

## **Coaching in non-competitive environments: Expert coaches' perceptions of the key coaching skills and how they are developed.**

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### **Abstract**

#### **Purpose**

To examine expert coaches', working in non-competitive coaching environments, perceptions of the key coaching skills and how they developed these skills.

#### **What was done?**

Participants: A purposive sample of six male British paddlesport coaches was recruited based on the following criteria: (a) coaching in a non-competitive paddlesport environment (b) holding BCU Coach Level Five award for a minimum of 3 years; (c) use coaching as their main source of income and are actively engaged in paddlesport coaching activity; (d) operate in advanced setting either on the river or on the sea; (e) willing to unpack and reflect on their own coaching practice; (f) well regarded by their peers, and; (g) availability.

Process: Semi-structured interviews with each coach were used to explore their perceptions of skills required for coaching in the non-competitive environment and how these skills are developed. The interviews were analysed using a thematic analysis approach.

#### **Key findings**

Thirteen themes were developed to capture the coaches' views. These were:

##### **Experience and development:**

- Exposed to a range of sports throughout their upbringing
- Have been active paddlers for over 20 years
- Coaching activities and current role had evolved from a generic outdoor or adventure sports background
- Coaching activities initiated via an organisation
- Career path as professional coach only identified after a number of years of coaching experience
- Formal coach education played only a small part in their development as a coach
- Utilised Communities of Practice (CoP) within their development

##### **Coaching process and practice:**

- Describe their role as enabling independence
- Predominantly utilise a Constraints-Led coaching approach

- Self-described as very reflective individuals and describe this as significant factor in their coaching
- 'People' skills identified as the paramount coaching skill
- Personal paddling ability identified as of very high importance
- Have their own personal epistemology as applied to paddlesport coaching

**Points of interest for coaches:**

Coaching skills: The ability to read people, to be reflective and a high level of personal skills were important to underpin the coaching performance of those in this study.

Development of skills: Predominantly this came thorough a lifetime of paddling and years of coaching delivery and plenty of reflection. None of the coaches cited coach education as being a key component, although all coaches had utilised communities of practice to help them develop. There was also a notable absence of specific identifiable mentors.

If you would like a copy of Sid's full project or further information on his research please contact him on: [sid.sinfield@gmail.com](mailto:sid.sinfield@gmail.com)