karate in particular. I even became part of the national team. I decided to enrol on this course because I wanted the sport to become more recognised in every way. Also, I want to succeed my own coach. Like him, I want to coach national high-performance athletes. (Miguel, Year 1, RL1, January, 2012)

I always wanted to be a football coach, and I think I have a talent for it. Obviously, like others, I love football, but I also trust in my potential and knowledge. In comparison with some of my colleagues, I know that I know more than them, but I decided to come to this university because I believe it will help me to become a better professional. (Rui, Year 1, FG1G3, December 2011)

Although some students held stronger convictions than others in relation to what specifically they wanted to do in future, all agreed that working in a sport-related area had always been their ‘*dream*’. Hence, the students’ decision(s) to apply for the course symbolised an important step towards a self-identification with a professional

area and role. In other words, choosing their course was an act of affirmation of *who* they wanted to be;

We are here because this is the course we like and where we want to be. This is the career path we have chosen. This means that anything taught in this course is about a subject that we are passionate about. (Duarte, Year 1, FG1G1, December 2011)

The students' self-identification with a professional area or profession was, therefore, a process that had started long before their admission into the university. Having said that, no doubt such already established sporting identities were further solidified in an environment that '*breathes and exudes sports*' (Lara, Year 1, FG1G3, December 2011). In particular, the students reported that being in a context where everyone shared the same feelings made them feel more integrated, focussed and invested in their studies and future professional practice; something clearly expressed in the following excerpts:

I feel more determined towards my studies. (...) When I was in high school, I knew I wanted to work on something related to sport, although I wasn't sure what. Yet, along this semester I'm feeling more certain about what I want to do. I want to be a coach, a football coach. Being in this environment made me feel more determined. (Daniel, Year 1, FG1G1, December 2011)

I'm very happy with the group of people I've found here. (...) We are all from different sports and we get along very well; really because above all we love sports, we want to be good students. The group of people that I found here make me feel welcome and motivated to be here and attend

the classes. We usually exchange experiences and I've learned a lot. (Miguel, Year 1, FGIG1, December 2011).

Undeniably, the social interactions and peer group dynamics largely contributed to the students' feelings of affiliation and association. However, such salient sporting identities were not only evident within in-group interactions. For instance, this identity seemed to increasingly come to the fore when dealing with others who did not seem to value their professional area of interest. Here, the students recognised that their course was perhaps not as highly respected in the public sphere as other courses. In particular, their family and friends did not seem to understand or recognise the academic value of their career choices;

In my secondary school I choose a technical award in sport, and frequently others would ridicule the course...Also, I'm the only one from my close group of friends that studies sport, others are studying for Law or Engineering degrees. The other day, I told them that I couldn't go out because I had to study for Basketball. They were very surprised; asking what? Do you have to study Basketball? Are you joking? What is there to study? (Telmo, Year 1, FGIG1, December 2011)

When I told my grandmother, I was applying for this course she was extremely disappointed. She would prefer that I had applied for medicine, economy or law. I tried to explain that this was an academic course and that I was here because I want to be a coach. I think a lot of people think like my grandmother. (Miguel, Year 1, FGIG1, December 2011)

Such social discrediting was also a topic of discussion within lectures which, in turn, assisted the identity development of the students. In particular, some lecturers

recited their experiences as members of sporting governing bodies and associations related to sports, to explain the challenges presented to sports professionals. Such classroom views and discussion made the students feel part of a bigger cause as future sports professionals.

I really liked when the pedagogy lecturer spoke to us about how the sport is socially perceived. I mean, the problems faced at meetings, for instance when she is always the last to speak [symbolising a lack of recognition and importance]. Stories and experiences like that, give us an idea that we are all professionals, as coaches or teachers. We all want to change the public and social opinion in relation to sports...we don't want people to think sport is a secondary thing that is just useful to get fit and lose weight. It is more than that! (Duarte, year 1, FGIGI, December 2011).

In response to such discredit, the students developed something of a siege mentality against those who ridiculed their professional area of interest. This was clearly expressed by their sense of responsibility to change the image associated with the profession they had chosen. In doing so, they increasingly demonstrated a personal sporting identity;

We feel a certain responsibility about how sports are seen outside these halls, because here...is like living in a 'bubble' where everyone recognises the value. Our job is to take the ideas to the outside world (...)
I want to show that sport is more than what people see on TV, where the coaches give press conferences chewing gum and don't know how to talk. 'Sport' as a subject is more than that. (Afonso, year 1, FGIGI, December 2011).

Nonetheless, although strongly identifying with a general sporting identity, the students did not hide their desire to be, specifically, recognised as sport coaching

students. Additionally, despite categorising themselves as ‘*future coaches*’ or ‘*coach apprentices*’ (Afonso and Miguel, *year 1, FG1G1*, December 2011) in an ‘*embryonic stage*’ (Paulo, *year 1, FG1G1*, December 2011), the students gave the impression that, so far, their course structure, content and the related tutors’ behaviours had been tendentiously directed towards a career in teaching. Consequently, they felt the development of a desired professional coaching identity was somewhat ignored. In the words of two of them;

Here, everyone seems to think that anyone that picks this course wants to be PE teacher and it really annoys me! Almost all of the lecturers seem to think that we will choose to be teachers in future (...) Very often they say: when you become a teacher.... (...) That upsets me a bit. (Miguel, year 1, FG1G1, December 2011).

They [teaching staff] could be more open to coaching and provide examples of both coaching and teaching. Unfortunately, up until now, coaching is being put aside. They think everyone wants to be a teacher. (Carlos, Year 1, FG2G4, February 2012).

Similarly, some of the students appeared disappointed with the way their practical modules were conducted, with such modules focussing on their sporting abilities with the students being treated as athletes. Little attention was thus given to the development of the students’ didactic and pedagogical knowledge (‘*the lecturers only ask us to stand in the shoes of an athlete, instead of treating us as future coaches*’ (Rodrigo, *Year 1, FG3G1*, April 2012).

Such frustration was particularly articulated by two of the students who, despite appreciating the value in gaining eclectic athletic experiences, disagreed with the underlining learning intentions of the related undertaken tasks;

I know that it is important to have practical experiences in different sports to be able to teach them, as it gives us some sensitivity to teach them (...) [however] I don't understand the purpose of the assessment in the practical modules. I thought the aim of this course was to develop educators and not skilful athletes in multiple sports. We spend all the time practising to perform a specific skill, rather than learning how we should teach it (Lara, Year 1, FG1G3, December 2011).

We are not here to be professional athletes. Our future is related to teaching and coaching, so it doesn't make any sense for our future career such focus on athletic performance (Antonio, Year 1, FG2G3, February 2012).

Clearly then, the students would have liked a greater focus on the development of their desired professional identity. Hence, the students' developing coaching identities mainly emerged from external sources and how the lecturers, as pedagogues, behaved towards them. This was a learning reflective of a 'reading between the lines'.

My coach is my biggest role model...no doubt (...) Consequently, although there are a few things I have learned (at the university) this semester, these are minimal. Still, I believe they are important. For example, the attitude of the Basketball lecturer, demonstrating values of self-motivation and perseverance, or the Gymnastic one, that showed us how and when to punish students and when not. (Miguel, Year 1, FG1G1, December 2011).

4.3.2 You are the expert. Just tell me what I need to know!

As introduced in the previous section, the students began their degree with ample amounts of motivation and enthusiasm. They were excited to step into higher education and deepen their knowledge about their favourite subject: sport, in general and sports coaching, in particular. Consequently, in contrast to previous educational experiences, they confessed to being more predisposed to learn than ever before;

Duarte: The difference between university and high school is the fact that we are here because we chose this course, we want to be here, and this is the subject that we like. Logically, all the content taught on the course is about what we love.

Miguel: Which makes it easier to learn, much easier! (Year 1, FG1G1, December 2011).

Nonetheless, despite demonstrating enthusiasm and excitement for the course, the transition into higher education proved to be more difficult than anticipated for many. Whilst acknowledging and accepting an increased level of work, the findings gathered during the first year indicated that the students were not fully prepared to cope with such a change. In particular, the initial months bred feelings of insecurity, frustration and strangeness in relation to the teaching and learning environment on offer.

Accustomed to more ‘traditional’ learning environments, where information is typically presented in a ‘ready to consume’ style, the students appeared to be a little ‘lost at sea’ when such an environment was not provided;

I'm finding it really hard to understand how to study at university. Before, [in secondary school] I used to have a manual that I could study from. It was either that or the teachers would pass on notes with all the information on them. Here [at university], this does not happen. Here, the lecturers say: 'Look for it yourself!' (Frederico, Year 1, FG2G2, December 2011).

Pedro: In high school, we always had a lot of support. There was always someone telling us where to go and what to do.

Federico: Here, [at university], it's 'each man for himself'. (...)

Pedro: There is a big 'gap' between high school and university. That's what I think! Now I understand why they say the first year is the hardest! (Pedro & Fred, Year 1, FG2G2, December 2011).

In high school they 'spoon feed' us, but that doesn't happen here [university] (Lia, Year 1, FG1G3, December 2011).

The students' initial time in higher education then exposed them to a teaching and learning environment somehow adverse to their former experiences which, in turn, unleashed some discomfort and frustration. In particular, the students struggled with the lack of direction given;

I think the lecturers tend to explain once and then we have to figure things out ourselves. (...) Instead of giving us feedback or clues to correct us, they expect you to find out what you are doing wrong. That is really frustrating' (Lia, Year 1, FG1G3, December 2011).

I prefer when they [lecturers] go straight to the point. In some of the modules the lectures go around and around and, in the end, we end up not following it. If they [the lecturers] were more concise and direct to the point, we would understand it better. (Antonio, Year 1, FG1G2, December 2011).

Furthermore, students also appeared disappointed with the amount of time and effort staff members paid towards their [i.e., the students'] individual development. In particular, they felt a 'bit lost' without the consistent attention and support from their lecturers. The students thus, desired more contact time with staff members to practice, perfect and confirm if they had correctly understood what had been taught in class;

We could have had more time to practice in module X. For instance, the lecturer could have spent some time observing each one of us and then provided individual feedback, indicating what we were doing wrong! (Martim, Year 1, FG1G2, December 2011).

I rarely had feedback from the teacher and I felt a bit lost. I saw him giving feedback to others or saying it was ok, but he almost never spoke with me. (Bruno, Year 1, RL3, April 2012).

Notoriously, at the beginning of their studies, the students assumed the identity of 'consumers' characterised by an expectation of 'being provided with', in opposition to 'being part of', the learning process. Consequently, they expected a great deal of direction, guidance and assurance from their lecturers (e.g. 'the university needs to tell us what to do!' - Jose; 'be more concrete in everything (...) just give us the right

instructions'-Lara, Year 1, FG2G3, February 2012). Allied with such a need for certainty and guidance, the students also confessed to lacking confidence in their own ability to study and learn independently. Specifically, the students worried about 'missing something' or 'getting things wrong' and, consequently, failing in their assessments;

I find it hard not to have a book to support my study. With a book, I know the information there is right. Now, with a dozen PDFs and Powerpoint presentations ...[and] taking the notes in class, I worry if I've missed something or I'll get it wrong in the exam. At the moment, I feel really insecure. (Lara, Year 1, FG1G3, December, 2011).

The students' understanding of the nature of knowledge also impacted on the way they approached and related to their studies. More specifically, during the first year, the students seemed to believe there was 'one right answer' and, hence, a different interpretation to information meant 'getting it wrong'. Their insecurities and frustrations about their learning experiences then appeared to be strongly connected with a dualistic or absolute perception of the nature of the knowledge. Such a perception obstructed a recognition about the value of integrating different sources of information, expecting instead that the lecturers would provide them with definitive and clear answers (e.g., '[Lecturer x] used an expression from a certain text, and then completed the sentence with an expression taken from a completely different text. What a mess!' - Lia, Year 1, FG1G3, December 2011). Hence, the students found it difficult to understand teaching approaches centred on a more abstract or non-linear understanding of knowledge, particularly when such knowledge was not presented in an explicit or logical manner.

I don't like her because she does not follow the structure of the slides and sometimes she confuses me. She is talking about something and then she jumps into another thing. (Tiago, Year 1, FG1G4, December, 2011).

Although, such difficulties appeared to be recognised by the lecturers, the situation went largely unremedied which further increased the students' perceptions (e.g., *'The [lecturer X] said to us that later we will have the maturity to understand her classes eventually; so I am waiting (Ironic laugh)'*- Lara, Year 1, FG2G3, February 2012).

Consequently, during the first year, the students admitted favouring subjects and lecturers that presented more certainty, i.e., *'more objective and direct information [where] no one is left with doubts'* (Rodrigo, Year 1, FG3G1, April, 2012). Yet, despite such desire for assurance and structure in the information presented, the students rather paradoxically did not prefer more directive teaching methods. On the contrary, the students seem to dismiss and dislike teaching approaches that only focused on the transmission of information, which some students referred to as *'monologues'* (Manuel and Ricardo, Year 1, FG2G4, February 2012). In the words of one of the students, below;

I don't like (it) when the lecturer arrives and only he talks. When that happens, I only listen to half of it. I prefer when the lectures are more interactive and when they ask us questions...When the teachers come up with a problematic scenario from a practical context. I prefer that. That way we are forced to think. (Carlos, Year 1, FG1G4, December, 2011).

Although the students were happy to receive seemingly unproblematic information, they favoured more negotiated styles of teaching where they felt

acknowledged and valued in the learning process. More specifically, they preferred more interactive teaching methods where they had the opportunity to discuss their opinions and understandings, even if they ended up accepting the lecturers' perspectives;

This week we had lecturer X because lecturer Y was away. We really felt the difference between them. With lecturer Y we talk, discuss things and give our opinions about what should be done in a specific situation. With X though, he enters the room with his head facing down and starts to talk, then he writes something on the board and carries on talking (Afonso, Year 1, FG3G2, April, 2012).

Hence, the students seemed to value more the teacher's pedagogical knowledge than any expertise in a specific subject area (e.g. 'He [lecturer X] knows everything. He is really smart, but he doesn't know how to explain' -Rodrigo, Year 1, FG3G1, April 2012). In particular, they admired a teacher's ability to simplify the subject knowledge to a level where they understood the concept being explained and felt confident about it. Once again then, the students demonstrated their preference for closer guidance, structure and support from their lecturers.

Furthermore, students also seemed to admire lecturers that demonstrated an ability to connect and relate to their existing experiences. Specifically, some of the lecturers were able to link the subject with students' pre-existing knowledge. Such skill (or sensibility) was reflected in the language used in class and in the teacher's ability to contextualise the subject matter within familiar professional practices;

I think that lecturer X explains the matter well. He is simple, direct, he contextualises the examples, he permits us to understand what he is saying in a simple way (Afonso, Year 1, FG3G2, April 2012).

Miguel: He (lecturer X) is awesome! He asks us questions, makes us feel comfortable and make analogies with everyday sports experiences. He also shares with us his own experiences...

Pedro: He is like: 'Imagine this...'. In comparison with the other lecturer, the examples he gives us are more appealing and relevant for our future practice. (Miguel and Pedro, Year 1, FG3G2, April, 2012)

Although the students valued this linking of theory to practice, their acceptance of it was largely uncritical. It was a desire to ascertain 'what works in practice' as opposed to a crucial interpretation and contextualisation of abstract knowledge. Nevertheless, the connection between academic knowledge and practical scenarios allowed the students to feel closer to their desired professional identity, and gave them some assurance and self-confidence on how to operate in their future practice;

Yesterday, in the biochemistry class the lecturer was explaining to us the lipid and oxidation systems to promote ATP... I believe all of that is really important for our future coaching practice. To know what to do as a coach and how can we optimise the performance of our athletes. For instance, what should we do at the beginning of the coaching session... what should we do at the end...what advice can we give to our athletes in regards to what to eat. I believe this is really key. (Lia, Year 1, FG1G3, December 2011)

4.3.3 It wasn't the best way to learn, but it was an effective one!

Unquestionably, initial understandings of their role as students impacted not only on how the students perceived their learning experiences and relations with lecturers, but also how they engaged in the processes of knowing. More specifically, their (aforementioned) *consumerist* identity manifested in a superficial, passive and strategic attitude towards their studies; something that will now be further explored.

At the beginning of their course, the students' 'study' (or studying habits) were characteristically sporadic and mechanical. They were primarily perceived as activities comprising the revision and retention of information to pass exams, rather than a constructive endeavour of personal reflection and change. Hence, particularly during the first semester, the majority of the students seemed to only work hard as the examination period loomed;

Duarte: Basically, I attend the classes, make some notes of what the lecturer says and then, when the lecturer makes the PowerPoint slides available, I print them, add my notes to it and leave it until up to a week of the examination period

Joel: I only study when I know I will have an exam. A couple of days before the due date I start to study.

Joel: When I'm in the lead lectures I try to pay attention to what the lecturer says. Any information that stays in my mind, stays, the rest I will try to get it whenever I start to study it. (...)

Nuno: I normally start my study more or less a week before the exam due date (Joel and Nuno, Year 1, FG1G4, December 2011)

Despite being exposed to discrete subject areas, with distinct ontologies of knowledge, the students did not seem to differ in the way they approached their exams. The purpose of their studying, therefore, seemed to be directly focused on the memorisation of information in an uncritical and linear manner. In other words, much of the focus was on the remembering of information as absolute answers, rather than on the development of personal meaning. A tendency illustrated in the following extracts;

For sport history, I try to memorise the dates without looking for the papers. For pedagogy, I just try to read the slides and write, mainly write, because I think I memorise better if I write it many times (Federico, Year 1, FG1G2, December 2011)

I memorise better if [I] link images with texts. So, I print images that I find appropriate and (a) couple of minutes before the exam I look at them. It is a good method to get focused and remember things that are important. (Rui, Year 1, FG2G4, February 2012)

In addition to this, the students demonstrated a general lack of engagement with external sources of information that went beyond those provided in class. In line with their initial expectations of ‘*being provided with*’ (as explored in the previous section) , the students mainly studied from the teaching materials given (*I only read the slides* – Antonio, Year 1, FG2G3, February 2012), while resisting any extra literature suggested by staff (*I have to admit that I haven’t read much of the extra readings. Essentially, I read and studied the [PowerPoint] slides with some notes that I take in classes.* - Lara, Year 1, FG2G3, February 2012). Indeed, instead of developing

their learning from additional academic sources, students would alternatively use 'ready to go' notes, usually provided by students from previous years. Traditionally kept in a resource archive in the students' union shop, these notes had the advantage of exposing the information taught in an already 'digested' and 'ready to consume' form (i.e., organised and summarised).

The evident dualistic and absolute understanding of knowledge encouraged the students to adopt a rather superficial and positivistic approach towards their studies. This was allied to a very conscious and strategic attitude towards achieving the best possible grades (e.g. '*what really counts in the end is the grades that you achieve*' - Lara, Year 1, FG2G3; '*Our aim in the university is to achieve good grades. That is our job!*' - António, VD2, February 2012; '*If we want to enter the Master's degree, we have to fight for better grades or other students, from other universities, will take places*' - Lia, Year 1, FG2G3, February 2012). Such performative pressures somewhat forced the students to focus on their assessment tasks; an approach identified as *strategic*;

I try to study the information that I believe will be asked in the exam, to try to pass it...it's around that, that I focus my study (Martim, Year 1, FG1G2, December 2011)

Yes, I usually focus on the exam because I need good marks. Everyone wants to get good marks (Pedro, Year 1, FG1G2, December 2011)

Such a strategic approach was characterised by attention to perceived clues and signals alluded to in the teachers' discourses. For example,

He [Lecturer] made the PowerPoints available from the beginning, so I normally print the slides and take them with me to the sessions. Then, when the lecturer says: 'Pay attention to this. This is important!' I write in the slides something like, 'This is important. Study at home'. (Miguel, Year 1, FG1G1, December 2011)

I always make a note when the lecturer says something that is not mentioned in the PowerPoint slides. Or, for instance, when I see that the lecturer mentioned it twice I take note because I believe it must be important for the final exam. (Lara, Year 1, FG1G3, December 2011)

This was an approach or practice also recognised by the staff, with some lecturers intentionally offering (assessment) clues as a way to capture students' attention and motivation. Although some may argue that this strategy impoverished the wider learning agenda, the students were nevertheless supportive of it.

Yet, despite such incipient understandings of the teaching and learning process, the first period of exams seemed to have prompted many of the students to rethink their approach to study. The superficial, passive and strategic approach adopted, although proven to be efficient to pass exams, revealed itself as problematic for meaningful learning (e.g., *'it wasn't the best way to learn, but it was an effective one [to pass the exams]'*: Telmo, Year 1, FG2G1, February 2012). In retrospect then, the students became increasingly disappointed with their performances in terms of the impact their initial approach to study had on their wider knowledge growth. For instance, they began to appreciate that the subjects in which they were weakest, were the ones where they had used a *'Copy-Paste'* approach (Lara, Year 1, FG2G3, February 2012); as can be evident in the following extract;

Researcher: Do any of you feel that you have already forgotten some of the information retained for the exam?

Rui: Sure! Particularly for [module X]. It was an exam that only required us to memorise things.

Carlos: Absolutely. Memorisation was all we had to do. I'm glad that it's over.

[...]

Daniel: When the study becomes a memory exercise, the knowledge is easily lost. (Rui, Carlos and Daniel, Year 1, FG2G4, February 2012).

The students then, came to realise that meaningful and long-lasting learning required a more in-depth understanding of the topics studied. Similarly, they came to slowly appreciate that learning is a process that takes time and commitment. In particular, they felt they had to change their last-minute approach to study to a more gradual and consistent one. The experiences and outcomes obtained during this period proved to be an important 'wake-up call' moment for change;

I wasn't used to it [university exams system], I think. I was sloppy during the first semester... I really think I need to change my attitude and I will accomplish more. I felt completely exhausted during this first period of exams. I need to be better prepared for the second phase. (Telmo, Year 1, FG2G1, February 2012).

4.3.4 I learned a lot, but not much about coaching. I can't wait for next year!

In the first semester of their first year, the students were introduced to '*another routine, another intensity*' that they were not prepared for (Pedro, Year 1, FG3G2, April 2012). Indeed, although frustrating at times, these first months allowed the cohort to '*test the waters*' and acknowledge the not-so-explicit 'rules of the game'. As they travelled further into their degree (1st year), the students appeared calmer and more confident in their ability to operate within this altered academic environment ('*Now that we are more into the academic life we know how to deal with it better*' – Paulo, Year 1, FG3G2, April 2012). In particular, the students seemed to be committed to change their ways of *being as* students and make a more quality investment in their learning experiences ('*The first semester was quite revealing, so it was time to change as a student*' - Paulo, Year 1, FG3G2, April 2012).

By the end of the first year, the students' learning identities were undoubtedly different from those evidenced at the beginning of their course. Specifically, their self-positioning as '*consumers*' faded, with the examination period having a catalytic effect on their learning habits. The realisations that some of the knowledge '*memorised*' for the first set of exams was quickly forgotten and that good grades come as a consequence of solid and deep understanding of the content matter, seemed to have initiated some changes in their learning beliefs and behaviours;

I don't care about grades when I'm studying. In the end there will be topics that remain and others that don't. I can't keep everything in my head. I learned that last semester. I prefer to understand it than achieve a first only because I remember everything word by word. (Rui, Year 1, FG4G3, June 2012)

Consequently, as the students became more aware of the limited nature of *superficial* and *passive* approaches to studying, they recognised the need to become more independent learners (i.e. *explorers and deciphers of knowledge*).

Naturally, such epistemological changes of perceptions on *how to learn* did not happen overnight, neither did they evolve at the same time or speed for everyone. Similarly, although all students seemed to recognise the need to change, not all followed through such intentions with immediate or clear-cut actions. Rather, this was an inconsistent, individualised and gradual process, that started at the end of the first semester and continued its development along the second.

The potential catalyst for this change related to ‘learning identities in transition’ was attributed to an acceptance that there was no return to absolute knowledge for the students; there was ‘*no going back to high school days*’, ‘*it’s just not the way things are here*’. Consequently, the realisation dawned on the students that they had to change as the system was certainly not going to;

I felt a great difference from the first to the second exam period in the first semester. I faced the first one like I was in high school and received the consequences. I realised that college needs more study and independent effort.’ (Miguel, Year 1, FG2G1)

Subsequently, allied to more general reflections about what they had learned during the first semester, some of the students started to refer to *studying*, not only as a moment for exam preparation, but also as an opportunity to learn and grow professionally. They thus became less focused on immediate results and more centred on long-term learning aims and gains;

Now I try to study not only to achieve a good grade, but also to understand. That's why I try not to only memorise things. I try to understand it, make some sense in my mind. Otherwise I will forget everything after the exam. I might get lower grades, but because I study everything properly now I feel good because I know that I understand the content (Lara, Year 1, FG4G3, June 2012)

During this second semester I read more. I try to find and read articles to understand better what has been taught in class and try to consolidate my knowledge. (...) I also read other things outside the reading list recommended by staff. (Claudio, Year 1, FG3G4, April 2012)

Such a redirection of focus towards a more in-depth and meaningful learning approach was particularly operationalised by a more proactive and (as indicated above) independent search for supplementary and more personally relevant sources of information.

In addition, the students also become increasingly critical of their assessment tasks in relation to their relevance for what was worth learning and knowing. In particular, those students actively involved in coaching practice were dissatisfied at the perceived irrelevance of the assessment they were subjected to in terms of their being no obvious link to everyday practice. Consequently, many of the students saw little value in the grades attributed through written examinations as they were considered not to be an accurate measure of knowledge and professional competence;

The grades don't necessarily mean anything. You could get a 10 [out of 20] in the exam but still understand what you studied and be able to apply that knowledge in practice. Some people may get a good grade. However,

when the time comes to prove (it) in practice, nothing comes out. [...]
(Rodrigo, Year 1, FG3G1, April 2012)

A definitive shift in the first year thus seemed to have occurred in the students' thinking. Whereas initially, they were critical of an absence of absolute knowledge when they encountered it, by the end they were paradoxically critical of any positivist approach or material given to them, where 'one correct answer' exists. As opposed to just replacing one critical stance for another, what was witnessed here was an engagement with an appreciation of context and a subjective world, where accepted lines of good practice, although existing, could never be unproblematically transplanted. In response, the students called for assessment strategies that better mirrored this awakening; to push them to do more than merely recall information.

[We] need forms of assessment to force the students to study more in-depth and really try to make the connections [between theory-practice].
At the moment, we just have to get there ourselves (Paulo, Year 1, FG3G3, April 2012)

There was a feeling that the course, as it was set up, struggled to facilitate this change. As it was, the students felt they had to 'get there themselves', albeit with the encouragement of a few staff members.

4.3.5 Year 1: Conclusion note

The end of the first year seemed to be an important landmark in the participating students' academic development as they started to view their role as students differently. Specifically, towards the end of their first year, they became more critical of their learning strategies and started to better understand what was expected

of them. They also began to increasingly value *evidence-based* knowledge (although the question of evidence was still largely untouched) and recognised the need to adopt a more independent attitude in their search for what counted as worth-while information. Simultaneously, most of the students started to get involved with contexts of practice, thus becoming more critical and analytical of their curriculum structure and the impact of this on their development as learners and future coaches. In summary, the students' journey through their first year was indeed 'bumpy' and 'uncomfortable' at times. Nevertheless, it was within and because of such 'friction' that their identities as learners and neophyte coaches started to transform and progress.

4.4 Jumping into uncertainty and starting to think like a coach (Year 2)

The participating students' perceptions and experiences of their second academic year will be now explored under three main sections; 'Starting to think like a coach: I doubt; therefore, I think!', 'Experimenting coaching selves: This is not as easy as I thought!', 'Choosing Wisely! Instructors or coaches' and 'It is not my sport, but I still learn from it!'. Overall, the section aims to illustrate how the participants continued to develop their identity both as students and coaches; particularly as coach education became more preeminent in their curricular structure. At this stage, staff, peers and external coaching environments all began to play more crucial roles in shaping the students' professional development. More specifically, the findings here demonstrate the influence of respected teachers in instigating the development of more inquisitive and critical minds. In addition, the impact of coaching role-playing pedagogies and informal peer discussions in the development of self-awareness and self-confidence also come to the fore.

Important here to note is that the students' experiences now somewhat diverged due to the sports they opted to obtain coaching qualifications in (e.g., football, athletics, gymnastics, swimming, basketball or volleyball). Hence, although all the participating students selected Sports Coaching as their major programme of study, their coach education curriculum differed slightly according to the specificity of the sport selected. Despite such differences, this added layer of interesting complexity allowed an exploration into the impact of diverse sport cultures and pedagogical approaches upon individual perceptions of learning and coaching.

4.4.1 Starting to think like coaches: I doubt; therefore, I think!

At the beginning of the second year, the students appeared enthusiastic and hopeful for the year ahead. They were particularly enthusiastic about the 'sports methodology' modules that would be finally addressing the coach identity they so anxiously wanted to develop. According to one of them, the first semester of the second year was '*more relatable with coaching sciences*' (Rui, Year 2, FG3G1, October 2012). Moreover, the students were also enthusiastic about the different practical modules on offer. Contrary to the first year, where the majority of the practical sports were individual in nature, during the second year the practical modules were instead focused on games activities, which aligned better with the sports they would like to coach in future.

Finally, we can now start to talk about what matters to us. This year we will have the methodologies module on the practical sports we want to specialise in. I cannot wait to start (Miguel, Year 2, FG5G1, October 2013)

In truth, their specialisation pathways did not start until the second semester, yet at the beginning of the second year, the students appeared increasingly conscious of the theoretical grounding given in Year 1 for their coaching practice. This, in turn, led to greater reflection on the value of learning, both in practical and theoretical classes, as related to their professional practice. The realised added value derived from the theoretical classes in the construction of their professional knowledge and identity, additionally allowed the students to develop a critical sense about their learning, whilst assisting in their positioning as coaches. In the words of one;

I'm enjoying this year a lot more. Even the theoretical classes are much more relevant. Now I understand why some theoretical subjects were taught in the first year... and it also has to do with the applicability of the disciplines (Luís, Year 2, FG5G4, October 2013).

In addition to this, students seemed to appreciate a greater representation of their future professional identity in the teaching materials used, the discourses engaged in and in their teaching practices. These were aspects of the curriculum design that appeared to further create a sense of self-identification with the professional role, particularly for those who were already beginning to experience a transition in their identity from athlete to coach. In the words of two, taken from focus group discussions;

They [the teachers] are finally addressing some of content taught towards our future career. Sometimes, I get distracted in class, but when I hear lectures saying 'For you future coaches, you need...' I feel recognised and then pay more attention, because it more obviously matters to me (Daniel, FG5G1, Year 2, October 2012).

This year, I feel like the lecturers have focused more on coaching examples, often referring to us as future coaches as well as PE teachers, which is great. I definitely feel there is a shift in the way I see myself in the future. I guess I always knew that I wanted to coach, but this year it feels more real. I'm kind of losing my identity as a player I'm starting to feel more like a coach now. Well... more like an apprentice coach, but nevertheless (VD7, Year 2, Lara, March 2013).

The increased 'relatedness' of most of the curricular units in Year 2 made it easier for the students to make the links between theory and practice. In addition, being taught by lecturers who also held credibility as coaches was deemed a positive highlight in terms of their learning experience;

I'm really enjoying the classes with professor X. He is a genius! A bit crazy at times, but you cannot argue with his expertise. You just need to ask: 'What have he won?' His sporting successes speak for themselves' (Carlos, Year 2, FG6G1, February 2013)

I never played handball, nor did I intend to select it for my coaching specialization, yet I'm learning a lot with professor Y. He is one of the best coaches in the country. And more than a coach, he is a great teacher. You can feel he knows a lot about coaching, not just handball, but coaching in general, so I'm taking a lot from him that I can apply to my own sport (Duarte, Year 2, FG6G1, February 2013)

Nonetheless, despite the overall satisfaction with their course, a few of the units in the academic curriculum made many of the students struggle in terms of seeing

the content relevance for their practice. For instance, the ‘introduction to contemporary thinking’ module was one of the units that divided opinion. Here, the ‘*abstract and philosophical ways of thinking*’ (Pedro, Year 2, FG6G1, February 2013) amused some, while leaving others feeling let down. For instance;

To be fair, I don't really understand the value of that discipline for any aspect of our course or future career. Why do I need to know about art, to become a coach or a PE teacher? (Miguel, Year 2, FG6G1, February 2013)

I think you have to take what is said and adapt it. I really like his lectures. I swear! I think he is amazing. I like to see his enthusiasm when is talking about art... what he presents and discusses. I review myself in those ideas.. I link those discussion with my views on football...what can I transform in the ‘art’ side of football, what I can transform in the most scientific side of it, what a player can do to make his game more amusing and aesthetically pleasing?...(Duarte, Year 2, FG6G1, February 2013).

The discussion embarked upon about this module in the curriculum led some of the students to consider the wider aims of their course, and the value of a university education for their overall growth and learning. Such discussions, have in turn revealed some changes in relation to their understanding of the learning process, in addition to a recognition of greater agency in the learning process;

I think the aim of lectures is to open our minds, to become curious about a certain topic/theory or approach. Then, it is up to us explore this in more detail and apply it to our realities of practice. We have to learn for ourselves, find the information independently (...) that is one of the ways

in which I have changed. When I started this course, I thought I would be taught everything that I needed, to be a good coach.(...) I now think what the university wants is to open our minds to some knowledge so that we can personally explore what it is to be a good coach (Afonso, Year 2, FG6G1, February 2013).

Such an increasingly proactive and independent attitude towards their studies was already evident among the student-coaches at the end of Year 1. However, midway through Year 2, such understandings seem to be much clearer. As one of the students confirmed, *'our course becomes what we want it to be'* (Telmo, Year 2, FG6G2, February 2013), thus indicating greater ownership being taken over a personal learning process. In this respect, although some dissatisfaction continued to exist with some of the knowledge provided, the students' continued to progress towards what could be akin to being considered as one akin to being true 'learners', i.e., those that explore further and deeply their knowledge interests, in order to question personal assumptions and those of others. Alongside such welcome developments, however, simultaneously emerged an almost contradictory strategic approach to learning where the students made conscious decisions to focus on certain tasks and/or assessments;

This year I found myself doing a lot more independent study in my free time. However, there is not much time to explore everything in-depth, so I need to study for myself. I'm becoming more selective about what I decide to pay attention to (Miguel, Year 2, FG6G1, February 2013).

However, the most important catalyst for change by the end of this first semester (in the second year) related to the impact of some lecturers in challenging the students' pre-defined assumptions of practice. Here, the tutors efforts to disrupt

unproblematic traditions within coaching practice, stimulated the students to adopt a more critical and reflexive attitude towards what they saw, read and heard. In the words of two of the students;

Not all we see in practice is good practice, and if we don't question it we end up repeating the same mistakes! (Rui, Year 2, VD, March, 2013).

Professor X really forced us to think about the dogmas or traditions that we hold in our heads and challenge it. For example, why do we keep using running to warm-up our athletes if they are due to play volleyball? That is just an example on how sometimes we do things without really thinking about or justifying it (Lia, Year 2, FG7G2, April, 2013).

At the end of the second semester of their second year then, a realization increasingly came to exist among the students that, in order to grow their expertise and knowledge, practice behaviours needed to be challenged and justified. A sense of social awareness appeared to grow of the necessity to be critical of their own and others' practice, in order to better inform what they did as coaches. The words of Afonso reflected a general growing tendency within the cohort;

In order to be a good coach you need to be conscious of what you are doing. You need to be able to justify why you are doing. That is what will make a difference between a good and a bad coach. So, the trick is to doubt first and only accept if you are able to justify why (Afonso, Year 2, FG7G1, April 2013).

4.4.2 Experimenting with coaching selves: This is not as easy as I thought!

In addition to the experience earlier reported, the promotion of learning environments that included a deconstruction of the performance of the coach's role, even in situations of simulated pedagogical practice, was perceived as crucial for learning. Taking on the role of the coach, especially in teaching and 'correcting' tasks, was perceived as fundamental to better understand "what they were" and what the coaching profession requires. These experiences of pedagogical practice also allowed the students to become aware of the gap between what they idealized to be and what they actually were; helping them to get to know themselves better while, at the same time, developing an understanding of the dynamics of building professional identities. For example;

we started to have some opportunities to try the role of the coach, although in a limited way. In some practical classes [practical studies] we had to give part of the class to our colleagues, which helped me to feel a little more as a coach and to realize what I have to work on and improve" (Miguel, Year 2, FG6G3, February, 2013).

In addition, these experiences boosted the development of a more conscious reflection process, about how to build and realise a primary professional identity (i.e., initial professional conceptions); that is being able, through trial-and-error, to 'test' different forms of professional performance (i.e. different professional "selves") whilst receiving feedback from teachers about such performances.

I had never thought about how difficult it is to communicate ... Before I thought that to be a good coach, I had to be an expert in the sport but I never thought that It would be so hard to explain the exercises clearly or

give the feedback. These classroom experiences have put this in evidence for me” (António, Year 2, FG6G3, February, 2013).

My first go at coaching this year left me so frustrated. I spent hours planning it, then when I tried it, nothing goes to plan. It was such a mess. I felt so overwhelmed with all I had to do. Too much was happening at same time and I could not focus on anything. By the time I managed to go around everyone, the time of my session was up. (Lia, Year2, FG6G4, February 2013).

Although some students thus felt somehow disappointed with their initial coaching ‘performances’, the majority seem to see such experiences in a positive light. As one mentioned; *“We can only get better, and the more we do the quicker we learn”* (Carlos, Year 2, FG6G4, February 2013). Here, then the clash between reality and expectations was alternatively identified as a great opportunity for self-realisation and self-evaluation of personal competencies.

Nonetheless, and rather sadly, it is important to note that not all students felt this way. Although agreeing that this experience had been a tough learning curve, the conflict between expectations and real performance led a couple of them to dissociate themselves from a career in coaching; they subsequently withdrew from the course and, hence, the project. Such feelings were captured in the email received from one of them sent to me to notify that he no longer wanted to be part of the project;

I have decided to abandon the project because I don't feel this is anymore a career path that I want to follow. This is nothing against you or the project. I just feel coaching is not for me. Over this semester, I

experienced a bit of peer-teaching and really felt I'm not good at teaching or coaching. I didn't and don't get any pleasure out of it. So, I'm going to choose Sports Management instead as I really enjoyed project management module last year (Email from Roberto, December 2012).

Not all the students who embarked on this course and journey developed in the way hoped or expected. Nonetheless, the experiences of playing with the coaching role were nevertheless fundamental for the development of a better sense of self-in-role.

4.4.3 Choosing wisely! Instructors or coaches

During this second year, the person of the teacher also assumed a crucial element in the construction and affirmation of students' self-perceptions as coaches. In reality, certain students even changed sports dependent on the teacher in charge.

This was evidenced by two of the students who so switched the sports variant of their sports coaching specialisation;

The teacher talks a lot about his personal stories...it gets tired ... I needed to feel that I was really learning something and there, I didn't feel it. (Frederico, Year 2, FG7G1, April 2013).

Seeing his [the teacher's] work up close has helped me a lot to change my mentality regarding training. He is very critical in relation to practice; that is, he accepts nothing without first doubting and asks me a lot of questions that make me think about why things are as they are (Gustavo, Year 2, FG6G1, February 2013).

Conversely, for those students that had already started to adopt more realist understandings of knowledge and learning, further exposure to contexts that promoted didactical and dualistic understandings of the subject, complete with an absence of connection to practice, become a source of frustration. For example, in the words of one;

Certain lectures just frustrate me. Lecturer X seems to be the complete opposite to what he is on the pitch. How can I be expected to be an independent learner, if all I have been asked to do in his lectures is to listen? I know how to read slides. I do not need a lecture to read the slides. There's no link to practice here; and it's not like practice anyway (Gonçalo, Year 2, FG7G1, April, 2013).

Nevertheless, it was from the second semester of Year 2 (i.e. when specialization within the sport modality arose) that the students began to really feel, perceive and value what was important in learning how to become coaches. Here, the 'Sports Methodology' classes were definitive catalysts in terms of raising awareness of what it means to be a coach, helping the students, in some if not most cases, to deconstruct latent prejudices and dogmas. In particular, some students revealed that the Sports Methodology teachers "opened their minds" and allowed them to access knowledge that, until then, was unknown; encouraging them to question their practices and to "run away" from what was unproblematically considered norm or tradition.

Professor António started to question why the warm-ups carried out in the sports field always start with continuous running. He's really right, I never thought about it and if he hadn't raised that question, I would probably never question it. I think it is very important to talk about these issues (Joaquim, Year 2, FG7G3, April 2013).

Particularly in football, everyone has an opinion and a way of seeing the game. So, there was a need to deconstruct these ways of thinking, as some of those personal theories are wrong. I think the teacher had a really essential role in helping us to contest some of the myths. First by exposing them and second by refuting them with evidence and logic (Afonso, Year 2, FG6G1, February 2013).

Additionally, the teachers' abilities to discuss and expose their own thought processes in resolving problems from and in practice was also valued by the students to promote a wider understanding of coaching knowledge as co-constructed and situated. For example;

I like when the teacher gives us an insight into his own coaching experiences and explains to us how and why he teaches a specific aspect of the game in a specific way. I know...his rationale gives me a further understanding of the problem and the challenges that may emerge so I'm more prepared for it (Lara. Year 2, FG7G2 April 2013).

...the teacher often stops the game or task to point out particular aspects of the game or our intervention that did not work so well so we can debate with him ways that we could improve the situation. We end up learning with our mistakes and the mistakes of others (Miguel, Year 2, FG8G1, June, 2013).

In addition to this, those teachers identified by students as “influential” for their learning, tended to make more use of constructive approaches characterized by a constant connection between theory and practice, and an expectation that students

need to be active and reflexive in the construction of their own knowledge. This was stimulated by ‘experimental episodes’ of simulated practice where the students had opportunity to ‘play with’ how specific principles of the game in question could be taught. Such a constant interaction between theory and practice allowed students to enhance not only their understanding and knowledge of the technical and tactical aspects of the game, but importantly their pedagogical knowledge. In turn, such a development led to an increased sense of self-competency and confidence in the students in terms of personally performing the coaching role.

I’m particularly enjoying my methodology because we have lots of opportunities to discuss particular aspects of the game and how we can manipulate and shape the playing context in order to promote the outcomes we want. We have lots of opportunities to discuss our ideas with him (the teacher) and with other students. It is really good because everyone has their way of seeing things and by being exposed to this you gain new ideas while appreciating the potentialities or disadvantages of your proposed plan. (Lara, FG8G2, Year 2, June 2013).

It was at this stage that many of the students began to realize that there were no ‘absolutely right answers’ and that the knowledge related to a coach's action was always constructed, negotiated and changeable. Furthermore, the introduction of more interpretivist pedagogical tools such as “game centred approaches”, seem to have triggered students to become more strategic and thoughtful in the development of effective strategies for players learning and development. This has in turn pushed them to be more independent and active towards knowledge search and commitment to decision-making.

In our methodology X [lecturer], challenge us to create our own games and to think on the specific conditions to manipulate and constrict players actions towards the behaviours we are aiming to develop. This require a lot of thinking but I really feel this allow me to learning in such a more deeper level, because then I need to explain and argue the value of my ideas to others (Daniel, FG9, Year 3, November 2013)

As a consequence, they began to recognise the value of having variable positions in relation to coaching and sporting content, accepting different possibilities in dealing with the problems that emerged in practice. The adoption of more relative views then, continued to increasingly replace dualistic views of knowledge, which was reflected in the development of coaching identities associated with greater agency.

Having said that, not all the students had the same opportunities to have such fruitful and meaningful learning experiences as those witnessed above. In particular, those who chose more individualised, and perhaps less contextually bound and technically focussed sport, seemed to not progress as much in their learning and related identity development. Although these negative experiences were not exclusively sport specific, the promotion of more rationalist views of the coaching process within them, particularly in relation to skill development, resulted in a general lessening of meaningful and transformative learning experiences for the students. Consequently, these students' learning and identity development at the end of their second year were more akin to those of *instructors* as opposed to *coaches*.

In detailing these experiences, the students' principal criticism related to teachers' inabilities or unwillingness to establish a closer link between the given theories and the application of such concepts in practice. Here then, a disconnect

existed between the two learning moments (despite belonging to the same curricular unit). In words of the students;

What he does in practice does not relates in any way, shape or form to what we discuss in the theory (Antonio, Year 2, FG7G1, April 2013).

In the theory class, the lecturer tends to focus on general coaching aspects. He talks about what it means to be a coach and the considerations we need to have very generally. Then, in practice, he spends the first hour talking about specific tactical aspects that he did not discuss with us in the theory lecture! (Rodrigo, Year 2, FG8G1, June 2013).

In addition, exacerbating this, the students complained that the methods used by many of their teachers (not only those considered directly above) were very didactic and autocratic, thus lacking space for discussion, reflection and individual opportunities to perform important coaching tasks. Instead, the students were once more placed in position of *athletes* possessing little agency.

We get to try lots of games in practice; the problem is that he [the teacher] never explains the aims and fundamental principles of it. So, at times, it is hard to really understand when we should use those exercises and in what circumstances. (Lia, Year 2, FG8G3, June 2013).

The teacher just keeps passing on content, so there is not much time for discussion. It's slide, after slide, after slide! I can do that at home (Martin, Year 2, FG8G3, June 2013).

In such learning environments, the student-coaches denoted a distancing between them and their teacher, which, in turn, led to less, high quality questioning and interaction between them;

You know how he (the teacher) is. He doesn't allow anyone to contradict him. We cannot even start to establish a conversation. He cuts us up by saying, 'I have been coaching for x years and if I'm telling you to do this way, believe me because I know best!' (Antonio, Year 2, FG8G3, June 2013).

...we don't have much of an opportunity to say what we think. It's more like 'Do this, and then do that; "...there is no question about it! (Samuel, Year 2, FG8G3, June 2013).

As a consequence, some of students started to feel disengaged and unmotivated towards their studies, reverting to more superficial and strategic approaches of learning. This was a tendency further strengthened by the common and continuous use of evaluation exams, as opposed to more 'constructivist' assessment means and methods.

I stop going to lectures. It does not add anything of value to me. I will decorate the things that are on the workbook and that's done! (Duarte, Year 2, FG8G3, June 2013).

In conclusion, the students that experienced more traditional teaching approaches, which presented coaching knowledge and practice as unproblematic, evolved a weaker sense of identity development both as students and coaches. The learning across the cohort then was variable, and dependent on a number of interacting factors.

4.4.4 Year 2: Conclusion note

During the students' second year of study, it was possible to observe the impact of different academic contexts and pedagogical experiences on their respective social and intellectual development. Although informal loosely affiliated 'communities of practice' enabled opportunities to share, debate knowledge and meaning-making, particularly on personal practical problems, differences in terms of the students' professional role frames (e.g. how they perceived coaching role) and approaches to learn began to take firmer shape. Such differences were related and influenced by who taught them, in addition to how they were taught. Here, the promotion of a relativist perspective towards coaching knowledge, supported by an emphasis on reflexive and critical thinking rooted in real coaching problems, were crucial. The next, final, section, will attempt to explore the impact of these differences on students' engagement, learning and development through Year 3.

4.5 The promised land: Will I survive there? (Year 3)

The findings presented in this section explore the student-coaches' experiences of their learning and identity development in Year 3 of their degree programme. In particular, the students' final year experiences will be explored under two main sections; 'Fitting in: Negotiation of self in the 'real world''; 'Why do I need to know this?'. This will be followed by a concluding note. The intention here is to give specific

attention to the work placement experiences in order to understand how the students navigated and adapted the knowledge received in more formal academic settings to workplace environments (and vice versa). In the context of their degree, during their final year the students were required to complete a season long work-placement (around 10-11 months) in an officially registered club to gain their level II coaching licenses within their chosen sport. In addition to this, attention will also be given to student's curricular experiences outside their "sports methodology" module, in order to explore how contrasting natures of knowledge are now perceived and negotiated by students.

4.5.1 Fitting in: Negotiation of self in the 'real world'

The pinnacle of students' undergraduate studies had finally arrived. The motivation to begin this third year was high, with the students seemingly very excited to work alongside experienced coaching teams as a part of their placements. Yet, despite such enthusiasm, a slight anxious anticipation about exactly how these experiences would work out for them was also evident. In this respect, they were aware that doing a '*good job*' during this final year, and particularly within their chosen placement, would not only help them to grow as coaches, but could also potentially open some doors in relation to future job prospect. While the spectrum or range of practice contexts on offer for the students was diverse (ranging from grassroots opportunities to professional settings), some students had engineered and/or guaranteed access to some of the best teams in the country; something which would almost have been impossible to achieve if it wasn't for the learning partnership(s) that existed between the University and the clubs in question. As a consequence, despite perceiving and recognising the placement opportunity as a chance to increase their learning, it was also viewed as a 'crucial moment' by the students in terms of proving

their self-worth to themselves and others as coaches for the future. The excerpts below capture the mix of fear and excitement in this regard;

I'm really excited to have the opportunity to learn from the best. Yet, I'm super nervous too. I've been playing volleyball all my life and up to a good level... but because of my background, I feel like others may expect more for me... or it is not even that... What if I say something wrong or I make a mistake in-front one of the coaches?...or players? What they going to think about me? (Lara VD, Year 3, September 2013).

I know that I wouldn't get this opportunity if it wasn't for the University's connections with the academy. That was one of the reasons that made me apply to this Uni. But I know the football environment. It is highly competitive, and everyone wants the same. It's not going to be easy, but I hope I can prove myself once I'm there. (Paulo, RL, Year 3, September 2013).

Although the students valued their formal learning contexts, the almost overwhelming desire to 'learn by doing' was alternatively clear. As the excerpt below suggests, there was general agreement about the importance of these experiences for their general learning in how to become a coach;

The methodology module (last year) was ok. I didn't agree with all of it, but I guess it gave me some foundations...yet the major learnings, no doubt, will emerge from the placement experiences. I know that only in practice will I be able to apply the knowledge learned so far (Lia, FG9G1, Year 3, November 2013).

I really believe that there is no better way to learn than being out there (in practice); in training, games, tournaments, getting to know all the dimensions of what it really means to assume that (coaching) role (Afonso, RA, Year 3, September 2013).

For quite some time, the students had been looking forward to this stage of their programme; to the opportunity to experience real contexts of practice in order to make more concrete sense of the theoretical knowledge learned (e.g., *‘we need to learn from (practical) experience’* - Duarte, FG4G3, Year1, June 2012; *‘I needed to apply these theories in practice’* – Miguel, FG5G1, Year 2, October 2012). In fact, during the previous year (Year 2), some students had even taken it upon themselves to find external coaching opportunities outside the realms of the course. For the majority of them, however, the placement opportunities provided in this final year were their first real chance to participate in coaching ‘reality’.

Despite the initial enthusiasm, just two months into the placements, the students’ mood had changed. Their excited, perhaps romanticized, ideal of what these experiences could or should have been were ‘crashed’ by the social and political reality of clubs into which they were inserted. Here, then, the students’ opportunities to grow socially and academically were directly impacted by the different work-placements they were involved with. A particular distinction here, in terms of the students’ experiences, relied on how their respective roles within the organization were perceived by those in control of the said (coaching) environments. Specifically, differences existed between those that had gained employment in ‘open’ and supportive clubs, as opposed to those who found themselves placed within rather ‘closed’, explicitly hierarchical, and controlling coaching environments. Indeed, while some seem to have found a welcoming and nurturing context in which to learn, one

that gave them space for intervention and responsibility over parts of the coaching process, others conversely reported occupying a rather peripheral role, with much less or no responsibility over practice. The contrast between the two different types of experiences are illustrated in the excerpts below:

I'm loving my experiences in the work placement. I thought it would be very challenging, but so far so good. The professionalism of all coaches is indescribable. Having the opportunity to see and interact with so many coaches and their ways of coaching has been a real 'eye opening' experiences for me (FG9G3, Afonso, Year 3, November, 2014).

Well, I wish it was the same for me. I'm doing my placement in one of the clubs that trains locally and so far, I haven't had many opportunities to intervene. I'm doing my placement with X, which is a renowned coach, but I feel I don't have much time or opportunities to speak to him about training or anything really. He usually sends me his plans for Sunday and then I go to the training to observe, help with the equipment and sometimes I'm asked to take the times and such like. It's disappointing (FG9G3, Antonio, Year 3, November 2014).

Indeed, while all students appreciated the given opportunities to observe practice and see the players and coaches in action, some longed for greater involvement and insight into the planning and decision-making processes;

No doubt, I would like to feel more included in the all processes going on. I understand that the coach is a very busy man and time is tight for everyone, but I would like to be included in the planning stage of sessions

and things so I can really understand why he takes the decisions he does (Rui, FG10G2, Year 3, February 2013).

Such distancing from the decision-making process, positioned the student-coaches as mere observers or method appliers within the more general coaching process. It also made them less comfortable and, therefore, more reluctant to ask questions and engage in meaningful dialogue about coaching practices. In the words of two of them;

I can ask questions - I've been told I can - yet I don't always know what to ask and I don't want to look stupid in front of the coach coz he hasn't involved me in anything and it's maybe things I should know anyway, but I don't (António, FG10G3, Year3, February 2014).

There is not much space to ask. The coach provides us with a plan at the beginning of the session and then asks us if we understand it. Sometimes I want to give my opinion, but then I feel like it may not make sense. You know what they say; Better say quiet...Plus he has been coaching for years. Who am I to propose anything? He probably wouldn't listen anyway, just ignore me, which I suppose I can understand (Telmo, FG10G2, Year 3, February 2014).

In addition to this, the students' lack of involvement with the 'thinking' or cerebral aspects of the coaching job, led some to continue to hold dualistic views of coaching knowledge and the associated role. Such a lack of movement or resistance was evident in a number of comments about the students' disappointment with the methodology modules that were meant to support their placement experiences;

I was hoping for more specific examples of how we should develop specific abilities in practice. I'm currently doing the level 1 in hockey, and in two weeks of that course I learned more than in two years here! [i.e., at the University] (Carlos, FG9G1, Year 3, November 2013).

'I know that we need to be very meticulous in our work. We need to make sure we track all the miles, the times and loads we give to athletes, and that we balance periods of rest with periods of high intensity, no matter what. If we do that, we have much better chances of producing good athletes. (Carlos, FG9G1, Year 3, November 2013)

As a consequence, some of the students started to lose their enthusiasm and commitment to the task in hand. With it, their sense of self-worth and competence as coaches somewhat decreased which, in turn, further negatively impacted on their self-identification with the coaching role. Ultimately, these negative experiences led some of the student-coaches to reconsider other sporting career avenues. In the words of one;

I enrolled myself on a personal trainer course, as I think I would like to work more in a gym environment where I deal with the clients on a one to one basis. Also, I feel I need to know more about physiology and anatomy than what we get on this (coaching) course (Antonio, FG11G2, Year 3, June 2014).

Although undeniable, these negative experiences or perceptions were not common among the group. For the majority of the students then, their sense of identity as coaches had been developed and enhanced from the previous year. Indeed, it became obvious that the respective experiences within the work placements had had

the biggest contribution towards such a development. Although the student-coaches clearly highlight their coaching identity was not at this point fully formed, they recognized that the above experiences had transformed their understanding of the coaching role. As one of them explained, this was something he could now ‘feel’:

Only now can I start to feel what coaching really is about. Before, these ideas were only in my imagination, but now I recognize myself in doing it. I’m not saying I’m a coach coz I don’t feel that way yet. I feel I need to take the role in full to really experience that, but I’m much closer to feeling that way after this experience (Luciano, FG11G, Year 3, June, 2014).

We can only learn to be real coaches when we have opportunities to lead training, make decisions and have some autonomy. Fortunately, I was given this autonomy in my placement. I learned a lot (Afonso, RA, June 2014).

Performing the role was undeniable a necessary or ‘eye-opening’ condition through which the students could develop their professional identities, yet this was not the only factor that contributed in this regard. Indeed, although the space for intervention was opened for some, others had to engineer the opportunities to intervene for themselves. In the words of one;

When I first started on placement, I found it really hard to find my place. The team already had a coach and a head coach, so I was always the one that was there to fill the gaps (Miguel, Year 3, FG10G1, June 2014).

Hence, in order to manage a position where they could have some agency over the practice, some of the students had to find ways to prove themselves in order to earn the trust and confidence of key stakeholders within their respective working environments. Particularly for those involved in coaching cultures where results were valued over development, such a task was especially difficult;

In truth, I don't have much control over what we do in practice. The coach decided on that, however sometimes, whenever there is an opportunity, I try to offer suggestions. It is a tough balance, because I don't want him to think I'm criticizing, because at same time I want him to trust me (Daniel, Year 3, FG10G1, February 2014).

Interesting here was a recognition by the students caught in this conundrum was the need to try to 'fit in' through means of 'standing out'. The difference between these experiences and those reported at the beginning of this section, was that the students now appeared better at noticing the problematic and routine aspects of practice where space for interventions was (perceived by the student coaches as) needed but unnoticed by main coaches. Consequently, by engaging in acts of acute observation, and to a degree micro political practice, students were increasingly able to feel useful and valued in their respective coaching contexts.

We spend a lot of time discussing specific individual players and how they work in the game... those insights really help me to notice things I could not see before because I was too centered on my own actions. However now, whenever I see a task going wrong or a player struggling, I sometimes tell the coach if I think it's the right time; and sometimes he says 'yes you are right! go ahead and tell them'. That makes me feel that I'm in the right track (Telmo, Year 3, FG10G3, February 2014).

Such an approach seem to be influenced by a redirection of action from the students' own behaviour and needs to what players were actually demonstrating in their performances. Such a redirection of attention from coaches' needs to those of the players was a characteristic shared by many who experienced the placement as a positive learning experience;

When I started my placement, my focus was on myself and how coaches, athletes, parents and any other member of the club would see me. But then I realized what matters here! I know it sounds obvious and it is, but I wasn't paying much attention to what the players were actually doing. I was so focused on what the coach wanted them to do that I forgot to look and see what they were actually struggling to do. But now my thinking process has change. I now think, 'what does this player need to do to be a better player?' (Daniel, Year 3, FG10G1, June 2014).

4.5.2 Why do I need to know this?

The 'Methodology of Sport' unit, and the associated workplace learning, was perceived by all the students as the '*most valuable learning context and experience*' (Afonso, Year 3, FG9G1, November 2013) for the development of their coaching knowledge. Therefore, it is perhaps of little surprise that the findings reported in this final year focused on these experiences as they dominated students' reflections and discussions. Nonetheless, it would be misleading to conclude that other academic experiences did not contribute or also offered useful insights into the participants' learning and professional development.

Indeed, in comparison with previous years, the students seemed increasingly conscious of the impact that different areas of knowledge, the teachers' approaches, and the various forms of assessments had already had in developing their

understandings about learning and studying. Of some interest was the students' growing understandings of the distinct knowledge ontologies evident within different curricular units. Here, a perceived ontological and epistemological misalignment between what the students expected and what the teachers offered came to light. In the words of one;

In subjects like biomechanics, nutrition, I expect them to give me all the answers. Yet in, psychology or sociology you cannot have such clear cut knowledge. So, my point is, why is Professor X [a social science/humanities teacher] presenting all his ideas like it is the only truth. Even if I have a well-formed argument to contradict him, he will never accept it. He will say 'no, that is not right' (Miguel, Year 3, FG9G2, November 2013).

Consequently, despite the students' growing relative ways of thinking, which they seemed on the whole to enjoy more, they still appreciated the need for more absolutist knowledge; as something expected and deemed of value in relation to the 'knowledge heritage' of the area. As one student pointed out (Rui, Year 3, FG9G3), 'the course is named 'sports science' for a reason'. A scientific approach then (for many) still held substantial knowledge capital. It was, therefore, not so much the variety of paradigmatic perspectives on knowledge that bothered or frustrated the students, but rather their perceived inconsistent or inappropriate use. A wish then existed among the general group that the varying epistemologies presented on the course could have been better integrated or made sense of as a coherent whole;

On this course we have a great opportunity to learn a bit of everything. That is really important for us to get a wider and solid perspective of our area. However, I feel there is a need to establish further connections

between them. Each lecture stays in their corner and there is not much effort to integrate knowledge. I would love to have a module where everything comes together (Afonso, VD, FG9G2, November 2013).

For many of the students it was the lecturers' responsibility to create or facilitate a better alignment, relevance and inter-integration of knowledge across units. In their eyes, the content selected and taught tended to be rather specific and more than often related with the staff's specific areas of interest, while not really providing enough 'lessons for practice',

In X unit, the professor only focuses on his own perspective, from his own book! He says he does not want to influence our political or social views of the world, yet, he does not provide any position other than his own (Rui, FG9G1, November 2013).

They [the lecturers] keep mentioning to us the well-known saying from Abel Salazar ('The doctor [coach] that only knows about medicine, not medicine [coaching] knows')...yet in their modules they tend to focus on one or two aspects rather than showing us a wider view of knowledge in the area. (Carlos, FG9G1, November 2013).

As a consequence, many of the modules ended up being something of a disappointment for students. In turn, this led them to return to more superficial, yet this time, consciously strategic routines of study.

Nonetheless, despite some negative learning experiences, a number of positive examples of coach education practice were also evidenced at this time. For instance, in the 'learning motor skills module' the teachers created opportunities for the students

to apply theory to practice. Specifically, as part of this module, the students were asked to develop, in groups, a research paper centred on the evaluation and testing of motor skills in a practical context of their choice. Here the majority of the students chose their placement settings to conduct these experimental studies, noting great benefits from the process;

... we decided to do our study in our work-placement and it worked really well. I was able to understand better some of the things the lecturer told us in theory and at the same time, I start to better understand how that knowledge can contribute to my practice. We did this in collaboration with our tutor and it worked really well (Lara, Year 3, FG9G3, November 2013).

An additional result of the teachers' efforts to place students in a position of 'knowledge creators' as opposed to being 'receivers', was that the students became increasingly critical and skeptical of the face-value nature of some 'so called' evidence-based studies. Such an awareness made them increasingly doubt the value of positivistic experimental work for their future practice as coaches;

This unit was good because it pushed you to appreciate the research process. However, I cannot understand how me evaluating players turning around cans of coke, can help me to establish how good my hockey players will be in their reaction times...or how to staying in a 'flamingo' position on top of a box can better predict the balance or the strength of a football pass or shoot. I just don't see how can context-free tests can predict something that happens in game –time chaos (Rodrigo, Year 3, FG9G, November 2013).

Such evidence demonstrated that the students now, at this stage of their course, displayed strong traits of independent or rather critical thinking. Such a cognitive development emerged from a constant crossing and intersecting between university and work-placement contexts; something evident in the personal reflection below;

Although I feel now more confused that when I arrived, I feel this confusion is a natural path. I believe it's evidence that I'm more aware of things and that I now better appreciate the full complexity of it all (Daniel, RA, July 2014).

4.5.3 Year 3: Conclusion note

The student's experiences on and of their work-placements were the highlight of their third and final year. Through directly experiencing the complexities and social dilemmas on the job, the students were more able to gain a better appreciation of their practice (and of the general nature of coaching practice). Seeing this aspect of the course as the most exciting and relevant, inevitably called into question in the students' minds the appropriateness of the course's other, more theoretical, aspect. Here, alternatively, the students' disappointment was visible, as the academic experiences and support provided during this third year fell below their initial expectations. This, however, was not so much in terms of the formal learning which was directly linked to the work placement (where they had opportunities to discuss and theorize their experiences). Rather, their dissatisfaction stemmed from the other modules exposed to; curricular units which were not seen as challenging, appropriate or progressive enough. A problematic aspect in this regard was the range of epistemological conceptions of learning on display through the different curricular units; something which was often perceived by the student coaches as a misalignment between aims,

content and assessment. The links here, and the sense which had to be made of the total course experience, was not an easy one.

Furthermore, the data collected throughout this final year continued to demonstrate the importance of ‘who’ was the lecturer in shaping the students’ ideas of coaching knowledge in a progressive and realistic manner. The perceived care demonstrated by the staff in this regard (i.e., in relation to the students’ knowledge positioning) became a major catalyst in what and from whom the students learned. This was linked to the peer support the students received from each other in the social groups established, with the particular tutor becoming a point of reference for their discussions and discourse. This was not, however, a universally felt development. There was also a perception among some of the cohort that they were somewhat ‘lost’ in a perceived disconnection of theories; some very positivistic and others interpretive, in addition to the realities of practice itself. Hence, some of the students felt that a greater exploration of the landscape of the coaching practice to assist in their practical ‘know how’ development would have benefitted them; a desire which pointed to the rational sediment that still somewhat remained within the group.

4.6 Final assessment: What have I learned, who have I become?

Trying to capture students’ personal perceptions about their self-knowledge, learning and professional development was not a straightforward task. The reason here appeared to be threefold in nature; first, although the student-coaches were at the end of their final year of study, it became somewhat apparent that they hadn’t yet had enough time to distance themselves from their university degree experience to really analyze it as such. As one of the students explained: *‘it becomes really hard not to have a bias towards the most recent experiences as they are the fresh in our minds.*

I'm not quite sure what I think at the moment!' (Afonso, Year 3, FG11G1, June 2014).

Secondly, as evidenced from the previous years' data, a realization regarding one's personal stance and perspective often takes time to come to fruition; a delay which no doubt hindered the requested clarity regarding self-understandings. Lastly, the exposure to reflective material and the necessity to develop personal working theories was inevitably a challenging task, with many deeply held understandings and beliefs being subconscious and affective in nature. This, naturally, made them harder to access, verbalize and communicate in terms of particular moments and events which were influential in such beliefs' development. Nonetheless, despite the acknowledged difficulties, a need still existed to engage the students in such a final self-reflection process to further ascertain, develop and confirm interpretations.

Nevertheless, at the end of this process, the students' overall impressions of their course and its value was distinct. One of the principal catalysts was their on-going considerations about what they believed or understood to be the ultimate goals of a university education. Although a range existed in this respect from the start, with some considering professionalization and career development as the main goal of higher education, while others had a more holistic, social view, there was a general movement among the cohort that the purpose here was towards developing an increase recognition in the value of being informed and critical learners. Hence, the students' undergraduate years become more and more to be seen as an opportunity to develop critical abilities enabling them to make more informed decisions and judgments in a considerate and thoughtful manner. Such a shift was reflective of the development of increased relative and critical thinking among the cohort, as illustrated in the words of Manuel below;

“I feel we are now more critical; we reflect more on what we do. We know that there is no universal coaching knowledge and that we have to take decisions according with what the practice present us” (Manuel, Year 3, FG11G1, June 2014)

Having said that, there were still pockets of resistance, or points of difference, among the students in this regard. For instance;

Carlos: I just think there is something really wrong here. When you look at other undergrad courses. For instance, a doctor leaves medical school and what? He/she is a Doctor. If I take an accounting course, I would have finished the course as an accountant... Yet here we don't get any professional qualifications. In some sports, we get a level 1 qualification in the sport, yet I could have got that externally.

Rui: Well I understand what you are saying, but...I think you need to look at your degree in a wider perspective, these are just the foundations so you can make more informed decisions in the future. Obviously, you will have to invest more time to your learning if you want to specialize in coaching, but the course gave us a good overview of the areas that are out there and how to think about them. (FG11G3, Year 3, June 2014).

The move towards enlightened and sensitive ways of thinking, therefore, was not universal or smooth. A potential reason or explanatory clue for this bumpy journey lay in the students' perception that such a reflective process, where long held assumptions were fundamental questioned and critiqued made them vulnerable. A few of the students, therefore, found the experience very uncomfortable. Those that were willing to engage with this uncomfortableness often realigned it in terms of exploring and being curious. Consequently, they somewhat managed to change their frames of

references to the inevitably doubting becoming opportunities for growth and development. In the words of one;

‘I realized that if I want to develop as a coach and learn with others I needed to be curious and put myself out there. There is no point in me pretending I know something or to be quiet. If I don’t ask now when I’m still at the beginning of my career, when will I ask?’ (Goncalo, FG11G2, Year 3, June 2014).

This realization or acceptance of such vulnerability by the students as a condition of learning did not only apply to their own understandings of how they could best learn, but also how they could best progress the learning of others. Consequently, the students’ exposure to and engagement with particular coaching pedagogies influenced them to pay more attention to the perceived gaps of the knowledge of the athletes they coaches. The accounts of two participants at the end of their placement experiences provide evidence of this;

I used to think the best way to correct an athlete was to tell him what he is doing wrong, yet I found that strategy not to be effective in the long run. If I want to help him to read the game better, I need to first know why he thought that the option he took was the best one. Only then can I then try to explain where they went wrong (Pedro, Year 3 RA, July 2014).

Some of the kids that are new to the club find the culture a bit different, as they were used to be told what to do. Here [at club x] we tend to question them. It is hard at times as they just want don’t want to think, yet when they feel they have got it is a game changer- they realize there

is more to football than just playing with the ball (Luciano, Year 3, RA, August 2014).

Contributing to this change to better understanding coaching knowledge in addition to general theories of learning among the students were a number of influential others such as colleagues, lectures and tutors. The interactions with such actors exposed the students to new ways of thinking and practicing coaching, which in turn, leads them to reevaluate their own beliefs and previously held assumptions. Here, the exposure to other realities and philosophies of coaching assisted the student-coaches to affirm and reaffirm what they *wanted to be* in opposition to what they *did not want to be*. Consequently, by the end of their course, different and at time contrasting sources of knowledge were no longer seen as a problem, but rather as a catalyst for learning. In the words of one;

We need others to learn. We can think for ourselves, but it gets to a point where we exhaust all our knowledge. We need others then to see and learn about other experiences and other ways of doing things so we can progress (Rui, Year 2, FG11G3, June 2014).

In advocating such a position, the students reaffirmed that their identity construction(s) emerged from and in the interactions between content, self and others. Thus, although admitting that their self-identification as coaches was an on-going process, their professional identity had been, nonetheless, somewhat developed, particularly during the final year of study. Here, rather than attributing a particular focus on self-analysis, the students gave credit to the interactive process with other stakeholders and the context in which they worked as being crucial in terms of their coaching identity formation. Hence, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the students valued

their placement opportunities above almost all other learning spaces, as this is where the integration of theoretical knowledge to practice was ‘allowed’ to take place.

I think our identity development is constructed by the decisions that we take along the way. Our course was important to show us some [theoretical] knowledge, but I think it was in the process of applying that knowledge in practice that we grow as coaches (Rui, FG11G3, Year 3 June 2014).

Additionally, and finally in this context, those students that developed a stronger coaching identity (even not recognizing it) earlier in their course, seemed to be those that better grasped the value of pedagogical and social knowledge for their practice. Working with such knowledge appeared to give them a sense of self-competence and purpose. In the words of one;

My competence as a coach is based on my ability to communicate and motivate players to perform the game the ways I believe to be the best, so if I'm not able impact positively on their learning I'm not good as a coach and soon people will notice. (Duarte, FG11G2, Year 3 June 2014).

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the implication of the findings in terms of the main research objectives. Here, the complexity of the learning experiences and associated meanings reported in the preceding chapter are somewhat analysed with respect to the participating students' learning and identity development. As it was decided to give primacy to the data within the project, a data set collected over three years, to indicate the journey experienced by the cohort of student-coaches featured in the project, a lighter theoretical engagement was decided upon. Accepting that an element of theorization is always necessary in a thesis such as this, there was nevertheless a conscious intention not to bury the data and what they represent under thick layers of 'sense-making' theory. Having said that, the section is organized under the following sub-headings; 'The participating students' intellectual development'; 'The interplay between identity and learning experiences', 'The principal catalysts for change?' and 'Developing a knowledgeability' (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

5.2 The participating students' intellectual development⁵

The findings of this study (to a certain degree) challenge existing work which has used Perry's (1999) scheme as a 'sense-making' lens. No doubt a progression in terms of the student-coaches' intellectual maturity took place over the duration of the courses; a development in line with Perry's thinking. This was witnessed through a broad advancement from dualistic (see section 4.3.2) to relativist cognitive perspectives (see section 4.4.3). However, more significantly, the findings also

⁵ Aspects of the content contained in this section was published in 2015, by De Martin- Silva, L.; Fonseca, J.; Jones, R.L., Morgan, K. and Mesquita, I. Please see reference list for further details.

diverge from Perry's scheme in a number of ways. For example, and perhaps most crucially, the findings highlight how power continues to be manifest in students' intellectual development. Although others have reported on Perry's under-appreciation of power, the precise nuance of its workings continues to lack clarity. Indeed, although Perry was aware of the need to '*get to know students*' to affect their intellectual and ethical development (Geisler-Brenstein, Schmeck & Hetherington, 1996), the power dimension within this unavoidable hierarchical relationship was given inadequate attention. Within the current study, the power held by members of the teaching staff was witnessed and recognised in relation to selection of the content knowledge, the design of assessments and the pedagogical approach adopted (see p. 160-162 and 166-168), which at times was perceived as restricting the students' cognitive development (see p. 169).

In contrast, this project emphasised the importance of 'who' is the teacher (or coach) in the student-coaches' intellectual development. This was evidenced in two main ways. Firstly, from more meaningful staff relationships and related perceptions of staff care; often developed through increased opportunities to discuss content-relevant concepts. Secondly, the staff acted as catalysts for students' cognitive maturity through their own described and discussed positions, against which students began to define and form their own respective growing 'independence'. As opposed to Perry's idea of 'rebellion', the students' 'growth' signified more than just accepting that where authorities do not know, safe ground existed for them to decide for themselves. Rather, in recognising that no such unbridled choice from unlimited options exists, the students' *rebellious* thinking can be considered here as being generally in relation to what their teachers had taught them (see, p. 164-165). Although it could be considered as oppositional behaviour, the influence of the staff over the

students' learning could perhaps be better considered in terms of reference and emulation. This builds on the work of Jones and colleagues (2012; Hardman et al., 2010) who emphasised the importance of the 'who' as being as important as the 'what' and the 'how' in terms of pedagogical and coaching practice (an aspect explored further later in this chapter).

Of equal importance in stimulating the movement from dualist to relativist thinking, was the structure of the course. Not only did the influence of small discussion groups and seminars come to the fore here, but also the assessment demands. In this respect, the students, particularly early in the course, consistently demonstrated themselves to be strategic learners, much more concerned to 'pass the test' than to engage with any notions of wider 'learning' as an end in itself (as related to coaching) (see section 4.3.3). To this end, they consistently complied with the staff and course demands which, as the course developed, somewhat ironically, often came to include a call for greater autonomous thought and the taking of responsibility. Again, then, Perry's latter stages of 'Contextual relativism' and 'Commitment foreseen' can be critiqued for neglecting the influence of content. Rather, it appeared as if the students in this study remained somewhat anchored in looking for and responding to what authorities wanted of them, a characteristic of Perry's Position 3 ('Multiplicity legitimate but subordinate').

Although this undeniable link between learning and assessment may appear disheartening to pedagogues who claim an intrinsic value to learning, on reflection, it can be considered to bring a freedom of its own. This is because, if students are motivated by a mind-set of 'passing the test', then as long as the assessment is appropriately conceptualized and thought through, what and how they learn can be

largely controlled. Hence, if the aim is to get student-coaches to behave as relative and reflective thinkers and practitioners, the task for coach educators is to construct assessments that aspire to and ensure such objectives. This would appear to be particularly relevant to coaching, an activity which demands engagement with insecurity, ambiguity and creativity.

Another interesting point of difference located in the findings relates to where the seeds of identity development are sown. According to Perry, this process only begins in earnest during the 'Commitment within relativism' phase; a late phase in his framework. However, for students in this study, it appeared much sooner. For example, early in their development, the students emulated the thinking and talk used by authority figures (and by each other), which generated aspects of their (social) identity construction; that is, where they felt the need to act like student coaches in context (see section 4.4.2.) What accelerated or delayed this commitment was the work-related placements undertaken; and, more specifically, the quality of these experiences (see section 4.5.1). The more stimulating the interaction, the stronger the commitment to both relativist positions and personal coaching identities; i.e., they were empowered to act with more agency. Indeed, as discussed, the influence of authority figures continued through their intellectual progression in many and varied ways, perhaps most significantly through their adopted or copied frames of cognitive reference. What also proved problematic for the students in this regard, was the different epistemologies experienced without explanation. For example, some units were taught from an interpretive standpoint, while others were done so from a positivistic paradigm. Again, although Perry recognised the problematic influence of students' epistemic assumptions and their effects on learning (Clouder, 1998), the precise workings of in-built course contradictions in the knowledge presented have

remained mostly unexplored. The students within the current study no doubt experienced an element of confusion by being exposed to different forms of coaching practice in the context of their degree. The exposure to different coaches' practices allowed or encouraged the students to question the existence of absolute knowledge, particularly when both sides presented apparently valid points (see p.168-169). Similarly, and staying with Perry (1999) the findings suggest that greater attention could be paid to how and why an individual transitions from one phase to another. Although he conceded that an individual could be at different stages at the same time in relation to different academic subjects, little attention has been given to how this impacts on identity development or the commitment to a given subject (e.g. sports science or sports coaching) that teaches from differing epistemological positions. In countering the argument that student-coaches should be exposed to multiple free-standing alternatives, perhaps coaching degrees and related professional preparation programmes should locate their courses within a given epistemology (e.g., interpretivism as opposed to positivism). This would allow both a depth of cognitive engagement and a security of identity within developing coaches (De Martin Silva et al., 2015).

The move witnessed among the students towards a greater acceptance of and engagement with relativity is particularly appropriate for the field of sports coaching. This is because it gives credence to those who argue for the inclusion of complex concepts and a constructivist perspective, as opposed to rationalistic discourse, within coach education courses (e.g. Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012). This was a point argued by Jones, Edwards, and Viotto Filho (2014) and Jones (2019), who made the case that decontextualized simplicity will not help us understand complex things, like coaching. Borrowing from Law (2006), such authors go on to claim that some coaching scholars'

refusal to acknowledge (and therefore pedagogically engage with) the messy nature of coaching, actively represses the possibility of understanding the reality they purport to study (Jones, Edwards, and Viotto Filho, 2014); an obviously inadequate and deficient situation. As experienced by the participating students in the current study, neophyte or developing coaches should be challenged to leave the safe ground of dualistic certainty as early as possible. Although this often results in a degree of resentment and defensiveness against the new learning, such uncomfortableness is nonetheless required as such learners move towards relativism: a prerequisite to understanding the inherent complexity of sports coaching.

5.3 The interplay between identity and learning experiences

During the first year of the course, the power of anticipatory socialization (i.e., previous contact with the role from an outsider position) was evidenced in the way the students perceived the professional role of coaching (or of being a coach). Similar to what has been pointed out in the field of physical education (Fletcher, 2012; Barros, Gomes, Pereira & Batista, 2012), the results of this study also show that students entered Higher Education with preconceptions about coach identity, firmly rooted in their experiences as athletes (see 4.3.1 section). In particular, during their first year, the students viewed the coaching role as not much more than a 'technical activity' requiring a set of 'instrumental' or given skills to obtain the best levels of sports performance; within their talk, the analogy of having a coaching 'tool box' was thus often used to be dipped in and out of as appropriate (see 4.3.2 section). Consequently, the students tended to attribute more value to the technical-tactical know-how of sports than to any social or pedagogic knowledge. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the students attributed higher importance to the more practical curricular modules experienced, as

well as to the respective teachers who delivered them. In contrast, they saw less value in more academic subjects such as biology, physiology and pedagogy; subjects which they perceived as ‘taking them away’ from what was necessary to learn to be a coach. Here then, the question of perceived relevancy loomed large.

Throughout the degree's first year, some teachers encouraged students to critically consider that coaching was actually more than just ‘mastering technical knowledge’ by the taking of more facilitatory as opposed to instructional roles. In doing so, they gave the students increased opportunities to reflect and problematize their dogmas about coaching practice while simultaneously showing affection, care and attention. Additionally, the constructive pedagogical behaviours of some teachers were catalysts for the adoption by the respective students of a more relative view about coaching and the knowledge needed to coach. In this respect, the students were influenced by the teachers’ action in terms of an ethic of trust; that is, through their actions the students came to trust what their teachers and tutors were saying (see p.166-168) Hence, the students slowly came to a realisation that being a coach was much more than the unproblematic performance of a given role (see p.183).

In this respect, the teachers who taught the practical modules in particular regularly urged the students to reflect on the importance of developing social and relational skills vital for professional and practical success as coaches (see p.183 and 187). The students subsequently highlighted the pedagogical competence, communication, enthusiasm and dedication of these teachers as examples of ‘good practices’ to follow; something already pointed out as important within previous investigations into coach education (Chesterfield et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2013; Mesquita et al., 2014). This generated in the students the perception that the

construction of a professional identity is a social learning activity that is not only related to the aspects of content knowledge. Rather that it is essentially related with feelings, hopes, aspirations and emotions. Thus, it becomes necessary to rethink coach education practices that favour expository learning methods, as they promote an individualised yet structurally sensitive understanding of professional knowledge (Jones et al., 2012; Mesquita et al., 2014). The findings presented in this study then support the development of more situated learning opportunities, where interactions between people, traditions, intentions and cultural boundaries become the platform from where students transform their academic knowledge into practice. The results also point to the construction of knowledge through situated practice as being vital in allowing students to gain awareness of their professional identity and the resultant dilemmas they must engage with to ensure its further development (Mesquita et al., 2014). This is not to underplay the importance of more formal learning, however, just that *in situ* experiences allow learners (in this case student-coaches) to give meaning and personal appropriation to what is learned, allowing, in turn, the active construction of professional identities (Entwistle, 1994).

During the second year of their degree programme, the students increasingly began to attribute value to the teachers who mainly delivered modules centred on the respective sport's training methods. This resulted from the need within the module to establish a more explicit relationship between theory and practice; which forced the students to confront preconceived training routines and ideas thus influencing them to take more reflective and critical positions (see section 4.4.3). Furthermore, realising that even professors considered experts in their respective fields disagreed about the means and methods of professional practice, triggered in the students an awareness of the complex and the ambiguous character of professional knowledge. As a result, the

students gradually began to assume greater responsibility for their own decisions. It was a realization and process which formed an essential feature in the intellectual and identity development of the students (Entwistle, 1994; Perry, 1999). In turn, the simulated pedagogical practice (i.e., where they coached each other) that took place during the second year of practical modules (see section 4.4.2), allowed the students to experiment and 'test' in a practical, familiar and safe space, the role of coach. As a result, it encouraged them to think about their beliefs, values and principles associated with professional activity when faced with the challenges and problems of practice. Simultaneously, by somewhat empowering or permitting the students to 'test' their professional skills in a context of practice, it allowed them to experience the emotional charge of the role and, hence, gain a better understanding of what aspects of their identity they should develop (Mesquita et al., 2011; Mesquita et al., 2012; Santos et al., 2010). Furthermore, the confrontation and discussion generated in some classes provided an opportunity for the students to reflect on knowledge and personal feelings about their professional competence.

Furthermore, within the current study, the evaluation and reflection strategies promoted by peers (in the context of seminars, practical classes and informal environments), often focused on personal experiences, and allowed the students to reconstruct, re-evaluate and identify individual professional development paths. In this respect, external perceptions in the construction of identity, that is, how the students thought others perceived them had a considerable impact on the development of confidence and professional commitment (Schepens, Aelternam & Vlerick, 2009; Burn, 2007; Loughran & Berry, 2005). It would, therefore, appear of some importance to create spaces where students and/or neophyte coaches can debate in an open, reflective and critical way about their evolving professional selves. As MacLure

(1993) reminds us, professional identity is formed and informed through 'discursive practices', hence, it is essential to encourage discussion and the sharing of ideas so that awareness and consistency in the thinking of future professionals can be developed.

During the students' third year, their professional identity development was further enhanced by their experience in practice. This development, however, was largely seen as being dependent on how the students negotiated their interactions with the key social elements of context. Consequently, more than often, the initial high regard or hopes the students had for their work placement were generally not met. Instead, they found less support than expected, which generated feelings of frustration regarding the training process and professional development. In particular, the considerable competitive pressure that exists in some placement clubs, gave students less space for intervention, leading them to experience the role of the coach in a reduced way, which inevitably stunted many aspects of their professional identity development. Here, the fact that they often felt isolated within the professional community weakened their personal identity within a professional context. On the other hand, the students who managed to adapt to the working sports cultures exposed to appeared better able to read the social landscape thus developing a social or political literacy. As a result, they felt they had more agency, more space for intended interventions and a better understanding of the hierarchical relationships within the team/club.

A point of contention here was that most of the students experienced placements within elite or high-performance coaching environments; contexts focused on the immediacy of results above all else. To some this proved problematic from a number of perspectives. Not least among these was a reproductive belief in what all

coaching should look like. Such a concern, echoes that of Wang (2008) who also found that immersion in a professional activity often implies or encourages the implicit adoption of institutionalized beliefs and ideas (whatever they may be). In this regard, the beliefs and approaches rooted in exposed-to contexts of coaching practice, in addition the structural pressures that the student-coaches perceived to perpetuate such practices, were somewhat influential in how they came to think about the coaching role; a phenomenon identified by Piggott (2012) as ‘closed circles’. For some then, the dominant conception of the coaching role fought to become the ‘heart of coaching’ for them; complete with control and instructional tendencies (Light & Harvey, 2019). A clear smooth journey towards ‘enlightened’ practitioner identity then, was certainly not a feature of the current study’s findings.

5.4 The principal catalysts for change

Although the study’s conclusions point to momentum and movement in terms of the students’ learning and identity development, the general process was not a clean linear one. Rather, it was characterized by steep curves and plateaus. In trying to ascertain the reasons behind the phases of accelerated learning, although many factors were no doubt involved in the general process, certain features nevertheless came to the fore. Such features can be viewed as threshold concepts which went some way to reshape how the students perceived their learning (in general) and that of the associated coaching role identification. The first of these was the introduction of principles related to ‘game centered approaches’ (see p174-175). However, this was not so much in terms of promoting certain games, although it was assumed that some unspecified conception of learning would take place; elements of which are somewhat common in the GCA ‘advocacy’ literature. Neither was the ‘threshold concept’ particularly

evident in a widespread acceptance that errors and experimentation should be seen as opportunities for learning and not so much as mistakes to be corrected. Rather, the value of the approach for the students lay in providing an example that sports coaching (and hopeful subsequent athlete learning) is inherently grounded in a relativist epistemology and, hence, needs to be constructed in situ, albeit within certain boundaries. Such a realization also enabled the student coaches to think of themselves, not as mere method applicers, but as professionals who constantly need to make decisions in the interests of athletes based on astute contextual considerations (Toole & Seashore Louis 2002). Here then, they began to value interpretation over facts (Jones, 2006).

This realization also led or was inherently tied to a second ‘eye opening’ concept for the students; that is, a re-centering of attention (or a partial re-centering) from the coaching self to that of athlete learning. At the beginning of their journey then, a sense of anxiousness was very prevalent among the students; a concern about how they should behave as neophyte coaches, particularly when on placements, and how others would or should perceive them (see p.188). Consequently, they focused efforts on developing strategies related to ‘how they would fit in’, especially in relation to acting or behaving ‘like’ coaches. Switching their focus to that of athlete learning through pedagogical theory but more specifically practice brought the students closer to the realization of what the ‘doing of coaching’ was really about. Consequently, they came to analyse and judge their professional ‘performances’ not by what they said, did, or the exercises that comprised their sessions, but by the impact such actions had on the development of others (i.e., the athletes subject to such actions). Although perhaps such a conceptualization is not new in the literature (e.g., Jones’s ‘Sports coach as educator’ was published 15 years ago), the internalization of such and related

ideas for this group of students anyway, proved powerful. In doing so, it provides further arguments that socio-pedagogic concepts and considerations should perhaps be even more firmly grounded in coaches' educational and professional preparation programmes at every level of development.

A final threshold concept worthy of note here, is the students' realization that to develop in any authentic sense, they had to expose themselves to a degree of vulnerability (see p.196-198). Here, those who were more 'open' and 'honest' about what they knew, or rather did not know, appeared to experience faster and deeper development. Again, this was not an easy or automated process, however, as many students found the self-questioning and resulting self-doubt a frustrating and fundamentally uncomfortable experience. The revelations evident in such a process can be disturbing for learners as they are forced outside their traditional cognitive comfort zones, with previously familiar concepts rendered strange.

Nevertheless, those students more willing to accept and admit the limitations of personal knowledge, allowed or encouraged themselves to look at coaching (their own and others) through fresh eyes (Duckworth 1997), thus breaking free from the cramped confines of the familiar (Jones, 2006). Consequently, allowing a rebuilding from the state of vulnerability alluded to no doubt held potential for the students to better make connections between conceptually difficult topics, such as between discourse, ethics and context, and, of course, practice.

A final catalyst to be discussed here is that of the influence of the teacher, coach or pedagogue to whom the students were exposed. This was a feature which increasingly came to the fore from the second year of the degree programme. Despite the obvious importance of the topic, little interest has been shown by researchers in

terms of theorizing the phenomenon. A partial exception here was the chapter by Jones and colleagues (2012) entitled 'Who is the coach'. In tying the person to the craft, the case was made that "if coaching is enacted by somebody, then it naturally matters who that somebody is" (p.1). The work of Karen Agne (1998) in this respect, in emphasizing the relations established between teacher and student(s), appears crucial as a sense making lens; something that obviously spoke clearly to the experiences of students in the current study. This was not so much in terms of personal-relatedness commitment, but rather "more to do with student learning and effective teaching than anything" (Agne, 1998, p.168). It also calls into question more simplistic advocacy of 'student-centered' approaches, transferring the emphasis to 'student-learning-centered' over and above all else. The care expressed, as evidenced in the current work, was more related to care about the learning of the students, which although it includes the development of meaningful relations, did not collapse into a purely social conceptualization.

5.5 Developing a *knowledgeability* (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015)

As the students experienced or negotiated their way through the 2nd and, in particular, the 3rd Years of their programme, they began to acquire what Wenger-Trayner and wife (2015) has termed 'knowledgeability'. Such a concept refers to a competency that allows individuals to interact and relate to a multiplicity of practices across a particular landscape. It is an ability to recognise how appropriate the professional and practical 'know-how' is negotiated, constructed and defined within given groups and communities. This is specifically related to understanding that each community possesses a negotiated understanding of what constitutes competency

within the given field of work, and for any individual to be accepted as a member of that community entails accountability to competencies. In this sense, such professional competencies include ‘a social dimension’ (Wenger-Treyner & Wenger-Treyner, 2015, p14), which enables updated current regimes of practice in a particular domain to be engaged with. Being part of the community is thus important for learning as it continually encourages embedding evolving ‘regimes of competency’ into personal practice (Wenger-Treyner & Wenger-Treyner, 2015, p14). Such knowledge, developed within the discourse of the programme in addition to the practical experience, enabled the student coaches in the current study to engage with and better understand the ‘internal logic’ of coaching practice (see page 196-198). It is a logic that somewhat pushes new or aspiring professionals to operate within it. Indeed, according to Wenger-Treyner and Wenger-Treyner (2015), this engagement in the production of practice is important in the identification and development of a professional role. A claim that certainly rang true for the student cohort under study.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to map the intellectual and social development of a group of undergraduate sports coaching students by examining how their *knowledge construction* and *sense of self* was shaped, manifested and transformed over the length of their three-year degree. Here, the experiences of the students were collected through an interpretative research framework comprising three complementary means of data collection (i.e., focus groups; video diaries and written reflections). The main findings offer a more *situated* understanding of how the participating students developed their identities (both as learners, as well as coaches) in the context of a formal degree education. Overall, the expected contributions to coach education literature lie in three main aspects. Firstly, the study provides an understanding of how students attribute personal significance to their learning (Vermunt & Vermetten, 2004). Here, attention was given to the impact of content, curriculum structure and that of the teaching staff on the students' conception of knowledge and approaches to learn. Secondly, by developing a longitudinal study, this work presents a more complete picture of the social and emotional imbroglio that influences students' identities (Wenger, 2010). Indeed, the ambition here was to "investigate not only whether change existed, but also the complexity of how developments unfold" (Vanthournout, Donche & Gijbels, 2014, p. 22). Finally, this research challenges representations of coaching as a de-personalised technical activity, and assists in the appreciation of the relational, emotional and political influences that contribute to the shaping of coaching selves (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2016; Jones et al., 2012; Potrac, Smith & Nelson, 2017; Potrac et al., 2013). In particular, an insight into how inexperienced coaches negotiate their identities within

a restricted and highly competitive professional environment seems to offer great value for the development of future coach education initiatives.

Thus, in an attempt to bring the main findings together and establish the key learnings achieved from this investigation, this chapter (following this introductory section) firstly provides a summary of the main findings and their contributions to knowledge in more detail. This is followed by a presentation of the implications and limitation of the study, before suggesting some potential avenues for further investigation. Finally, the work is drawn to a close with a personal reflection of my experiences as a PhD student and the impact of this experience upon my personal and professional sense of self.

6.2 Reconsidering aims and objectives of the study

The general purpose of this study was to explore the intellectual, social and emotional development of undergraduate sports coaching students by examining the interplay between notions of self, structure and agency within an educational establishment (Roberts, 2000). Ultimately, the ambition was to explore the experiences and perceptions of students during their three-year undergraduate degree and, simultaneously, examine the impact of such experiences on the development of their professional identities. The following research questions constituted the framework of orientation that structured this research agenda:

1. How do sport coaching students think about learning and carry out their studying throughout their degree?

2. To what extent does the knowledge and experience gained on the degree programme contribute towards the students' intellectual development, and why?
3. What role (if any) do teaching staff, play in these developments? Why are they so perceived?
4. What identities, in terms of their own narrativizations (Gee, 2000), do they possess; who do they think they are, and why do they think that?
5. How and why do these self-perceptions change over their time as students? What are the principal catalysts?
6. Who are the students when they leave? What are their self-understandings? (Sfard & Prusak, 2005).

In studying the complexity of the students' journeys through their higher education degree, their experiences were examined at two interrelated levels; namely in terms of (1) the students' intellectual development and (2) their professional identity transformations. The following section then evidences how the specific research questions presented above were addressed.

During the three years of the project, the students' engagement and motivations to study varied greatly depending on subject knowledge, type of assessment and staff support. As a consequence, the students became very strategic in the way they approached their studies evidencing a constant tension or movement between superficial and deeper approaches to learning. This demonstrates that the students' approaches to learning were not fixed or consistent trait-like entities (Heikkilä & Lonka, 2006). Rather, they were intrinsically related to the structure of the curriculum, the perceived relevance of the subject knowledge presented, and the

students' individual motivations to learn. Yet, of particular value here, is to understand that despite inconsistencies in their learning, it could be concluded that the students nevertheless demonstrated or experienced what could be termed 'general intellectual development'. Hence, the occasional return to superficial approaches to learning did not signify a regression in their ways of thinking about what is learning and how they should engage with it. On the contrary, their not so straightforward developmental path evidenced their development in response to pedagogical and contextual challenges. In this respect, the content supplied enabled such change both in allowing the students to become more critical as a given aim, while also encouraged criticality in the form of resisting what they considered to be simplistic or overly deterministic subject matter. Of considerable importance here was the role of the teacher; a factor so important that it made some students switch from their preferred sporting option to a secondary one just to be taught by a particular individual.

On a general level the study can be claimed to have allowed a window into the identity development or evolution of students to coaches, together with personal conceptions of what it means to be a coach, which varied over the course of the programme. In particular, the results demonstrated that during the initial phase (i.e., the first year of the degree) the students possessed a professional identity strongly linked to their past experiences as athletes. This was revealed in a perception of professional activity fundamentally related to perspectives allied to seeing the training process as a linear and rationalist phenomenon (that is, to master knowledge and techniques). However, during the second year of the course, increasingly experiencing learning in situations of pedagogical practice (even if simulated), seminars and informal spaces allowed the students to assign meanings to the content learned in relation to professional requirements. In fact, the results revealed the importance of

learning in action, particularly when properly mediated by teachers and tutors through effective reflection strategies. This resulted in the students gaining greater awareness of their professional development, stimulating the emergence of greater agential ‘me’, vital to the construction of a professional identity.

However, it was during the last year of the degree that this identity development tended to become noticeably different and vary substantially among the students; a variation that was stimulated by the different characteristics of each student's internship experiences. In particular, the students who managed to better manage power relations within the training context and, hence, gained space for personal coaching interventions, displayed more positive identity development. This was because they had more opportunities to confer greater personal appropriation to neophyte professional identity. The students’ self-understandings then, shifted from desiring certainty in knowledge, to being comfortably in the realism of uncertainty; in essence, a shift to a more relative view of the world. This, however, did not mean a retreat into an ‘anything goes’ mentality, but a greater appreciation of the flexibility and nuance required to practice well as a coach whilst still adhering to decided upon personal principles.

6.3 Limitation and suggestions for future research

No doubt, every study has its limitations, and mine is no exception. What is usually outlined in such a section relates to the size of the data set, the uniqueness of context in terms of its wider relatability (or not), and the sense-making theoretical lens adopted. As the study took 3 years of field work to complete, more data in and of themselves perhaps wouldn’t have helped. Of more relevance here perhaps would have been better reading of the data during the early stages. Despite my ‘book

knowledge' of ethnographic means and methods, and several attempts at practice or pilot work in relation to observations and interviewing, doubts persisted that I was getting the information I needed to adequately address the aims of the study. I could have analysed deeper, with more sensitivity; I could have engaged in better reflexive practice; I could have thought more about where the data were leading me, or where I was leading the data. On reflection, however, I take solace that this was a part of my learning journey. I also always wanted the data to take primacy, leading to perhaps what can be considered a slight under theorisation in the work. Without abdicating my responsibility as an interpretive researcher then, I still wanted the student-coaches' voices to be heard over and above mine.

As far as future research is concerned, I think the work further demonstrates the importance of 'who' is the coach, teacher or indeed, coach educator. The power of the good example then, should be revisited in light of what it brings to individuals' sense making of who they, in turn, want to become. This could be a fruitful avenue of inquiry vis-à-vis coaches' learning to become coaches; not in terms of simple reference or 'positive role modelling', but in terms of what they see in others who occupy such positions, and why neophyte coaches value any attributes they do. Additionally, the movement from absolute to relative ontologies needs to be better appreciated and understood; i.e., what causes the shift in different contexts, and why it appears so much harder for some than for others to undertake. Finally, more research actually outlining that this shift does take place, further supporting the relativist shift in understanding coaching could be a further step on the journey to a more realistic conceptualisation of this most ambiguous of professions.

6.4 Learning the hard way: Reflections on my PhD journey

After a long period of personal investment in this project, I believe it is only appropriate to finish this work with a reflective account of my experiences along this journey. My intention is to mark these last pages with a personal memoir of my emotions and learnings gained along this process. By engaging with this reflexive exercise, I hope to emphasise the importance of some of the experiences I encountered throughout this project and gain further understanding *of the person I have become* (Beijaard et al., 2004). I hope this realistic and honest account of a not-so-perfect journey can contribute to the exposure of some of the ‘hidden’ challenges and struggles faced by a PhD researcher, so others can relate and be better prepared for it.

When I started this project, I could never have imagined the personal journey this PhD would take me. In the beginning, the idea of doing a PhD was attractive not only because it offered the prospect of better job opportunities, but also because of the freedom and adventure I would gain. Although it was never in my plans to move to another country, this opportunity came at an ideal time of my life. I had finished my Masters and had no other plans or commitments that would stop me from accepting this challenge. This was my chance to move away from the comforts of my parents’ home and experience for the first time full independence. Consequently, I decided to accept the PhD offer without truly understanding the challenges of such an endeavour. With two suitcases and a one-way ticket in my hand, I moved to Cardiff in January 2012.

I remember starting my first day with great enthusiasm and a sense of pride. Based on my previous academic experiences, I was self-assured that I was capable enough of undertaking this task. However, as I started to spend more time with my supervisors and other PhD students, I become increasingly aware of how far I was

from where I needed to be. To start with, my English skills were not great. I often felt frustrated by my inability to understand conversations or communicate my points effectively. In addition to this, I struggled to embrace ambiguity and the autonomy of thought expected. Accustomed to traditional teacher-led environments, I craved certainty and direction. Thus, I often felt frustrated when my questions were challenged with further questions such as *'What do you think?'*, *'Why do you think that?'* I now recognise the intention and importance of such an approach to instigating my understanding and development as an academic. However, at the time, (like the students examined in this study) I craved certainty and felt overwhelmed by the size of the task in hand. Thus, despite the invaluable support and help from my supervisor, I increasingly began feeling that I was not portraying the desired studentship identity that I thought other people expected from me as a PhD student. It soon became apparent to me that postgraduate life was not a simple step-by-step process, and that I needed further understanding of what I was doing.

As the first point of action, I decided to enrol in an English course. For a year, I attended classes every morning and returned to my PhD in the afternoon. It was a full-on commitment, yet I believe it provided the confidence needed to engage with the academic work. In parallel to this, I volunteered to coach swimming in the evenings and helped with undergraduate teaching when needed. Here, my engagement with further realms of the academic community helped me increase the pre-eminence of my professional identity as a researcher and as an educator. However, the demands of my PhD work, together with a desire to gain a further understanding of other professional practices, tested my motivations and commitments to the task. Influenced by my PhD readings, I convinced myself that crossing boundaries beyond the landscape of practice were an important occasion for learning (and it was!). However,

as I now reflect, I also used these extra role-identities to hide away from the '*desirable difficulties*' imposed by my research.

During the first three years, the on-going process of data collection made me feel galvanized and reinvigorated about my research insights; once this was over and I began engaging with the writing, however, I found it harder to get going. As I started to draft paragraphs, I could not help but feel anxious and insecure about the commitments to the knowledge that I was presenting. Every sentence held an assessment of my ability to present a well-developed argument. The writing process was so revealing of who I was and what I knew, that I found it hard to expose my vulnerabilities to my supervisor (whom I hold great respect and admiration as a researcher as well as a writer). The endless process of editing, rewriting, rethinking, amending and deleting was so exhausting that I would lead myself to the point of being physically sick. However, I was confident at sharing and discussing my work in academic conferences, staff development workshops, informal encounters with students or other academics. I realise now that during the process of writing I had (and have) to be far more methodical, structured and assertive, which require a higher level of reflection and understanding of the theories I wanted (and want) to discuss. Slowly, I found myself living in a state of 'liminality'; that is, a '*suspended state of partial understanding*' (Meyer and Land, 2005) that required me to act. Yet, I didn't.

With my funding running out, earning a living took precedence and after a few interviews, I accepted a lecturing job in London. I felt anxious because I knew the challenges and the extra commitments this would involve, but at the same time I felt I could not miss the opportunity. After all, lecturing was the career progression I was planning when I started this PhD, and my teaching experiences at Cardiff Met had

confirmed this to be my true passion. Hence, I looked forward to using my findings as a guiding structure for my own pedagogical practice. For instance, as part of my teaching, I recurrently use the work of Perry to map students' intellectual 'positions' and raise students' awareness of how they can progress. Such knowledge also allowed me to understand students' expectations and ease their frustrations when confronted with (new) knowledge that does not match their epistemological perceptions. Such insights have also been particularly useful with my undergraduate dissertation students as their higher engagement with academic work seems to exacerbate even more their need for relative thinking and commitment.

Equally, this work has allowed me to participate more effectively in team meetings and contribute to the revalidation of curricular programmes with valuable empirical knowledge on how to stimulate students' learning and identity development. Specifically, I promoted the development of more cooperative and realistic means of assessment and advocated for the presentation of contrasting and ambiguous forms of knowledge at the early stages of the degree. In addition to this, I have been exposing students to confront their '*exposed theories*' (i.e., what they say they do) with their '*theories-in-use*' (i.e., what they actually do) through the use of cameras and visual elicitation methods (e.g. Patch kutchu). Such approaches allow me to initiate reflective conversations and promote discussions around currently designated identities (i.e., *an ideal future self*).

Overall, I feel that I have been able to establish a more empathetic and supportive relationship with my students, while appreciating the impact of my behaviours for their subsequent development. This work has demonstrated to me that there is much value in exploring the taken-for-granted experiences of students (and

people in general) to develop further knowledge and understanding as an educator. In this respect, the humanistic and interpretivist character of this research proved valuable in appreciating the more banal moments of my daily interaction, forcing me to reflect upon the impact these may have in instigating a learning culture that promotes confidence and a sense of belonging.

However, ironically, if on the one hand my teaching experiences brought me joy and self-confidence, on the other, they also brought me the dark shadow of a depression fuelled by my inability to respond to all the demands (i.e., PhD, work, family). It has not been an easy journey. Along these years, my priorities became less clear and I lost my way many times. Yet, I cannot ever regret starting this journey. This work has not only been a source of academic learning, but importantly a catalytic for personal growth and self-discovery. I will be forever grateful for the people I met along the way, for the professional opportunities I gained and for the learning and identity transformations I was forced to engage with. I have learned it the hard way, but I'm grateful nonetheless.

*You think that when you rest at last, you'll go back from where you came
But you're picked up quite a story and you've changed since the womb
What happened to the real you, you've been captured, but by whom?*

Bob Dylan - Property of Jesus (1981)

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Perry's scheme of ethical and intellectual development ⁶

Basic Dualism, Position 1, represents a dichotomous perspective of the world. Students here see knowledge as known facts and absolute; for example, good–bad, right–wrong. Within it, the belief exists that to receive the right answers, students must listen to authority (e.g. lecturers) as it holds the valuable truth.

Position 2, Multiplicity Pre- legitimate, is promoted when students are confronted with pluralism. Here, different points of view are acknowledged, even among authorities. Despite this awareness, students largely remain in opposition to the abstractness and diversity of interpretation (Love and Guthrie 1999). Consequently, authority remains the main source of information. Students within this position are inclined to feel fear, stress, and sadness when their beliefs are confronted. Hence, they tend to accept the existence of different opinions as temporary.

The progression to **Position 3, Multiplicity Legitimate but Subordinate**, occurs when students realise that even 'good' Authorities do not have all the answers. Although students allow for some uncertainty, they still believe that finding the truth is just a question of time. Hence, where the right answer has not yet been found, it is assumed that no answer is wrong, and everyone has the right to an opinion. Furthermore, in order to achieve the standards expected, they still look to authority for guidance and confirmation (Perry 1981).

Position 4, Late Multiplicity, symbolises an important turning point for students, where two distinctive pathways are identified; Multiplicity Correlate (4a) and Relativism Subordinate (4b). Within Multiplicity Correlate, uncertainty is no longer seen as avoidable. Rather, primacy is given to the belief that everyone has the right to their own opinion which, in turn, carry equal weight. Here then, students assume multiplicity as possessing equally legitimacy (Perry 1999). The transition to Relativism Subordinate commences when, in discussions with Authorities, students sense the weakness of their arguments as not being underpinned by robust reasons or evidence (Perry 1999). They begin to differentiate an opinion from a 'supported' opinion.

During position **5 (Contextual Relativism)**, students move from seeing relativistic thought as an exception (Position 4) to identifying it as the norm. Here, notions of right and wrong are viewed as context specific, while also evaluated in terms of consistency and coherence. Dualism is now resigned to the category of 'special cases', while authorities are considered diverse and divergent. In Position 6 (Commitment Foreseen), a truly relativistic world is accepted, where infinite context requiring constant decisions exist. At this point, students start to feel that commitments need to be made 'in order to establish their bearings in a relativistic world' (Love and Guthrie 1999, 12).

Positions 7, 8 and 9 represent different degrees of commitment within the relativism accepted. This makes them not as clearly defined as other positions. Nevertheless, students further conceptualise values and knowledge as temporal and contextual. Although a somewhat contentious issue, it has been argued that an element of trans- formation (Belenky et al. 1986), as opposed to mere cognitive development, takes place during these phases. This is because, within them, individuals integrate personal or 'inner' knowledge (based on past experience and introspection) with that gained from others. For many, such a development is initially deemed risky and will, therefore, only be attempted in areas considered 'safe'. With increased confidence, greater responsibility for decision making is assumed. According to Perry (1981, 97), this is the time when 'one finds at last the elusive sense of "identity"'. Commitment then, gives a place to stand in uncertainty, creating apparent structure in the ambiguity of the relative. When they reach position 9, Perry (1999, 171) considered students to be mature in relation to being in a partly settled condition about what they can determine and what is left 'in the hands of fate'.

⁶ Content in this section was published in 2015, by De Martin- Silva, L.; Fonseca, J.; Jones, R.L., Morgan, K. and Mesquita, I. Please see reference list for further details.

Appendix 2: Programme structure, curricular units and credits (Translated Version)

BSc (Hons) in Sport Sciences - Specialization in Sport Coaching													
PROGRAMME STRUCTURE, CURRICULAR UNITS AND CREDITS (2011-2014)													
1st Year (Level 4)													
1st SEMESTER					2nd SEMESTER								
Format	Module code	Module Name	Credits		Format	Module code	Module Name	Credits					
Theory	111	Biochemistry and Cell Biology	4		Theory & Practical	114	Applied Statistics	5					
Theory	112	Sport History	4		Theory	115	General Physiology	3					
Theory & Practical	110	Sport Pedagogy	6		Theory	116	Psychology on Human Development	3					
Theory & Practical	109	Functional Anatomy	4		Theory & Practical	123	Management of Sport Organizations	4					
Practical	127	Practical studies I - Athletics	3		Practical	121	Practical studies II - Athletics	3					
Practical	128	Practical studies I - Gymnastics	3		Practical	122	Practical studies II - Gymnastics	3					
Practical	119	Practical studies I - Basketball	3		Practical	134	Practical studies II - Basketball	3					
Practical	120	Practical studies I - Swimming	3		Practical	133	Practical studies II - Swimming	3					
				Theory & Practical	*	1 Optional Module (see list of options A)*	3						
2nd Year (Level 5)													
1st SEMESTER					2nd SEMESTER								
Format	Module code	Module Name	Credits		Format	Module code	Module Name	Credits					
Theory & Practical	208	Sport and Special Population	4		Theory	229	Introduction to Contemporary Thinking	5					
Theory	211	Theory and Methodology of Sport Training	6		Theory & Practical	236	Exercise Physiology II	3					
Theory & Practical	207	Motor Development	5		Practical	222	Practical studies IV - Handball	3					
Theory & Practical	232	Exercise Physiology I	3		Practical	238	Practical studies IV - Soccer	3					
Practical	233	Practical studies III - Handball	3		Practical	239	Practical studies IV - Volleyball	3					
Practical	220	Practical studies III - Soccer	3		Theory & Practical	**	Methodology of Sport I (Sport Coaching)**	10					
Practical	219	Practical studies III - Volleyball	3		Theory & Practical	*	1 Optional Module (see list of options A)*	3					
Theory & Practical	*	1 Optional Module (see list of options B)*	3										
3rd Year (Level 6)													
5 th SEMESTRE					6 th SEMESTRE								
Format	Module code	Module Name	Credits		Format	Module code	Module Name	Credits					
Theory & Practical	314	Learning of Motor Skills	6		Theory & Practical	320	Health Education	4					
Practical	315	Metabolism and Nutrition	3		Theory & Practical	346	Sport Sociology	4					
Practical	317	Anthropology of Sport	3		Theory	322	Functional Re-education	4					
Theory & Practical	344	Sport Psychology	5		Theory & Practical	319	Biomechanics	8					
Theory & Practical	**	Methodology of Sport II (Sport Coaching)**	10		Practical	**	Methodology of Sport III (Sport Coaching)**	10					
Theory & Practical	*	1 Optional Module (see list of options B)*	3										
*List of Optional Curricular Units (select a minimum of 1 unit per semester)													
List of options - A					List of options - B								
Format	Module code	Module Name	Credits		Format	Module code	Module Name	Credits					
Theory & Practical	631	Teaching Dance in School	3		Theory & practical	632	Young cultures I	3					
Theory & Practical	612	Recreational Sports	3		Theory & practical	633	Young cultures II	3					
Practical	623	Water Sports	3		Theory & practical	628	Sport, Education, Employment and Employability	3					
Theory	626	Sociocultural Discourses in Sport	3		Theory	602	Biophysics	3					
Practical	624	Teaching Golf in School and Club Context	3		Theory	622	Gender and Sport	3					
Theory	608	Aesthetics of Sport	3		Practical	630	High Performance Gymnastics	3					
Theory	629	Sports Policy and Entrepreneurship	3		Practical	610	Introduction to Computer Sciences	3					
Theory & Practical	627	Laboratory Practice in the Study of Motor Behaviour	3		Theory	605	Introduction to Sport Law	3					
Practical	625	Competition and Arbitration	3		Practical	611	Safety and Aquatic Rescue	3					
Practical	600	Non-Competitive Aquatic Activities	3		Theory	606	Traumatology and Prevention of Sport-Related Injuries	3					
** For Methodology of Sport I, II or III (Sport Coaching) student need to pick one of the following sports: Soccer, Athletics, Swimming, Gymnastic, Basketball, Handball or Volleyball.													

Appendix 3: Example of Focus Group Interview Guide (Translated Version)

6TH FOCUS GROUP – February 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Welcome
- 1.4 Reinforce ethical considerations

2. QUESTIONS

MAIN FOCUS:

What has made students change the enthusiasm and motivation for deep learning approaches?
Who is responsible for those changes? Why? How and examples?
What have they learned new? How does that affect their identity development?

LEARNING

*"This year is **more specific in coaching**! So, in this year we don't study just because it could be a question on the final exam, but also because it could be helpful in our future practice as a coach." (Afonso, FG5G2)*

*"I feel that I'm **more focus** this year, but I don't know why!" (Daniel, FG5G2)*

1. In the last focus group you have said that this **second year it is better**. Do you still think that? **Why? What is better?** Why affected you? Why? It is because it is **easier to understand them first years subject?** It is **because is more direct/rational and reductionist?** What is responsible for you think that? Are they more secure in the

*You also said in the last Focus Group that **a good lecturer** has to:*

- **Love** and show that he/her loves the subject that is teaching
- **be an expert**
- know how to transmit the information in an **interesting** way (Carlos, Pedro & Duarte, FG5G3)

knowledge they get?

2. Do you agree? **Why? What is interesting? Why or why not?** Give me **examples? How do you know they are expert? What they have to have or to show? How does that affect you? What is more important for your learning: the lecture (content) or the lecturer? Why?**
3. **Why have you change? Or why not?** How do you select **what is important?** What you think that is important for you to learn? **What makes you learn? What is your criteria? Why or why not?** Do you study **alone or in group? (so, does the group give you security that you think the same or does it challenge your thinking in other ways? Does it bring you closer together or make you realise your own uniqueness?**

*"I think we become **more mature because of the experience of the last year, (ask them which experiences exactly?)** I mean the impact with different way of learn and study, and because of that in this year we are with a different attitude and predisposition to learn." (Telmo, FG5G2)*

"I think I have change, know I try to focus more on how the information that I'm receiving can help me to be a better coach or to achieve high levels of performance in my athletes." (Lara, FG5G3)

4. **In which environment (situation) you learn better?** Where? Why? What you learn? Do you agree most of the times or it is frequent to have disagreements? What impact has that in your knowledge and in what you do as a coach?

"I didn't change my way of study, It is the same, but I know I can understand better my training session in my club and why my coach take some of the option that he takes.... I think in certain way I'm more critical in terms of which kind of exercises should I select, why and when, because of the knowledge that I bring from university." (Lara, FG5G3)

5. **Are you more critical or more knowledgably/informed? why? In what? Where did you develop that? Why you think that? Can you give me some examples that evidence some of the learning that you receive in university? Why did you think that was important?** How do you feel about this? About the learner, you have become? How would you describe yourself now in relation to what you were like when you started? (identity strand)
6. **Do you think that university have provided good learning experience? Can you give me some examples that you did not have mention before? Why? How does it affect you? Why? Where?**

2.2- IDENTITY

I bet you are not the same person that you were last year. What changes to you think it happened? Why? I think I'm more autonomous.

What you mean by autonomous?

In the first year we are the new ones and we are not allowed to do anything. I don't know...it's different! In this year seems like this is our house.

I don't understand, can you explain me better what you mean?

Now I know all the persons and I know all the places and this start to be familiar to me. I feel this is like my second house! (Lia, FG5G3)

1. **What you mean by autonomous? Give me examples? Do you feel more autonomous or more familiar with the environment?** Are you autonomous in your study or you just try to understand what is given to you to learn?

"I'm starting to feel more like a coach (Lara, VD7)

"I don't feel any changes, maybe because I feel that I still have a lot to give as an athlete." (Afonso, FG5G2)

2. **Why? Can you expand? When? What has changed? What made you change? Or why not? How? Are you happy with coaching role? Do you understand that? Do you feel that you change in relation to your identity as a coach? Do you think like a coach? Why? (What about the commitment and engage with the course? Why or why not?)**
3. **How do you want to be perceived by others? What you have been done to be perceived like that? Do you think of yourself as a coach? How do you see yourself as a coach? Why? What helps in that process?**

3. WRAP UP

3.1 Is anything you want to add?

3.2 Thank you very much for your participation.

Appendix 4: Authorization to Conduct Research at FADEUP



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A Faculdade de Desporto da Universidade do Porto (FADE-UP) aceita acolher e ofertar a assistência necessária à estudante de doutoramento Joana Ferreira da Rocha Fonseca da Cardiff School of Sport /UWIC. Este acompanhamento será predominantemente garantido pela Professora Isabel Mesquita a qual será responsável pela supervisão de todo o trabalho desenvolvido pela estudante enquanto permanecer na FADE-UP.

Porto, 4 de Novembro de 2012

O Director da FADEUP


(Doutor Jorge Olímpio Bento)

Appendix 5: Participant Information Sheet and Consent form (Translated Version)

A) PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Dear student,

You are invited to take part in a longitudinal research about how undergraduate students learn and develop their professional identity during their 3-year's degree.

The information in this document will help you to decide if you would like to take part in this project. In the Participant Information Sheet, you will find more detailed information about what are the aims of the study, what your participation would involve and what would happen after the data collection is concluded. I will go through this information with you and answer any questions you may have.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form on the last page of this document. Also, you will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form to keep.

Please note that you do not have to decide immediately whether you would like or not to collaborate with this study. Feel free to take some time to consider this proposition.

1.1. Research Title and Aims:

Title: Sports Coaching Students' Learning Experiences and Identity Development: a Portuguese case study

This longitudinal study is part of a doctoral project (Ph.D.) at UWIC (University of Wales Institute, Cardiff) which aims to explore the experiences and perceptions of the sports coaching students regarding their degree. By gathering such data, we expect to understand students learn and develop as coaches in such environment. We are interested in understanding:

1. How sports coaching students think about learning and carry out their studying?
2. How and why do these self-perceptions change over their time as students?
3. What do students consider to be the strengths and limitations of their degree in terms of content, delivery, and assessment? Why?
4. What role (if any) do the teaching staff play in these developments? Why are they so perceived?
5. What social identities do students possess; who do they think they are and why do they think that?

1.2. Participation in the Study:

Why have you been selected?

You have been specifically selected because the University and course that you are enrolled (FADEUP) has a well establish reputation of good teaching practice and course design.

What will be required from you if you join the study?

If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to give consent to:

- Participate in four focus groups interviews per year (a total of 12 focus group interviews over the three-year duration of your course);
- Keep a reflective diary to record your thoughts about your experience in the course
- Make a video diary reflecting on issues you find relevant to your life as a student, athlete, coach and to other roles you might have within any social setting.

None of this information will be used to evaluate your performance as students. Will only serve the purpose to explore and understand students' experiences in this particular course.

What will happen with the data collected?

The data collected in this study will be disseminated in different academic setting:

- In the final doctoral thesis and viva (Ph.D.);

- In academic journals as part of a research paper;
- In academic conventions or seminars around the topic area.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results published at any point.

The data collected for this study will be kept secured in a password protected file, that only the research team will have access to.

How we protect your privacy?

The data collected for this study will be kept secured in a password protected file, that only the research team will have access to.

Participants' names (yours, other students, lecturers) or other personal details that may reveal your identity will be anonymized or deleted in any dissemination of this research, whenever possible. However, as we will be using video diaries, we cannot always guarantee anonymity. For this reason, before using any videos that feature you, we will consult you about them.

Are there any risks?

There are no anticipated risks associated with the study. However, if you feel uncomfortable with any aspect of the research, you can withdraw at any time.

What happens if you want to change your mind?

If you change your mind about your participation during the study you have the right to withdraw at any time. We will completely respect your decision.

We hope you feel clear about the intentions and expectations of this research project. However, if you need further clarifications, please feel free to contact me or any of the member of my supervision team by telephone or email at:

Contact Details:

Joana Fonseca (Ph.D. Researcher) Jfonseca@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Professor Robyn L. Jones (Principal Supervisor) rljones@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Professor Isabel Mesquita (Co-Supervisor) imesquita@fade.up.pt

B) STUDENT CONSENT FORM

Participant name: _____ Student

Regnum: _____

Research title: Sports Coaching Students' Learning Experiences and Identity Development:
A Portuguese case study

Leading researcher: Joana Fonseca

Email: jfonseca@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Please indicate in the box correspondent to each of the statement, a X for 'No' or a ✓ for 'Yes':

1. I understand the nature of this study and why I have been selected to make part of it. ☐
2. I had time to consider and inquire the information provided and I am satisfied with the answers provided. ☐
3. I have been informed that I can withdraw form this research project at any point without the need to justify my decision. ☐
4. I authorize to be audio or video recorded in any of the interviews or focus-groups. ☐
5. I authorize the dissemination of any data retrieved from the focus groups, video diaries and reflective diaries for academic purposes. ☐
6. I understand the study identified above and I agree to be part of it ☐

Participant signature

____/____/____
Date

Researcher signature

____/____/____
Date

