PREPARING SPORTS COACHES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF A GRADUATE SPORTS COACHING EDUCATION PROGRAM

by

Jørgen Bagger Kjær
A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of George Mason University in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Committee:

__________________________________ Chair

__________________________________

__________________________________

__________________________________ Program Director

__________________________________ Dean, College of Education and Human Development

Date: ____________________________ Spring Semester 2017
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA
Preparing Sports Coaches for the 21st Century: A Qualitative Case Study of a Graduate Sports Coaching Education Program

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother, Grethe Bagger Kjær, who was still with us when I entered the Ph.D. program in 2011, but passed away in 2013 after a very short illness and therefore was not able to witness the completion of this work. Ironically, my Ph.D. work allowed me to be close to her and spend a great deal of time with her in her final years because of my research visits to University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

My mother went to elementary school in a small countryside village in Fyn, Denmark. After she completed seventh grade, Denmark was occupied by Germany during the Second World War. In order for her to continue her schooling, she would have to ride her bike to a bigger village farther away from where she grew up. But because of the war, there was no rubber left in Denmark to be used for wheels on her bike. After the war and in her young adult life, she managed to upgrade her schooling in order to become a licensed early childhood educator (lead teacher in a 3- to 6-year-old multi-age classroom). Although her formal schooling was limited, she always had a thirst and love for learning, constantly reading the newspaper, watching news, and attending adult classes on a wide range of topics. From her, I inherited the same lifelong love of learning and her pedagogy skills, and I know she is proud that my formal schooling resulted in a Ph.D.
Acknowledgements

The six-hour drive home to Washington, DC, from Ohio University was a very emotional one, as I realized that I would soon graduate with a Ph.D. At least it was in my hands as to whether I would graduate. Maybe not the next day, but someday, I would walk out on the stage at graduation and reach this long-awaited goal. That is what every coach dreams about: the ability to control the outcome of the competition. I had access to the field-related data and had collected enough data to draw conclusions and inspire an interesting discussion. Even though the dissertation phase is a lonely journey, several people have helped me along this path. As I reflected on my Ph.D. journey, all of these people went through my mind during my drive home from Ohio University, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to each for their time and guidance.

Every researcher knows how critical it is to gain access to the research field. I am very grateful for the faculty at Ohio University, and particularly to the program director of the graduate program in soccer coaching. These professionals have been very transparent throughout the process and gave me all the information that I needed. Ohio University was just as interested in this project as I was, and without the program director’s willingness to work on this project, it would never have been completed.

My first doctoral committee at George Mason University was composed of John Nauright (Chair), Dr. David K. Wiggins, and Dr. Gary Galluzzo. They allowed me a flexible course selection schedule, gave me the opportunity to explore different academic interests, and supported a research visit to the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. The benefit of that flexibility cannot be understated, because it allowed me to explore different research avenues, interests, and opportunities, for which I am very grateful.

Dr. Wiggins and Dr. Galluzzo also served on my dissertation committee, along with Dr. Anastasia Samaras and Professor Craig Esherick.

Professor Esherick was on my interview committee when I applied for the Ph.D. program, so I am grateful that he is here at the end of my journey. We share the same passion for sports coaching. He was essential in helping me gain access to Ohio University and consistently reminded me that my research actually had an impact, which was an important role within a work that spans such a long stretch of time.

Dr. Galluzzo’s presence on both my committees gave me confidence that I would eventually graduate. I trusted that he would help me through the process. Every class he
taught inspired me, and he has served as a role model during my own college teaching experience. If my college teaching can even approach the level of excellence that his has, I will have achieved a great deal.

Dr. Samaras was the first professor who taught me how to conduct rigorous qualitative research. She is skilled in gently pushing students in her classes toward excellence. I have always been impressed with the amount of interest she devotes to each of her students, regardless of whether the research topic relates to her own interest. Her feedback is always on point, and it significantly enriched this dissertation.

Dr. Wiggins is not only extremely knowledgeable in all aspects of the sports research field, but also a very positive and supportive person. Dr. Wiggins helped me discover what I am passionate about, and I am grateful that I ended up writing about sports coaching. He was ready to help as dissertation chair when I needed him the most, and without him, I simply would not have graduated.

Finally, I would like to thank Joan Stahle in the Ph.D. office in the College of Education. Throughout this 5-year process she has been my guide, with answers to questions and resolution of registration issues; she has helped me out on numerous occasions. She has also made life much easier for hundreds of other students.

This dissertation could not have come to fruition without the guidance and support of my family. Thanks to Victor and Ella for their patience with their dad as I was working on my “big question.” Their interest in participating on organized sports teams inspired me to write and finish this dissertation. To Kirstine, my wife, I express thanks for all of her support and gentle push through this journey. As she often said, “If you have to spend all this time on a Ph.D., you might as well do it right and on something that is useful afterwards!” She was alone with our young kids during many evenings or over extended periods when I was in Copenhagen. I could not have done it without her support.
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<td>CCoP</td>
<td>Community of Practice</td>
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<td>ICCE</td>
<td>International Council for Coaching Excellence</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIFA</td>
<td>International Federation of Association Football</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCOE</td>
<td>Gladys W. and David H. Patton College of Education</td>
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<td>NSCAA</td>
<td>National Soccer Coaches Association of America</td>
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<td>PE</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>PBL</td>
<td>Problem-Based Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPB</td>
<td>Physical Pedagogical Bricolage</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZPD</td>
<td>The Zone of Proximal Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>U.S</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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PREPARING SPORTS COACHES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF A GRADUATE SPORTS COACHING EDUCATION PROGRAM

Jørgen Bagger Kjær, Ph.D.
George Mason University, 2017
Dissertation Director: Dr. David K. Wiggins

Sports coaching education and research in higher education have received increased attention lately, especially in English-speaking countries such as the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and the UK (Potrac, Gilbert, & Denison, 2013). Although research on sports coaching education is on the rise, very few studies have explored formal sports coaching education programs in university settings. As a result, little knowledge on formal sports coaching education at the university level has been generated. The purpose of this case study was to explore the outgrowth, design, curriculum, and delivery of a graduate sports coaching education program with a concentration on soccer coaching (M.S.R.S.) at Ohio University in light of the recent professionalization processes within the field of sports coaching. This research project was framed by the interpretivist research paradigm. Interviews, documents, and observations served as the main data sources, with the coding of themes as the main form of data analysis strategy.

As a result of the increased professionalization of sports coaches, advanced sports
coaches must become knowledgeable in many aspects of the coaching domain in the 21st century. The curriculum, and the changes the program has implemented into the curriculum, makes this point clear. The dissertation determined that the curriculum to a large extent is aligned with the International Sports Coaching Framework (version 1.2). Moreover, this study demonstrated that, with a master’s degree in soccer coaching, the graduate program expects students to take on a larger role in the soccer world and to become agents of change in soccer communities around the country. Implications of this research project include a follow-up study to incorporate student voices and an exploration of why the program has not been successful in attracting more women. Furthermore, the study demonstrated the need to develop an evaluation tool to help educational programs access whether sports coaches become more effective in their profession when they graduate from a university program.
Chapter One: Introduction

Youth sports in industrialized countries have changed over the last two decades. In Europe, a health agenda has been created with a stated goal to create quality opportunities for children to engage in after-school sport activities. This has prompted increased funding for sports coaching (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995; Kidd & Donnelly, 2000; Macphail, Gorely, & Kirk, 2003; Taylor & Garratt, 2010, 2013). In the U.S., youth sport has changed from something children engage in for fun to an industry influenced by money, ambitious parents, and coaches (Hyman, 2010). Youth sport today is highly structured and organized.

In light of those changes, Taylor and Garratt (2010, 2013) have argued that sports coaching has been professionalized, evolving from a primarily volunteer activity to a paid job for the “professional coach.” Duffy et al. (2011) mention that “there has been a stated need or intention for coaching to become more strongly established as a profession” (p. 95). Sports coaching is now considered a legitimate profession,¹ partly because of pressure from the International Council for Coach Education² (ICCE) (Potrac et al., 2013). As such, sports coaching has become a profession that requires certification. New

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¹ For example, in Brazil, coaching is already an established profession. Sports coaches are required to hold a bachelor degree in physical education (Milistetd, Trudel, Mesquita, & Vieira do Nascimento, 2014).
² The International Council for Coach Education later changed its name to International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE).
guidelines and benchmarks along with a system of formal accreditation have been developed. For example, the ICCE was created to improve sports coaching education and to develop a global sports coach network (ICCE, 2010). The ICCE has developed a framework that guides sports coaching education in order to develop a common coaching curriculum around the world.

The professionalization of sports coaches brings new challenges and demands for 21st-century coaches whose work can be considered unique and highly individualized: “Accordingly, the contemporary coach needs to be professional in terms of the acquisition of new forms of knowledge and training, ‘capable’ in terms of forging new professional networks and relationship” (Taylor & Garratt, 2013, p. 36).

The larger question that needs to be addressed is how coach educators best support sports coaches to acquire new forms of knowledge within their domain. It has been argued that sports coaching education programs must acquire a stronger scientific and professional orientation (Lyle & Cushion, 2010; Taylor & Garratt, 2010). Scholars believe that sports coaches become more effective after having completed university training (Armour, 2004; Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2009; Mallett, Rynne, & Dickens, 2013). At the university level, students acquire extensive content knowledge as they learn critical and independent thinking skills (Armour, 2004; Mallett et al., 2013). Those skills are required for quality coaching (Mallet et al., 2013).

Alongside the professionalization of sports coaching, sports coaching education and research have attracted great attention, especially in English-speaking countries such as the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and the UK (Potrac et al., 2013). In
England alone, 217 undergraduate programs in sports coaching and 11 postgraduate courses have been created (Bush, 2009). Moreover, more colleges and universities in the U.S. are offering sports coaching education programs. According to McMillin and Reffner (1998), 148 undergraduate minors or certificate programs are offered, in addition to 10 undergraduate majors and 21 master’s programs. Since 2013, at least three graduate programs have been created in the U.S. As Bush et al. (2013) write, “coaching as an academic program of study is flourishing as an academic subject at both undergraduate and post graduate level” (p. 60). In 2013, Ohio University introduced a graduate program in sports coaching with a concentration in soccer in collaboration with the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA). This is the only such collaborative effort between a university and a national sports coaching education organization in the U.S.

Despite the growing number of academic programs and sports coaching education programs through sports organizations, “closer inspection reveals that to date there have been few studies that have as their aim attempted directly to investigate and evaluate coach education programmes” (Cushion et al., 2010, p. 45). What are the design elements of a high quality sports coaching education curriculum aligned professional standards? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine sports coaching education programs, especially at the university level (Mallett & Dickens, 2009). According to Mallett et al. (2013), “systematic research is foundational to guiding the structure of these [university-based] programs, the pedagogies, and importantly the impact on coach practice” (p. 471).
The aim of this study is to explore a graduate sports coaching education program whose goal is to help coaches reach the elite/advanced level within the soccer world. Specifically, this study will explore the curriculum and teaching methods of the sports coaching program with a concentration in soccer coaching at Ohio University. This is a highly specialized degree that represents the professionalization of sports coaching nationwide. The research goal of this project is to make a significant contribution to the body of literature on sports coaching education by exploring the outgrowth, design, curriculum, and delivery of the graduate program and determine to what extent the curriculum is aligned with the International Sports Coaching Framework (version 1.2) aimed at professionalizing sports coaches and developing a global sports coaching standard.

**Significance**

Sports coaching education is an important area of research. As Mallett and Tinning (2014) write: “Understanding and evaluating coaching effectiveness is important for several reasons, including the development of coaching practice, the professionalization of coaching, and accountability” (p. 9). Dieffenbach and Wayda (2010) argue that in order for the sports coaching research field to create its own academic path, two research lines need to be addressed: evidence-based best practices in coaching education practices, and evidence-based practices in applied coaching science. Sports coaching is designed to improve athletes’ performance (Lyle, 2002; Mallett et al., 2013). The objective of sports coaching education must be to improve the quality and effectiveness of coaching (Lyle, 2002). Participation in highly organized and adult-
directed youth sports, however, is not only designed to improve athletic performance: “participation in youth sport can be a life changing experience” (Veila, Crowe, & Oades, 2013, p. 417). Approximately two-thirds of American children participate in a sports program at some point in their life (United States Census Bureau, 2009). Participation in youth sports potentially promotes growth and development and improves physical and cognitive skills, self-esteem, teamwork, and social skills (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003). Many of these positive outcomes depend on the coach. Some youth report negative experiences as a result of participation in sports. Low self-esteem, early burnout, and overtraining resulting in injuries are some of the potential drawbacks of participation in competitive youth sport (Ginsburg, Durant, & Baltzell, 2006; Hyman, 2010).

The recent growth of interest in sports coaching, as well as Hyman’s claim (2010) that America is obsessed with youth sports, poses new challenges for 21st-century sports. Sports coaching around the world has become a full-time job. In the U.S. alone, there are 217,000 full-time coaches at various levels of competition. In Australia there are 27,000 (Duffy, 2009). In the UK there are an estimated 36,537 full-time and 230,765 part-time coaches (North, 2009). In Germany, 500,000 people are licensed to coach, but this number includes volunteers (Duffy et al., 2011).

**Statement of the Problem**

Although research on sports coaching education is on the rise (Potrac et al., 2013), very few scholarly studies have focused on examining sports coaching education programs in university settings. As a result, very little knowledge on sports coaching education curricula at the university level has been generated. Fundamental questions
such as what curriculum and teaching methods are offered in a graduate-level sports coaching education program have not been answered. In order for the field to grow, and to improve sports coaching, it is important that studies collect evidence of effective curriculum and practice and areas of improvement within formal sports coach education. This qualitative case study will explore those questions.

**Research Questions**

This case study explores a graduate sports coaching education program in the U.S. The overarching research question of this study is framed as follows: What is the outgrowth, design, curriculum, and delivery of the sports coaching education graduate program in soccer coaching (M.S.R.S.) at Ohio University? The following subsidiary research questions were designed help explore the main research question:

1. How did the program develop?

2. What are the components of this program in terms of objectives, scope, and sequence of courses?

3. To what extent is the curriculum aligned with the International Sport Coaching Framework (version 1.2)?

4. Based on Côté and Gilbert’s (2009, 2013) definition of effective coaching, which knowledge domain is delivered through online learning, classroom instruction, and field experiences?

5. With what teaching methods and experiences (academic and coaching) do the faculty deliver the program?
Clarification of Terms

In any discussion of sports coaching education, it is important to define the term coach. There needs to be a match between the experience of the coach and the content of the sports coaching education program. Lyle (2002) and Lyle and Cushion (2010) identify three types of sports coaches and their functions: the sports leader (introductory), the sports coach instructor (skills development), and the sports coach (competition). The ICCE operates with a similar operationalization. Participating coaches operate in a context where having fun while developing skills is the main priority. Performance coaches emphasize competition and measure success in terms of wins and losses. Each category has three subcategories (ICCE, 2012, 2013). Table 1 illustrates this point.

Table 1

Coaching Categories and Coaching Domains (ICCE, 2013, p. 23)

<table>
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<th>Participating Coaching</th>
<th>Performance Coaching</th>
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<td>Coaching adults</td>
<td>Coaching high-performance athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching adolescents</td>
<td>Coaching performance athletes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaching children</td>
<td>Coaching emerging athletes</td>
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These roles begin with sports coaching assistant, coach, and advanced/senior coach, and finish with the master/head-level coach. This study will explore a sports coaching education program within the sports coach/performance coach context that
seeks to coach performance athletes. Sport/performance coaches work in the most complex situations due to their focus on competition (Bowes & Jones, 2006; Irwin, Hanton, & Kerwin, 2004; Rynne, Mallett, & Tinning, 2010). The graduate program at Ohio University is aimed at the advanced soccer coach. The terms coach facilitator or coach educator will be used to describe teachers who help students become more effective sports/performance coaches.

**The Researcher’s Understanding of the Essence of Sport**

Sport has different meanings to different people. The essence of sport and leisure might be different for a scout leader than for a professional basketball player like LeBron James. As a researcher, my understanding of sport might be different from that of my colleagues. For example, when trying to define the essence of sport, the question of whether recreation is a subcategory of sport or whether sport is a subcategory of recreation is often raised. The answer to that question can have consequences when a sports coach researcher explores different roles within the coaching domain (e.g., recreational coaches or performance coaches). For example, Bush and colleagues (Bush & Silk, 2010; Bush et al., 2013) argue for a radical change in the sports coaching research field. According to them, there is a need for an interdisciplinary research approach in sports coaching. Coming from a Marxist, physical culture background, they argue for a reconceptualization of the “theme field.” Research should not be conducted from a single discipline like pedagogy or psychology, but should be multidisciplinary. Moreover, they argue for renaming the sports coaching research field, since it is not an accurate term. Instead, it should be renamed the physical pedagogical bricolage (PPB). As such, sports
has been replaced with *physical* and *coaching* with *pedagogical*. Bush et al.’s (2013) concept of bricolage is inspired by Kincheloe (2005). Bush et al. (2013) also urge researchers within the PPB field to close the gap between the research world and the world of the practitioner.

One might question the need to change the name from sports coaching to PPB, as advocated by Bush et al. (2013) since competition is central to the sports coaching profession and the competitive element might be sacrificed to physical culture. As Nauright (2003) writes:

> Sport is the form of body movement culture that is focused on achievement in a competitive environment, as opposed to other forms of bodily movement such as dance, play, games or recreation. Modern achievement sport requires winners and losers as well as great performers. (p. 36)

PPB refers more to bodily movement such as games and recreation, and therefore will not encompass the work of the sports performance coach. However, it is valid to take a multidisciplinary approach to the sports coaching research field in order to create a bridge from research to the world of the practitioner, as defended by Bush et al. (2013).

**Researcher Identity**

The role of the researcher dictates a clarification of assumptions, beliefs, and experiences that influence the approach to this study (Creswell, 2008). My past experience has informed this research, the questions I am asking, and the framework selected. As Maxwell (2005) writes: “Separating your research from other aspects of your life cuts you off from a major source of insights, hypothesis, and validity checks” (p. 38).
On a personal level, the topic holds great interest to me. Competition is central in my understanding of sports, which is due to my own habitus. I have played soccer competitively since I was 6 years old and played semi-professionally in Denmark. Moreover, I have coached high school soccer in the U.S. for more than 12 years. I am also the assistant athletic director at an independent school where I mentor and evaluate coaches, and I am familiar with the evaluation of high school curricula.

I recently became a board member of the largest youth soccer club in Washington, DC, a club with 7,000 members. In that capacity I am involved in all aspects of program planning. I have been a member of the NSCAA since 2006 and hold the advanced national coaching diploma. NSCAA is the world’s largest association for soccer coaching education and is the organization that collaborates with Ohio University.

In addition to the rewards of contributing to the research field of sports coaching education, I am motivated by my past experiences. My professional goal is to join the academy and become a scholar and coach educator. My interest in this topic stems from working in the field for more than 13 years as well as being the father of two sports-interested kids. It hurts when I witness subpar coaching at my children’s sporting events or hear stories about a child withdrawing from playing sports because of negative experiences with a coach. Ironically, it was only late in my Ph.D. journey that I was able to articulate my research focus, which is centered on effective sports coaching and leadership.
Conceptual Framework

A clear conceptual framework is essential in case study research. As Yin (2014) writes: “such propositions will enable the complete research design to provide surprisingly strong guidance in determining the data to collect and the strategies for analyzing data. For this reason, some theory development prior to the collection of any case study is desirable” (p. 38). The ICCE guidelines will serve as the conceptual framework for exploring the sports coaching education program and will help focus my analytic section. The ICCE framework was developed in order to give guidance to a common coaching curriculum that could help set a global standard for effective coaching (ICCE, 2010). The ICCE is represented in more than 30 countries, and members include national federations such as the U.S. Olympic Committee as well as universities such as Loughborough University (ICCE, 2016). Additionally, this study is based upon current research in sports coaching education and effectiveness, particularly the work of Jean Côté and Wade Gilbert (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Gilbert & Côté, 2013). Their definition of effective sports coaching will be presented.

Bush et al. (2013) stress the importance of contextualizing the research field. In order to better understand where this study is situated and the development toward a global coach framework, the next section will contextualize the research field and describe the establishment of ICCE. Last, the ICCE framework will be presented.

Contextualizing the research field and the history of ICCE. This study is grounded in the belief that context becomes important for studies in the sports research field. The premise of this study is that professionalization of sports coaching has taken
place over the last decade. The scale and social significance of sport coaching as paid, semi-paid, and full-time job has led to discussions over the extent of sports coaching becoming a professional activity (Taylor & Garratt, 2010, 2013). For example, in 1997, the ICCE was created with the goal of developing sports coaching into a profession. ICCE’s core mission is “to lead and support the global development of coaching as a profession and to enhance the quality of coaching at every level in sport, guided by the needs of members, federations, nations and key partners” (ICCE, 2010, p. 4). For this purpose, the ICCE established two working groups. The first working group developed a global framework for the recognition of sports coaching competence and qualifications. The second workgroup defined the steps required to recognize sports coaching as a profession (ICCE, 2010). In order to do so, the ICCE explored how coaching as a profession compares to the conventional model of professions.

Traditionally, the five steps of professionalization processes include: (a) the beginning of full-time work, (b) the establishment of a training school, (c) the formation of a professional association, (d) the protection of jurisdiction through state-sanctioned licensing, and (e) the development of a formal code of ethics (Wilensky, 1964). Larsson (1977) and Abbott (1988) viewed professionalization as a process of market closure and monopolistic control of work. The goal of occupational groups is to protect themselves as insiders and to exclude outsiders. Occupation groups were often the driving force and had the goals of achieving higher salary, status, and power. Elliott Freidson (2001) argued that at the core of professionalism is “a set of institutions which permit the members of an occupation to make a living while controlling their own work” (p. 17).
A recent contribution to the field is Evetts’ work (2009, 2011a, 2011b) on professionalism as a discourse. Evetts calls her approach “new professionalism” or “organizational professionalism.” Evetts (2011a) argues that the research field has never been able to define a profession and such definition is pointless today, as the understanding of professional work is changing. Workers and firms are now more mobile and professionals have begun to work in large-scale organizational workplaces, and sometimes, in international firms. She states, “In the future, global processes seem likely to diminish the sovereignty of nation states in favor of internationalized markets and their regulating systems” (Evetts, 2011a, p. 24). Within the world of sport, national and international sports organizations regulate the work of athletes. In many European countries, a license is required to coach soccer at the highest professional levels. In the U.S., many elite youth soccer clubs require sports coaching certification as well; see, for example, the Alexandria youth soccer club (Alexandria Soccer Association, n.d.).

According to Evetts (2011a), professionalization can occur “from within” as well as “from above.” Professionalization “from within” is the manipulation of the market by a particular group, such as medicine and law, as described by Larson (1977). Professionalization “from above” is domination by forces external to the occupation group. Social workers and engineers, for instance, have been professionalized from above. For an example of professionalization “from above” in the sporting world, please see Kjær and Agergaard (2013). When the professionalization occurs “from within,” then

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3 Pierre Bourdieu argued for not using the term profession at all (Schinkel & Noordegraaf, 2010). It is possible to debate whether, in fact, his own term, social capital, captures it better.

4 Adapted from McClelland’s (1990) research.
the benefits to the group can be significant in terms of salary, status, and authority.

**Coaching as a blended profession.** According to Duffy (2011), ICCE realized the significant role of volunteer coaching and that working toward sports coaching becoming recognized as a profession might not be in the best interest of all stakeholders. The profession’s “right to practice” seems weaker than that of other professions. The control that other professions have to protect themselves and the public might not be in the best interest of the sports coaching field (Duffy et al., 2011). In medicine, doctors must possess an acceptable body of knowledge and skills. Is this desirable in sports coaching, where sports organizations rely on volunteer coaches? Many sports organizations, federations, and national organizations, especially in soccer, do require certification and knowledge. At more advanced levels and in schools and universities, academic degrees (but not necessarily in coaching) and certificates are required. There is a range of coaching roles (pre-coaching, assistant coach, coach, senior coach, master coach), status levels (full-time, part-time, and volunteer), qualifications (ranging from certificates to degrees in coaching), and experience. Given this variety, the ICCE realized that sports coaching should be considered a blended professional area (Duffy et al., 2011; ICCE, 2013, 2014).

By doing so, the ICCE recognizes that the main identity for the professional area of sports coaching could be “blended” while recognizing that the area borrows elements from and accepts the existence of “professional” and volunteer services identities (Duffy et al., 2011). The goal of the ICCE today is to work for the development of sports coaches and “provide benchmarks for the recognition and certification of coaches”
(ICCE, 2013, p. 10). That framework with related competencies will be described now and will serve as the core of the conceptual framework.

**Sports coaching knowledge and competencies.** The framework for the ICCE is built on the definition of effective coaching by Jean Côté and Wade Gilbert (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Gilbert & Côté, 2013). They write that sports coaching effectiveness is “the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes’ competence, confidence, connection, and character in specific coaching contexts” (Gilbert & Côté, 2013, p. 147).

This definition takes a multidisciplinary approach to coaching effectiveness as argued by Bush et al. (2013). Professional knowledge and its delivery are pedagogical. Interpersonal knowledge has a psychological base; intrapersonal knowledge is the ability to reflect on one’s practice and relate it to the coaching context. Gilbert and Côté’s understanding of knowledge is based on Anderson’s (1982) broad conceptualization of knowledge. In a sports coaching context, knowledge “represents a complex structure of coaches’ declarative (knowing) and procedural (doing knowledge)” (Côté & Gilbert, 2009, p. 309). Professional knowledge consists of content knowledge and the teaching of sports-specific skills. Interpersonal knowledge is the ability to connect and communicate with stakeholders, most importantly the athletes. This can also be described as “emotional intelligence” (Chan & Mallett, 2011). In reality, sports coaching is not done in isolation, but through social interactions. A coach’s ability to understand, talk, and engage with his or her athletes is important. In essence, it is the ability to understand oneself and
consistently reflect on one’s actions in order to improve coaching practice (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Gilbert & Côté, 2013).

The definition and approach to effective sports coaching guides the ICCE framework. Table 2 lists knowledge areas and related primary functions and levels of competence.

Table 2


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Areas</th>
<th>Primary Functions</th>
<th>Levels of Competence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Knowledge</td>
<td>Set vision and strategy</td>
<td>Understand big picture, align and govern, analyze needs, set vision, develop strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct practices and prepare for competitions</td>
<td>Guide practice, employ suitable pedagogy or andragogy, identify and manage suitable competitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Knowledge</td>
<td>Shape the environment</td>
<td>Create action plan, organize setting and personnel, identify and recruit athletes, staff and resources, safeguard participants, develop progress markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build relationships</td>
<td>Lead and influence, manage, manage relationships, be an educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal Knowledge</td>
<td>Read and react to the field</td>
<td>Observe, make decisions and adjust, record and evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn and reflect</td>
<td>Evaluate session and program, self-reflect and self-monitor, engage in professional development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current Study

This study is based on the following premises. The first premise is that sports coaching as professional practice has developed into a blended profession where the performance coach meets new challenges and demands. For example, some settings require degrees or certificates in order to be employed as a sports coach. As a result, it is now possible to earn a master’s degree with a concentration in soccer coaching. This is a highly specialized degree. It is in the context of the professionalization of coaching that this study explores sports coaching education programs. As a result of professionalization processes, the ICCE was developed with a framework for sports coaching education. That framework serves as my analytic framework; the second premise is that the dialogue over sports coaching education programs is based on research from which the guidelines from ICCE were developed; this lends validity to the study.

If universities and national sports coaching education programs within individual sports are training coaches as part of a blended profession, then they must meet research and benchmarks established by professional sports coaching organizations such as ICCE in order to justify their existence. It is an integrative process between the societal needs and sports coaching education programs operating within the blended profession of coaching. Figure 1 below depicts this interactive process. This study explores how a formal sports coaching education program prepares advanced coaches to master the six primary functions described by the ICCE.
Figure 1.Professionalization processes.

Summary

Research on sports coaching education is on the rise, partly as a result of the professionalization of coaching. As a result, the ICCE was created to set benchmarks and guidelines based on research on effective sports coaching and what sports coaching education should entail. This case study will add to the research on sports coaching education by exploring a graduate sports coaching education program, its curriculum, and to what extent it aligns with the ICCE framework version 1.2.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter will provide an introduction to the literature in the field of sports coaching education research. Glesne (2011) recommends conducting a literature review around trends or themes. Thus, three themes will guide this chapter. Those three themes are based on the definition of effective sports coaching according to Gilbert and Côté described in chapter 1 (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Gilbert & Côté, 2013). I have developed a table (please see Appendix B) that provides an overview of the journal articles structured by the themes.

The objective of sports coaching education must be to improve the quality and effectiveness of the sports coach. This can be accomplished by either preparing individuals to enter the coaching profession or helping advance the qualifications of more experienced coaches. It is the formal sports coaching education programs that serve as gatekeepers to the blended profession. The aim is to recognize the current knowledge base regarding formal sports coaching education programs and describe where this current study is situated in the literature. Sports coaching education programs fall into two categories. The first category consists of sports coaching certification programs of individual sports organizations (Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2006). For example, the US Soccer Federation and NSCAA have a scaffolding approach to sports coaching education where sports coaches advance to new courses once they pass a previous one. The second
category consists of university programs offering a sport-coaching track, often as an undergraduate minor/major or a certificate (Nelson et al., 2006). Both settings will be reviewed, although the primary goal is to achieve a better understanding of university-based sports coaching education programs. Certificate programs in sports coaching are reviewed in order to explore whether best practices from certificate programs can be recommended to university-based programs.

**Literature Search Procedure**

The general field of sports coaching research is thorough (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006). This literature review concentrates on published journal research from 1999 until 2015. The year 1999 was chosen based on a preliminary study of readings in the field. Based on those readings, it appears that the first research project to evaluate a large-scale sports coaching education program was conducted that year (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999). Only peer-reviewed academic journal articles were included, as well as dissertations. Journal articles and dissertations have been thoroughly reviewed, represent a record of a specific research field, and provide a foundation for understanding emerging research trends (Silverman & Skonie, 1997). It seems that books from recent years have created a broader understanding of sports coaching education, especially within the field (see, for example, *The Routledge Handbook of Sport Coaching* or *Sports Coaching Research: Context, Consequences and Consciousness*). I therefore decided to include books when discussing conceptual issues related to sports coaching education. All journal articles that evaluated formal sports coaching education programs are listed in Appendix B. The search was limited to English-language research. I did consider searching for Danish-
language research, but decided that it would bias my search toward one region and/or one theoretical approach to sports coaching education. A computerized search in the following subject databases was conducted: Education Research Complete, ERIC, PsychINFO, Sociological Abstract, SportDiscus, and Dissertation Abstract. The key words coach education, coach learning, and sports coaching education, and combinations of these words, were used to guide the search process. In addition to these databases, the special issues of some journals were also searched. This helped with crosschecking. The following journals from 2006 were searched: *Sport Psychologist* 20(2), *International Journal of Sports Science* 1(3), and *International Journal of Physical Education, 38*(1). Lastly, the following journals were searched manually for the year 2015, because often there is a delay between publication and computerized database referencing (Gilbert, 2002): *International Journal of Sports Science, International Journal of Coaching Science*, and *Journal of Coaching Education*.

**Professional Knowledge**

Gilbert and Trudel (1999) were the first scholars to develop a comprehensive strategy to evaluate large-scale sports coaching education programs. The aim of their study was to measure the link between course attendance and the knowledge and practice of the sports coach attending the course. The study was a qualitative examination study of the Canadian National Sports Coaching Certification program and concluded that a certification program often only reinforces what a sports coach already knows.

Malete and Feltz (2000) conducted a study of sports coaching education attendance and its impact upon coaching efficacy. A group of coaches ($n = 36$) completed
the coaching efficacy scale before and after attending two 6-hour sessions. The study concluded that course attendance had a significant impact upon the sports coaches’ perceived ability to coach. However, the study did not measure whether coach effectiveness, quality, or competency had in fact improved.

A similar study by McCullick, Schempp, and Clark (2002) evaluated the effectiveness of the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) national sports coaching education program. Through a qualitative study, the authors framed their findings against eight of Goodlad’s (1990) tenets of teacher education. The study concluded that golf coaching education programs must conform to certain criteria and the effectiveness and quality of the instructor is important. Coaching faculty should have a broad consensus as to what counts as content knowledge for a golf coach, and they also need to serve as good role model sports coaches for participants in the course. Finally, the study concluded that the supervision of teaching practice by the sports coaching faculty is important for a successful outcome.

Hammond and Perry (2005) conducted a qualitative study of two soccer-coaching courses by collecting such data as documents (syllabi), interviews, notation analyses, and questionnaires. They found significant inconsistencies between the syllabi’s recommended delivery and what was actually being taught in the course. For example, the delivery was supposed to be practical in nature, but in reality for three-quarters of the time, students in the course received knowledge through lectures.
Interpersonal Knowledge

Limited research on the requisition of interpersonal knowledge in sports coaching education settings has been conducted. A study by Abraham, Collins, and Martindale (2006) confirmed the need for strong interpersonal knowledge, but the objective of their study was not how coaches learn to acquire the skills needed. Instead, the focus was on developing a model of sports coaching: what coaches should know. The need for strong communication skills was exemplified by the following quote from one of the expert coaches: “You have to be able to communicate with players in a way that they believe in … your knowledge” (Abraham et al., 2006, p. 559). Moreover, the study also argued that sports coaches see themselves as leaders, not only on the field, but also in human resources. Abraham et al. (2006) write, “Expert coaches are leaders of a team of support staff and a team/group of athletes and therefore take on the responsibility for all human resources issues that entails” (p. 559).

Another article that describes the acquisition of interpersonal skills in a formal educational setting is “Developing a Coach Education Course: A Bottom-Up Approach” by Jacobs, Knoppers, Diekstra, and Sklad (2015). According to the authors, Dutch amateur football coaches felt they needed tools and knowledge to navigate conflicts and confrontational behaviors by players and/or parents. As a result, a coach education course was created in order to better equip coaches with tools they could use to improve their interpersonal skills. The article concludes that coaches were motivated to participate because coaches were given input on the content area and teaching methods, which could be adjusted during the course. Because of intensive feedback, including feedback from
peers, and significant time to practice exercises, the authors believe the course “may therefore have enabled these coaches to improve their interpersonal skills and reduce interpersonal conflicts on the football field” (Jacobs et al., 2015, p. 185). Using a bottom-up approach is time-consuming but worth the effort, concludes the article.

The aforementioned articles are the only articles that discuss interpersonal knowledge. The work of Potrac and Cassidy (2006) and Cassidy, Jones, and Potrac (2009) utilized Vygotsky’s (1978) concepts of “the zone of proximal development” and more “capable others” in discussions on effective sports coaching. It could be argued that this work falls under the category of interpersonal knowledge with its focus on the coach-athletes relationship. Here, the sports coach is viewed more as a guide who helps the athletes (who know less than the coach) to succeed. However, their work will be described and discussed under the intrapersonal knowledge section, since the authors have used the theories of Vygotsky in relation to the mentoring of coaches.

Intrapersonal Knowledge

This section describes the third component of the definition: coaching reflection. As Gilbert and Trudel write, “10 years of coaching without reflection is simply one year of coaching repeated 10 times” (2006, p. 114). Integrating reflection into coaching practice is the key to what Cassidy et al. (2009) termed a holistic approach to the activity. It is suggested that holistic coaching allows for risk taking and promotes intrinsic motivation in coaches.

The field of education has influenced the practice of reflective learning (Cushion, 2006). Based on sports coaching education literature, three approaches to reflective
learning currently exist as it relates to coach education: Schön’s theory of reflective practice, the concept of communities of practice (CCoP), and the theories of Vygotsky.

The work of Gilbert and Trudel (2001, 2004, 2005) provides a framework as to how sports coaches reflect. Their work is based upon Schön’s (1983, 1987) theory of reflective practice. For Schön, knowledge creation through experience is accomplished by reflecting in and on practice dilemmas, which are referred to as reflective conversations. Gilbert and Trudel (2001, 2004, 2005) demonstrate how sports coaches learn through reflection. There are three ways of reflecting according to Gilbert and Trudel. The first is reflection-in-action, which focuses on action in the present: for example, reacting to a play that the opponent successfully made against you. Sports coaches might reflect with their assistant coaches or make reflections on their own before calling for a new strategy. The second form of reflection is reflection-on-action. This is defined as having a reflective action after an event has taken place, but when there is time to correct the potential problem: for example, during a game the coach observes a defensive problem with his/hers team, but decides to change strategy after the game has ended because he/she judges that he needs some time to practice the new strategy with the team. The last reflective practice of sports coaches is retrospective-reflection-on-action. Here the reflection happens long after the event has taken place: for example, during the post-season when it is determined that a specific strategy simply does not work with the current roster.

“In terms of application to coach education, efforts designed to stimulate growth on coaches’ intrapersonal knowledge clearly would benefit from an emphasis on
reflection-in and on-action” (Gilbert & Côté, 2013, p. 156). A way to incorporate a more reflective practice into a more formal learning environment is through situated learning experiences: for example, replacing lectures with a problem-based learning approach.

As mentioned earlier, universities have begun to offer academic courses focusing on sports coaching. Demers, Woodburn, and Savard (2006) describe the establishment of a 3-year undergraduate sports coaching program at their university (Laval) in Canada. In essence, the authors reflect on their own progress delivering the program. The main objectives when creating the program were to (a) use a problem-based approach to learning and (b) create reflective practices. The authors discovered that it requires a great amount of faculty collaboration in order to create a problem-based learning (PBL) approach. Therefore, a significant time commitment is required from the faculty in order for the program to be successful. The authors also describe some difficulties for students in applying the knowledge from courses to their internship experiences. A way to overcome this issue, according to the authors, would be to design more specific assignments regarding critical reflection in order to better integrate theory and practice.

Another attempt to explore PBL as a teaching tool in formal sports coaching education is the work completed by Jones and Turner (2006). According to the authors, sports coaching must be “intellectualized.” Coaches need to approach their field holistically, as sports coaching is a complex social process. However, little research has been done on the topic, and as such, work on the improvement of sports coaching education has been neglected. The aim of their paper was to explore PLB as one way to improve sports coaching education. They write: “Its purpose lies not only in emphasizing
the interdisciplinary nature of coaching knowledge in practice, and of the need to educate coaches with this in mind, but in actively presenting a way through which this can be done” (Jones & Turner, 2006, p. 182). Jones and Turner introduced the principles of PBL during the final year of a sports coaching education and sport development bachelor’s program with 11 undergraduate students. The session took place weekly for 2 hours during the course of a 12-week semester. The paper concluded that the unit’s learning outcome resulted in students thinking differently about sports coaching and developing a better appreciation for the complex nature of sports coaching. The aim of their paper was to explore PBL as one way to improve sports coaching education. However, the implementation of the PBL learning method was not without problems. For example, the authors concluded that peer assessment seemed to be a problem because of leniency. Personal relationships were prevailing over critical feedback that could otherwise contribute to the discussion.

Two other studies that have assessed the reflective component of a university-based sports coaching education program are the works done by Knowles and colleagues (Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie, & Neville, 2001; Knowles, Tyler, Gilbourne, & Eubank, 2006). Their 2001 study was conducted among eight second-year undergraduate students in a sports coaching education program. The eight students received lectures that focused on conceptual and practical issues associated with reflective practice. Students were also placed in internships and workshops were conducted with a focus on writing reflective journals. The study concluded that the sports coaches had mixed feelings about the outcome. Some found the development of action plans and the discussions surrounding
the action plans useful, while others did not. Another conclusion was that students often needed extra support in the beginning of their internship from faculty supervisors. The study concluded that the role of the facilitator is quite difficult. Faculty members not only need to have sport science, pedagogy, and reflective skills, but also strong interpersonal skills. It cannot be assumed that reflective skills will be a “natural occurring phenomenon that runs parallel to increasing coaching experience” (Knowles et al., 2001, p. 204). Knowles et al. (2006) did a follow-up study to explore to what extent the graduates did engage in reflective practices. They found that once sports coaches did report reflective practices, it was primarily reflection on negative coaching problems. Little written reflection was conducted, as reflection was mostly occurring as peer discussion.

A recent study on reflective practice in a university setting is the study conducted by Kuklick, Gearth, and Thompson (2015). Twenty-one coach education practicum students were asked to answer weekly online journaling prompts over a 12-week period. The objective was to examine how students reflected within an undergraduate practicum course. The study confirmed prior research that coaches learn through reflection to identify coaching dilemmas. However, a key finding of the study is that disconnects exist between what is learned in the classroom and the reality of coaching practice. Therefore, the authors suggest a need for course work in university-based programs to better facilitate students’ understanding of how their coaching role is applied and what it may consist of in professional practice.

Knowles, Borrie, and Telfer (2005) analyzed the use of reflective practice and learning strategies through six national sports organizations and their certificate sports
coaching programs. Overall, the results indicated that none of the programs did an
effective job developing reflective skills. The programs did not offer a potential structure
for the development of reflective skills in conjunction with delivering more sports-
specific skills (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 1719).

**Communities of practice.** The use of communities of practice (CCoP) has
received increased scholarly attention in recent years as it relates to sports coaching
education (Cassidy et al., 2006; Culver & Trudel, 2006, 2008; Gilbert, Gallimore, &
Trudel, 2009). Wenger (1998) developed the CCoP framework, and uses a social theory
of learning as its base. He writes that “engagement in social practice is the fundamental
process by which we learn and so become who we are” (Wenger, 1998, preface). Culver
and Trudel (2006), who have used the CCoP framework and transferred it to a sports
coaching context, defined a coach CCoP as “a group of people [coaches] 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 interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 98). For
Culver and Trudel, a CCoP offers a place for sports coaches to reflect and discuss issues
related to their profession and by doing so develop their knowledge and expertise.
Cassidy et al. (2009) take the concept of CCoP further when they argue that:

> We would add that the learning for coaches within CCoPs can be enhanced when
> those leading or facilitates practices can integrate appropriate theoretical concepts
to guide and inform the discussions of the “real-world” issues that coaches have
to contend with in the field. (p. 171)
For Cassidy and colleagues, it is important that practical issues are combined with theoretical concepts, and they also call for the use of “academic theories and concepts as a base for stimulating discussion and reflection” among sports coaches (Cassidy et al., 2009, p. 173). However, the framework provided by Wenger also provides an emphasis on leadership. In fact, Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) argue that the most important factor in the success of a community of practice is the strength of leadership.

Moreover, they argue:

> The foundation of leadership has always been about learning. . . . It has been about passionately setting out a vision and putting together a sound strategy to support it; about developing people to take initiative and follow their bliss, while also reinforcing their commitment to performance objectives and holding them accountable. (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 216)

It seems essential for sports coaches to learn about different kinds of leadership styles in order to reflect on their own leadership approaches. Successful sports coaches need to develop a clear leadership vision, and be able to communicate that to stakeholders within their organization and the team, as well as within a CCoP. By doing so, the sports coach has potential to become a stronger contributor to the CCoP and take on a strong leadership role among his/her peers.

Cassidy et al. (2006) conducted a study where participants were introduced to the principles of adult learning, such as reflection. The aim of the study was to reframe the sports coaches’ thinking toward learners and learning and introduce situated learning. Eight rugby coaches volunteered to follow a program over 6 months, for a total of 28
hours. The course was conducted in the classroom and was centered on coaching theory. Cassidy et al. (2006) reported that the group could be compared to a “community of practice.” Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each attendee after the course, and the attendees indicated that they liked the theoretical nature of the course as well as the opportunity to engage in reflection and discussions with a group of peers. As with some of the other research discussed, this study did not explore whether the course helped the attendees become better sports coaches.

A recent study explored coach education at the graduate level. Araya, Bennie, and O’Connor (2015) interviewed 17 performance coaches in Australia who participated in a postgraduate course. The objective was to explore how coaches developed sports coaching knowledge as defined by Côté and Gilbert (2009). The paper concluded that coaches developed knowledge through rich learning situations when they were relevant to their coaching context. Furthermore, the three types of knowledge (professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) were fostered in an environment that was socially constructed through a community of practice. The study reinforces the importance of developing formal coach education that is learner-centered and as applied as possible. In addition, courses should focus on providing diverse learning experiences and embrace informal learning concepts embedded in formal learning contexts.

Using the theories of Vygotsky as a framework for sports coaching learning.

The third framework discussed in the literature regarding sports coaching learning and mentoring is Vygotsky’s theories (Jones, Harris, & Miles, 2009). These theories have been used within the field of education, as much of his early work focused on cognitive
development and the learning of children (see, for example, Daniels, 2001). Later, after his work had been translated into English, scholars from around the world began to use his framework to enhance adult learning in different settings (Cushion, 2006; Potrac & Cassidy, 2006). In relation to sports coaching, Potrac and Cassidy (2006) and Cassidy et al. (2009) have utilized the Vygotsky concepts of “the zone of proximal development” (ZPD) and more “capable others” in discussions on effective sports coaching. In this framework, the sports coach is viewed more as a “capable other” who guides and helps the athletes (who know less than the coach) to succeed.

The concept of ZPD suggests that after the learner receives instructional support or tutelage from someone who happens to be more capable in that particular context, the learner internalizes the new idea and, as consequence, will be more likely to perform independently in the next similar problem solving situation.

(Potrac & Cassidy, 2006, p. 41)

The concept of ZPD as it relates to mentoring seems to be useful in sports coaching practice, since it is learning through interaction, with an interaction between the more capable other and the less knowledgeable. Cushion (2006) also argues that the concept of ZPD is useful in a sports coaching mentoring setting because knowledge is constructed and negotiated through a process between the novice coach and the mentor. Furthermore, Cushion (2006) argues that:

Through mediation, the mentor appears key in learning proceeding from external action to internal activity. This process and the influence of the mentor (either formally or informally) mean that the pattern of coaches; behavior become more
and more recognisable and hold the potential for coaches to better understand their external activity. (p. 140)

However, few studies related to formal sports coach education have used a Vygotsky framework. One study, although not using the framework per se but focusing on mentoring, is the study conducted by Nash (2003) on reflection and formalized mentoring among 115 undergraduate students. The study was conducted over a 2-year time frame with two different cohorts of students. Students were required to do 36-hour work placements under the supervision of a mentor coach. Both the students and the mentors completed a questionnaire after the study. Students reported that they “were better able to utilize their theoretical knowledge within a practical situation as a result of this coaching practice” (Nash, 2003, p. 44). During the second year of this study, the results were more convincing: 84% of students reported they were better able to utilize theoretical knowledge, compared to 63% the first year (Nash, 2003, p. 44). Nash states that the higher percentage for the second-year group “hopefully” was a result of better training of the mentors.

Overall, the empirical research field seems to be limited to the work of a few scholars, which especially seems to be the case when exploring sports coaches gaining intrapersonal knowledge. Moreover, only two studies focused on the acquisition of interpersonal knowledge, and there were only five studies in sports coaching education programs. In sum, the sports coaching education field appears to be in an emerging state, and more contributions need to be made in order to gain a deeper understanding of the field (Bush et al., 2013).
Discussion

In this section, findings from the journal articles will be discussed. As Glesne (2006) points out, the literature review is “not a summary of various studies, but rather an integration of reviewed sources around particular trends and themes” (p. 26). The discussion will be structured around certificate programs and university-based programs. By doing so, I aim to go beyond summaries of prior research by analyzing and discussing it and trying to relate it to some of the concepts in the sports coaching education research field.

Certificate programs. Cushion and Nelson are highly critical of certification programs and whether it is right to call them sports coaching education (Cushion & Nelson, 2013; Nelson et al., 2006; Cushion et al., 2010; Cushion, 2011). They write: “‘Coach education’ is the terminology most frequently employed to describe formalized provision. Despite this, developmental courses could, perhaps even should, be more appropriately labelled coach training or even indoctrination in some cases” (Cushion & Nelson, 2013, p. 367). Their argument is built upon the work of Buckley and Caple (2000), who claim that training and education are two different theoretical conceptual frameworks. Training is more focused on preparing for a potential job with an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and skills specific to the profession. As such, the process is more mechanical, with a set curriculum where evaluators are checking off boxes, with only one “gold standard of coaching” (Abraham & Collins, 1998; Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Cushion et al., 2010; Cushion, 2011). On the contrary, education is more
focused on the individual, and the curriculum tends to develop more analytical and critical thinking skills (Buckley & Caple, 2000).

If the sports coaching certification process can be labeled coach training rather than coach education, then Cushion and Nelson (2013) argue that “viewed in this way, coach training is arguably effective in achieving its desired learning objectives, with the gaining of certification providing evidence that many practitioners have satisfied the governing bodies’ criteria for minimum levels of coaching competency” (p. 267).

The literature suggests that sports coaches believe training programs are beneficial. Sports coaches often place importance on sports coaching education when compared to more informal ways to acquire knowledge (Gould, Giannini, Krane, & Hodge, 1990; Irwin et al., 2004; Schempp, Templeton, & Clark, 1998). However, sports coaches also reveal that courses typically offer only a starting point (Abraham, Collins, & Martindale, 2006; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004), or that sports coaches already know the topic being covered, and as such, little new learning takes place (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999; Irwin et al., 2004). Sports coaches also mention that the theories presented are often too abstract to be used in everyday practice, or simply that too much material is presented in a very short time, resulting in no effective learning (Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007). Another critical point has been the lack of time at certificate programs, according to sports coaches and researchers. For example, one of the issues with a PBL approach is that it is time-consuming, which could be a problem for sports coaching education, according to Gilbert and Trudel (2006). It takes time to build trust when working in small groups. In general, sports coaches do not have enough time to
prepare for weekend courses (Abraham & Collins, 1998). As a result, sports coaches have questioned the learning outcome gained from attending the courses as they become more experienced (Irwin et al., 2004). However, this might also be due to the fact that sports coaches have become more experienced and that the specific courses they attended were designed for more novice coaches.

Although the literature is sometimes skeptical regarding large-scale sports coaching education programs, there are also positive conclusions to be drawn from the existing field of research. Sports coaches have reported that attending courses has given them an initial interest and enthusiasm (Irwin et al., 2004), and novice coaches have also found the courses beneficial (Wright, Trudel & Culver, 2007). Furthermore, coaches have provided positive feedback on the more practical nature of coursework (Lemyre et al., 2007) and reported that attending courses has provided them the opportunity to network with colleagues and share experiences (Irwin et al., 2004; Lemyre et al., 2007).

In sum, sports coaches’ perception of sports coaching education programs will be shaped by their current knowledge and previous experience (Werthner & Trudel, 2006). Unfortunately, it seems like sports coaching education programs mostly benefit the novice coach, and attention should be paid to building programs that effectively help improve the profession beyond the novice level. Based on the research, it appears that many certificate programs are more focused on preparing individuals to serve as introductory coaches. A certificate program often offers a standardized curriculum to make sure everyone knows how to teach the mechanics of a baseball pitch correctly. The
complex context involving the role of the coach is often left untouched in certificate programs.

**University-based programs.** Very few studies have been conducted on sports coaching education programs at universities. Only five studies have evaluated and researched university-level sports coaching education programs, despite the call from scholars to “intellectualize” coach education programs. All studies but one have been conducted at the undergraduate level, and no studies have conducted a document analysis of syllabi to explore the extent to which coach education programs follow best practices as highlighted by Dieffenbach and Wayda (2010). For example, to what extent are students gaining interpersonal knowledge and related skills within this domain through coach education programs?

It can be concluded from the review that communities of practice, mentoring, PBL, and reflection should be part of a university-based sports coaching education program (Cassidy et al., 2006; Jones & Turner, 2006; Knowles et al., 2001, 2005; Nash, 2003). However, these concepts can be difficult to apply to a practice for students with little sports coaching experience. Another conclusion from prior research is that it is not without problems to implement PBL. Students in an undergraduate sports coaching program are young and inexperienced. To what extent is a sports coaching program easier to implement at the graduate level, where students most likely will have more experience?

The literature review also demonstrated that there is only one scholarly study on the creation of knowledge in graduate sport coaching programs. Perhaps graduate
programs are where students benefit more from holistic coaching and the intellectualization of sports coaching practice. This is because coaches in this program often bring several years of sports coaching experience. I assume that a holistic approach with more experienced sports coaches is easier to implement. For example, it is easier to use a PBL approach with students who already have significant sports coaching experience. Students will bring field experience to the classroom.

Another characteristic of some graduate programs, like Ohio University’s sports coaching program, is online course delivery. This is perhaps as a result of the profit-driven McUniversity (Bush et al., 2013) creating learning opportunities and programs. How do programs incorporate PBL, create a CCoP, and then reflect and mentor students’ skills in an online format? Can sports coaches learn effectively through an online course?

Much of the literature on sports coaching education programs is limited. As a result, there appear to be no opposing camps on sports coaching education programs. The most contentious issue seems to be what to call “sports coaching education.” Nelson and Cushion (see, for example, Cushion & Nelson, 2013) argue that it is important to distinguish sports coaching education from sports coaching training, in that the latter is the acquisition of professional knowledge and sports coaching education is the acquisition of intrapersonal and interpersonal knowledge.

Instead of conflicting approaches, the field has nuances in the approaches to the acquisition of intrapersonal knowledge. Three approaches to the acquisition of key

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5 Bush et al. (2013) use the term *McUniversity* to describe profit-driven instrumental rationality in higher education.
abilities of intrapersonal knowledge have been PBL (Demers et al., 2006; Jones & Turner, 2006), reflection (Knowles et al., 2001, 2006), and communities of practice (Cassidy et al., 2006; Culver & Trudel, 2006). These studies, however, have not investigated whether the key abilities developed, such as being a reflective practitioner, have improved sports coaching practice. According to Lyle (2007), university-based sport coaching education programs have the potential to investigate the complex and highly contextualized practice of the sports coach. As Mallett et al. (2013) write:

University-based coach education programs were likely developed to facilitate coach development, and research to date is scarce in demonstrating that expected key outcome. . . . Moreover, future research might examine how higher order thinking skills that are supposedly developed through university educating impact on coaching practice. (p. 473)

In sum, there is a consensus in the literature that more research on sports coaching education is needed. Gilbert and Trudel’s (2004) work highlights that between 1970 and 2001, only six authors published at least 10 journal articles on sports coaching education. Seventeen scholars frequently collaborated on research publications. According to Bush et al. (2013), this demonstrates that sports coaching research is still in its infancy. The field has just a few “gatekeepers” conducting research. Moreover, Mallett et al. (2013) argue that most research on university-based sports education programs has emerged from the U.S. and the United Kingdom. They encourage researchers from other countries to add to the literature base on sports coaching education.
Summary

This chapter has provided a synthesis of the literature in the sports coaching education research field. In recent years, formal sports coaching education has received more attention from academicians, with a call for research to extend the knowledge in the field and to diversify the knowledge base. Few studies have been conducted on formal sports coaching education. Current research advocates a holistic approach to coaching. In following this argument, the education of sports coaches should center on three areas of knowledge acquisition: professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Within the context of university-based sports coaching education programs, there are several gaps in the field. Very few studies have evaluated formal sports education programs at the college level. None of the studies have utilized syllabus analysis to determine the extent to which recommendations from the research field are being followed, nor have any studies evaluated interpersonal knowledge in university-based sports coaching education. Lastly, only one study has explored master’s-level sports coaching education programs, and no studies have evaluated a blended learning sports coaching education course. The purpose of this study is to address some of those gaps in the literature, and as a result, to make a significant contribution to the literature on sports coaching education.
Chapter Three: Methods

This chapter will first discuss the philosophical orientation of a hermeneutics research paradigm, followed by a discussion of the rationale for a case study, and an outline of my research design and its procedures. Lastly, a discussion on trustworthiness and validity follows.

Philosophical Orientation

Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, and Hayes (2009) suggest that qualitative educational research can benefit from a stronger epistemological awareness. This includes research within the sport coaching research field. As Mallett and Tinning (2014) write:

Early career coaching researchers should consider in which of these frameworks they situate their research studies. Moreover, it is essential that researchers are cognizant of ontological and epistemological assumptions. . . . It is important to consider these differing theoretical perspectives because they influence the research process—what questions are considered important and how they should be answered. (p. 13)

Traditionally, hermeneutics has focused on the meaning of text (religion, law, and literature), but this strict interpretation of hermeneutics has been expanded. “From hermeneutics, qualitative researchers can learn to analyze their interviews as text and
look beyond the here and now in the interview situation, for example, and pay attention to the contextual interpretive horizon provided by history and tradition” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 51). In other words, context is important. Hermeneutics tries not only to understand, but also to interpret. Patton (2002) writes, “Hermeneutics challenged the assertion that an interpretation can never be ‘absolutely correct or true’” (p. 114). A researcher with a background different from the original researcher’s can interpret a text differently. Since this study utilizes documents collection, including transcripts from interviews, as its core research technique, a hermeneutical approach is appropriate. However, qualitative methodology is also chosen because it values and stresses the importance of tying a phenomenon to its context or an issue. Research questions can be grounded in an issue (Stake, 1995).

Hermeneutics can be labeled as an interpretivist approach (Greene, 2010). According to Potrac, Jones, and Nelson (2014), research within the sports coaching research field anchored within the interpretive paradigm has been on the rise since 2000. The critique of interpretivism pertains to the fundamental question of what counts as knowledge within this paradigm. If all conclusions are open to interpretation, how is knowledge accumulated? The response to this critique is to be found in the concept of transferability. According to Greene (2010), “this concept shifts the inquirer’s responsibility from one of demonstrating generalizability to one of providing sufficient description of the particular context studied so that others may adequately judge the applicability or fit of the inquiry findings to their own context” (p. 69).
Case Study

Stake (1995) offers a similar view. He believes that the most important role of the case study researcher is that of interpreter. His vision of this role was not as the discoverer of an external reality, but as the builder of a clearer view of the phenomenon under study through explanation and descriptions, “not only commonplace description, but ‘thick description’” (Stake, 1995, p. 102), and provision of integrated interpretations of situations and contexts. This constructivist position, “encourages providing readers with good raw material for their own generalizing” according to Stake (1995, p. 102). Furthermore, the aim of an interpretivist approach is not to change the world or to make a judgment about social and political life, but rather to describe and help understand the world; as such, an interpretivist approach will “enrich human discourse” according to Greene (2010). According to Stake (1990), “the purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case . . . the utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in its extension of experience” (p. 245). The aim of this dissertation is to “represent” a graduate sports coaching education program and explore its curriculum and teaching methods.

The case study is a readable, descriptive picture of a story about a person, program, organization, and so forth, making accessible to the reader all the information to understand the case in all its uniqueness. The case study can be told chronologically or presentenced thematically. The case study offers a holistic portrayal, presented with any context necessary for understanding the case.

(Patton, 2002, p. 450)
Furthermore, Patton (2002) describes three steps in the construction of a case study. The first step is to collect the data; the second (optional) step is to construct a case record, and depends on the complexity of the case. The third step is to write the final case study narrative.

**Research Design**

This section will describe the design and the plan for data collection and analysis. I will begin with the rationale for the case study as a research method, followed by a comment on the strengths and weaknesses of case studies. Since case studies use different research techniques within qualitative methods, such as document collection, field work, and interviews, I will describe those methods separately after the introduction to case studies.

**Rationale.** Case study research is commonly used in social science disciplines and the practicing professions. Case study research is also common within the field of education research (Yin, 2014). Creswell (2008) indicates that case studies “describe the activities of a group” by focusing “on an in-depth exploration of the actual ‘case’” (p. 476). Glesne (2011) adds that write-ups of case studies are often descriptive and holistic with the possibility of comparisons of more than one case leading to a search for patterns. This study describes the activities or processes of one case in the U.S. Creswell (2008) adds, “A case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system . . . based on extensive data collection” (p. 476). Yin (2014) explains that a researcher would utilize the case study as a research strategy when he or she wants to understand a real-world case; furthermore, research questions that ask “how” or “why” are suited to use the case
study as a research method. Patton (2002) explains that case studies are context-sensitive. Yin argues that a case study has the advantage when there are more variables of interest than data points and therefore relies on multiple sources of evidence, utilizing the benefit of triangulating data. Lastly, a case study also benefits from prior development of theory to guide the data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014). Stake (1995, 2000, 2006) operates with three types of case studies depending on whether the purpose is intrinsic, instrumental, or collective. The intrinsic case study seeks a comprehensive understanding of a single case and is descriptive. The researcher has an intrinsic interest in studying this case in particular and is not trying to generalize it to other settings (Stake, 1995, p. 3). Instrumental case studies seek an understanding of something broader than the single case under study by generating insights, redrawing generalizations, or aiding in theory development. Collective case studies are similar to Yin’s (2014) multiple case studies. In multiple case studies, the researcher compares and contrasts several cases. Stake (1995) mentions that it can be difficult to determine if a case is intrinsic or instrumental, and cases can thus be categorized as both intrinsic and instrumental.

This study is an exploratory, single-case study of the curriculum and teaching methods of the Ohio University master’s program in soccer coaching. Exploratory research is appropriate when a researcher has limited experience with or knowledge of the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The exploratory approach also provided an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and laid the foundation for future studies of sports coaching education. This is an intrinsic case (Stake, 1995) because the researcher had a genuine interest in this specific case and sought to better understand the case, for two
reasons. First, the program is the only one in the U.S. that is partnered with a national sports coaching organization or national sports federation. As a Dane, I find it interesting that the first sports-specific master’s degree in the U.S. is for soccer, a sport that is not considered an “American” sport (Martinez, 2008). The second reason this case is interesting is because the program uses a blended learning model of delivery. According to my preliminary studies, only one other graduate program in the U.S. offers a blended model. This study will examine what areas of knowledge are offered online versus which areas of knowledge are offered in classroom settings.

However, it is important to note that context played an important role for not only situating the case, but also understanding the professionalization process of sports coaching that informed the design of the curriculum. Higher education is about preparing students for a successful career in their chosen field of study. The case “provides an insight” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 549) into the world that soccer coaches enter as they graduate.

When designing the case study it is important to set the boundaries of the study (Glesne, 2011). Case studies are bounded, meaning that the case is “separated out for research in terms of time, place or some physical boundaries” (Creswell, 2008, p. 47). As Stake (2005) writes, the research questions should help focus the study and make the boundaries, and should “direct the looking and the thinking enough and not too much” (p. 15). Thus my research questions focus on the curriculum and teaching methods (unit of analysis) at Ohio University (the university is the boundary). The study explored the rationale behind the curriculum as well as the changes that have occurred since the
program started. Time was another boundary, as this study explored the curriculum from 2013 until July 2015.

Research Question: What are the outgrowth, design, curriculum, and delivery of the sports coaching education graduate program in soccer coaching at Ohio University?

Subsidiary Research Questions:
1. How did the program develop?
2. What are the components of this program in terms of objectives, scope, and sequence of courses?
3. To what extent is the curriculum aligned with the International Sport Coaching Framework (version 1.2)?
4. Based on Côté and Gilbert’s (2009, 2013) definition of effective coaching, which knowledge domain is delivered through online learning, classroom instruction, and field experiences?
5. With what teaching methods and experiences (academic and coaching) do the faculty deliver the program?

Few studies have explored sports coaching education programs at the graduate level. This study asks “why” and “what” questions. Following Yin’s rationale for conducting case studies (2014), a single explorative case study design is justified. In order to answer my research questions, multiple forms of data was collected, including document analysis, observation, and an interview, which enhances the argument for a case study.
**Site selection.** The first contact to Ohio University was made through a member of my dissertation committee to a faculty member at Ohio University in January of 2015. The Ohio University faculty member then directed me to the program director. At first the program director did not respond to my request but a follow up email from a member of the U.S Soccer Hall of Fame, whom we both knew, helped facilitate a responds from the program director. Ohio University was established in 1804 (Ohio University, 2014). In 1886, what later became the Gladys W. and David H. Patton College of Education (PCOE) began offering teacher education. Ohio University is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and is designated as a research university (high activity) by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The student demographic data at Ohio University is the following: 49% of students are male and 51% of students are female. In terms of ethnicity the majority of students are Caucasian (78.3%) followed by African-American students (5.2%) and mixed races (3.4%). Furthermore, international students comprise 7.2 % of the student population (Ohio University, n.d.a).

In 2013, the college introduced a master’s program in soccer coaching in collaboration with the NSCAA (n.d.). I view this in light of the professionalization of coaching—a master’s degree within a specific sport is a highly specialized degree that offers few job opportunities besides being a soccer coach. As such, this case study has elements of an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995), since the case is tied to the broader issue of the professionalization of coaching.
Data collection. The data collection methods included multiple and varied data sources: (a) document collection, (b) observations, and (c) an interview, and will be further described below. George Mason University’s Institutional Review Board approved this qualitative case study on March 2, 2015. The approval was extended on February 18, 2016. The Ohio University Institutional Review Board was also contacted, however this study did not require their approval. Table 3 summarizes my data collection process.

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<td><strong>Overview of Data Collection</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Spring 2015</strong></td>
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<td>Establishing connection to the field, coordinating logistics for site visit</td>
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| Washington, DC | Morgantown | Athens | Washington, DC | Baltimore |

Document collection. Document analysis is useful when trying to understand a central phenomenon in qualitative studies through the participants’ own words (Creswell, 2008). The strength of document analysis is that it provides insight into self-representations to which participants have given thoughtful attention (Creswell, 2008). Documents can provide information that was not available to the researcher through observations or interviews (Patton, 2002). A limitation of the use of documents is that
they can be difficult to locate and obtain, or simply inaccurate or incomplete (Creswell, 2008).

Before my site visit, I gained information about the sequence of courses as well as brief course descriptions from the program website. I also obtained general information about Ohio University from the website of Ohio University. At the site visit, I was emailed syllabi from the program coordinator for all courses except one, which I had to request through an email directly to the faculty member. These allowed me to analyze teaching methods and determine if best practices were being followed as recommended by the literature in the field and the ICCE framework. During my site visit, I also visited the university library to collect documents on the accreditation of the program. However, the library did not have documents pertaining to the accreditation process.

Site visit. Since a case study ideally takes place in the real world, unless the case study is purely historical, a case study researcher observes the phenomenon being studied. Observations then become yet another way of collecting information from multiple sources (Yin, 2014). Observations can be informal and/or formal. Yin (2014) writes that if a case study is about a school curriculum, then observations are valuable for understanding the curriculum or any problems associated with implementation. I visited the site during the residence program from June 14 through June 18, 2015. I arrived Friday, June 12, two days before the residency officially started. This allowed me to center myself and explore the setting before students arrived. I was invited to a Major League Soccer game on June 13 in Columbus, which was organized for the program participants that arrived early. This gave me an opportunity to connect with students and
the program director. During the residency, I attended all scheduled classes. At the opening lecture, I was introduced by the program director so that all students and faculty knew about the study. During the field sessions, I observed both cohorts, as they were having class on the same field and I could walk back and forth between groups. For lectures and classes, I had to make a decision as which cohort to observe. However, I was also able to go in and out of classes, as the two cohorts’ classrooms were next to each other. During classes, I wrote notes and reflections about my observations on a note pad. When I spoke with faculty or students, I did not take notes during the conversation, but did it after in order to remember the conversation. My informal conversations with participants and coach facilitators provided me with deep information about the program. I wrote analytic memos during the evenings. I collected artifacts such as handouts for students and all PowerPoint presentations used by the instructors. No exams were distributed.

**Focused interview.** The interview with the program director supplemented the document analysis in order to shed additional light on the curriculum and the program as a whole, including how it was developed. According to Halse and Honey (2010), informed consent is central to ethical research. I asked the participant to sign a consent form prior to the interview. In my emails and phone conversations with the interviewee and just before my interview, I ensured full anonymity for the participant. No names will be listed in any publications. The participant was assigned a pseudonym, and no key was created to link the pseudonym with the name. I explained that he could withdraw from the interview at any time if he felt uncomfortable. The interview was recorded with the
permission of the participant. After the interview, the interview was transcribed. I conducted member checking by sending the transcript to the interviewee. He asked for filler words to be removed and to make it more reader friendly, which I did.

As noted, within hermeneutical methodology, the interview, like text, should be understood in relation to its context. Knowledge generated in one situation cannot automatically be transferred to another. As Kvale and Brinkman (2009) explain, “the interview takes place in an interpersonal context and the meanings of interview statements relate to their context” (p. 55).

The format for my interview was a semi-structured interview centered on an interview guide (Appendix D). A semi-structured interview guide allows for some structure, but still facilitates an open dialogue and permits the interviewee to tell her/his story (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The advantage of having an interview guide is that the researcher can optimize the often-limited time available in the interview situation (Patton, 2002). The questions asked should be brief and simple (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview guide was developed before entering the field, and some members of the dissertation committee gave feedback. I also presented the protocol to a faculty member at George Mason University for feedback. The interview took place after the last session at the residency. The interview guide was slightly restructured as a result of the information gathered during the site visit. The interview protocol was developed to solicit responses from the participant to answer subsidiary research questions. The first part of the interview protocol focused on the outgrowth of the program. The second part was centered on the curriculum and teaching methods, as well as the academic and
professional experiences of faculty. The last part asked questions related to sports coaching education and the professionalization of coaching. The last part was added because the program director had talked about it at the conference presentation in West Virginia, but also with students, and I wanted to have his view on this topic in relation to the master’s program in soccer coaching.

The interview situation. According to Holstein and Gubrium (2003), “Interviews are special conversations. While these conversations vary from highly structured, standardized, surveys, interviews, to semi-formal guided conversations, to free flowing informational exchanges, all interviews are interactional” (p. 3).

Kvale and Brinkman (2009, p. 62) describe interviewing as a “moral enterprise.” They also describe the interview as an Inter View—a conversational exchange of views. However, in his article from 2006, Kvale states that power and dominance relations exist in the interview. The interviewer sets the rules for the interview, and an interview is often a back-and-forth where the interviewer asks a question and the interviewee answers it. However, other scholars claim that there is a way to equalize the power imbalance in the interview.

Brown and Durrheim (2009, p. 920) argue that if the interview takes place while both are walking, then “the conversation inevitably become situated, that is, contingent on the surrounding visual and aural distractions rather than on researcher questions.” They continue:

There may be research work that would benefit from a different kind of data-generation process, one that is oriented to a conversational inter-activity with
contributions by both interviewer and interviewers and which therefore generates a different kind of (inter-active) knowledge. (Brown & Durrheim, 2009, p. 927)

I do believe that how a researcher sets up the interview situation influences how much information a researcher will get out of an interview. I do not believe that I needed to do a mobile interview; instead, my plan was to conduct the interview at the university in the office of the program director, a relaxed and familiar setting. I had also planned to spend some time making conversation. It is important to create a climate of trust. Since I had been with the program for 5 days, I was able to create a connection with the program director, and a climate of trust was created. The interview ended up taking place in the program director’s hotel room, at his suggestion. The interview lasted 1 hour and 40 minutes.

Halse and Honey (2010), like Kvale and Brinkman (2009), claim that the interviewee can feel stress during the interview and/or experience changes in self-understanding. However, since my topic was not sensitive for the individual being interviewed, I believe my questions did not increase stress or change his self-understanding. The most stressful factor was probably the fact that the interview was recorded. My general sense was that the program director was pleased to have the opportunity to talk about the program, and also to have a researcher explore the program with recommendations for improvement. As he told his colleagues: “It’s kind of cool to have a Ph.D. study conducted on your own program” (program director, observation, June 14, 2015).
**Online classes.** Access to observe the online classes was not part of the research proposal, but was offered by the program during the site visit. After IRB approval on July 28, 2015, data were collected in the fall of 2015. According to Creswell (2008), it is important that the research design is flexible when conducting qualitative research. Documents from the online classes consisted of questions and assignments asked by faculty as well as responses from students. Documents were collected from July 1 to December 31, 2015. Table 4 summarizes my methods in relation to my research questions.
Table 4

**Data Collection Methods in Relation to Research Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsidiary research questions</th>
<th>Data collection methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How did the program develop?</td>
<td>● Document collection of program material and syllabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Observation, site visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Interview with program director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the components of this program in terms of objectives, scope, and sequence of courses?</td>
<td>● Document collection of program material and syllabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Observation, site visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Interview with program director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Observation, online classes, including student discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To what extent is the curriculum aligned with the International Sport Coaching Framework (version 1.2)?</td>
<td>● Document collection of program material and syllabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Observation, site visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Interview with program director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Observation, online classes, including student discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Based on Côté and Gilbert’s (2009, 2013) definition of effective coaching, which knowledge domain is delivered through online learning, classroom instruction, and field experiences?</td>
<td>● Collection of program material and syllabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Observation, site visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Interview with program director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Observation, online classes, including student discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. With what teaching methods and experiences (academic and coaching) do the faculty deliver the program?</td>
<td>● Collection of syllabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Observation, site visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Interview with program director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Observation, online classes, including student discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis and Analysis Framework**

The analyzing phase begins in qualitative research when the researcher starts coding data (Creswell, 2008). According to Stake (1995), no consensus exists among researchers as to how much they want to have research questions unidentified in advance,
as case study fieldwork can take unexpected directions. Yin (2014) argues that it is important to develop a general framework or analysis strategy before beginning the analysis; this study will utilize Yin’s case description strategy, in which a researcher organizes the case after “some descriptive framework.” This choice was made to help focus my data collection. The ICCE coaching framework version 1.2 guided my analysis and served as my descriptive framework. In addition, the literature review highlighted recommendations for best practices in sports coaching education. For example, I explored the extent to which the program delivers problem-based learning.

Since the study was grounded in the ICCE coaching framework, I decided to conduct a theoretical (deductive) thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis procedure: (a) becoming familiar with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the report. This decision was made for three reasons. First, established researchers have already used this method within in the research field of sports coaching (Bertram, Culver, & Gilbert, 2016). Second, Braun and Clarke (2006) write that “a theoretical thematic analysis would tend to be driven by the researcher’s theoretical or analytical interest in the area, and is thus more explicitly analyst-driven” (p. 84). Braun and Clarke further write that the consequence of using the approach is that it tends to provide a less rich description of the data overall, and more detailed analysis of certain aspects of the data, especially if the researcher codes for the specific research questions. This is the case in this study with five sub-questions. Third, this approach allows for some structure but also allows for some flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006;
Creswell, 2008).

For the analysis, the interview was transcribed. After the transcription, I listened to the interview again without stopping the recording to recheck the transcription. This also helped me get familiar with the data (Maxwell, 2005). I read all documents including field notes in order to get a sense of the whole (Creswell, 2008). The next step was coding data (Creswell, 2008; Stake, 1995).

Table 5

*Example of Coded Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Highlighted text</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>“I wanted to make it as meaningful and as applied as possible”</td>
<td>Problem-based learning</td>
<td>Teaching methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>Students were asked to write down problems or obstacles in their daily coaching and workplace that weakened player development</td>
<td>Problem-based learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coding, according to Creswell (2008), is “the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes of the data” (p. 251). Stake (1995) mentions that a researcher needs to decide how much to rely on code data versus direct interpretation. Due to the nature of my research questions, most of the analysis was direct interpretation. For example, one code was “problem-based learning,” which then became part of a theme, which was “teaching methods.” This helped me answer the research question regarding which teaching methods are used in the program. This example is illustrated in Table 5.
All documents collected, the field notes, and the interview transcript were given initial codes by highlighting relevant quotes on the documents themselves with colored marker. The codes were then sorted into potential themes. The process of coding/developing themes was repeated until saturation in order to “develop a deeper understanding about the information supplied by the participants” (Creswell, 2008, p. 245). All themes are listed in Appendix F.

Limitations and Validity Issues

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers hope to arrive at a deeper understanding of a phenomenon by conducting fieldwork. The question is whether the researcher has gained the correct understanding. Defining and ensuring validity in qualitative studies has been discussed for more than 50 years (Cho & Trent, 2006; Creswell, 2013). According to Patton (2002), social construction and constructivism have generated new language and concepts to determine quality in qualitative research. For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985) use words such as credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and conformability to determine the trustworthiness of a study.

According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009), “Validity refers in ordinary language to the truth, the correctness, and the strength of a statement” (p. 246). Maxwell (2005) adds that qualitative researchers are not looking for “objective truth,” but for the credibility or correctness of the findings. Some qualitative methodologists often have checklists to ensure validity in research, although Kvale and Brinkman (2009) mention that validity should permeate all the seven stages of the research process.
Creswell’s (2013) checklist focuses on eight areas in order to improve the validity of a qualitative study: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich thick description, and external audit. Creswell suggests focusing on at least two areas from the checklist in any given study.

Maxwell (2005) also offers a checklist, which is similar to Creswell’s. However, Maxwell highlights two validity threats: researcher bias and reactivity. Researcher bias is a threat in qualitative and quantitative research because it is the researcher who collects and analyzes the data as well as does the reporting. The researcher is the gatekeeper. The key to validity is to be true to the data and not manipulate it to suit the expected or desired conclusions.

In regard to reactivity, the most important part is to understand how the researcher influences the informants and how it affects the validity of the conclusions (Maxwell, 2005). However, I doubt that I influenced the program director. I am more afraid that the program director influenced me in the interference. He has an interest in presenting Ohio University in the most positive way, which could be a potential limitation of my study. A significant part of my data centers on analysis of syllabi, course materials, and observations; as such, there will be fewer inferences. I am more concerned with the broader notion of researcher’s bias when collecting and analyzing data. Creswell (2013), Glesne (2011), and Maxwell (2005) contend that researcher bias could be a threat in qualitative research. However, Maxwell has stressed that researcher bias could be an advantage when properly disclosed. An interpretivist approach does open up for
accepting the bias of the researcher (Stake, 1995). I have been open and honest about my connections to the field as well as my own habitus. Working several years in the field has given me access to data through “informal data collection.” From my own experience, I have an opinion of what constitutes effective coaching. Consistent with the case study approach of Stake (1995), this research design utilizes several of the procedures mentioned above, including member checks with participants during the interview process, clarification of researcher bias, multiple modes of data collection, and the development of a research protocol.

**Triangulation.** In order to determine if “we have it right” (Stake, 1995, p. 107) the researcher must have multiple sources of evidence (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2005). I used multiple sources in my data collection (please see Table 3). Another way to improve validation is to have key informants review the draft case study report. This is what both Stake (1995) and Creswell (2008) describe as “member checking.” Member checking allows participants to see whether their points of view are reflected accurately in the transcript and to offer feedback on the researcher’s interpretation and findings (Creswell, 2008). I did send my transcript of the interview as well as the final case report to the program director at Ohio University. He had no objections to the report, and as such, allowed the university to be named.

A session on dialogical validity with a critical friend can also improve theory triangulation (Samaras, 2011). I consulted a critical friend who brought a different set of eyes to my analysis for inter-rater coding on segments of analysis. Furthermore, I presented my research proposal to a graduate research conference and received feedback
and reflective questions, which helped improve my study. In addition, my doctoral committee acted as “critical friends” as well. The committee helped fine-tune the structure and content of my questions, as well as helping me reflect on my research progress and report writing. Lastly, preliminary findings of the study were presented at the National Coaching Conference, held in Seattle. Engaging others in my research increased the reflectivity of my study and helped me gain a better understanding of the data, which according to Maxwell (2005) and Kvale and Brinkman (2009) is the essential part of validity. As such, I solicited feedback from peers (as recommended by Creswell), increased my reflectivity, and looked at the data from different viewpoints. Could I have understood the data differently? With critical friends, I conducted ethical research and adopted the thinking forward approach described by Reybold, Lammert, and Stribling (2009).

**Reliability.** The last issue regarding validity is reliability. It is essential to conduct a study that future researchers can replicate (Merriam, 1998), which is what Yin (2014) describes as “establishing a chain of evidence.” It is critical that my research protocol is accurate and well thought out and that I create a case study database. For example, it is important that my field notes are organized, categorized, and complete in such a way that they are available for later access.

**Summary**

This research project is framed by the interpretivist research paradigm. In this explorative case study, one graduate sports coaching education program was analyzed in order to explore how coaches are being educated to become more effective in their
profession. The focus of data collection was on the extent to which the ICCE version 1.2 frameworks as well as best practices are visible in the curriculum and teaching. This study was not designed to prove a hypothesis, but instead to conduct an inquiry into how a graduate program in the USA prepares soccer coaches for the 21st century. An interview, documents, and observations are the main data sources, with the coding of themes as the main form of data analysis strategy. The results provide a picture of what and how a graduate sports coaching education program teaches, in order to help sports coaches become more effective and knowledgeable in all aspects of their profession.
Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter will begin with background, description, and demographic information about Ohio University in order to better understand the context of the case. Document analysis, observations and an interview with the program director yielded information about the outgrowth, mission, values, and curriculum of the program. Then, findings related to each of the research questions will be presented.

Ohio University

Ohio University opened in 1808 with one building, three students, and one professor, Jacob Lindley. The PCOE at Ohio University, where the master degree in soccer coaching is housed, is ranked among the top 6% of graduate colleges of education in the U.S. In 1954 the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education accredited PCOE. The main campus is located in Athens in the Appalachian foothills of southeastern Ohio.

The College Green on the northern part of the campus is the center of the Athens campus. It intersects with the neighborhood of Uptown, which has several restaurants, bookstores, and cafes. College Green has brick walkways and shade trees and has a small college ambiance. It is possible to walk between campus buildings in 10-15 minutes. Residential housing is located on campus or within a mile away in the city of Athens. The city of Athens is surrounded by a patchwork of hardwood forests that constitute the
Wayne National Forest. The closest major airport is Port Columbus International Airport, a 90-minute drive from campus. A private vendor operates a shuttle from the airport to campus (Ohio University, 2014).

During the 2013-14 school year, Ohio University enrolled students as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Enrolled Students, Ohio University 2013*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate students—Athens</td>
<td>17,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate students—Athens</td>
<td>4,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Learning</td>
<td>6,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional campuses</td>
<td>10,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total enrollment</td>
<td>38,857</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Department of Recreation & Sport Pedagogy enrolled 212 students in all of its graduate programs. Table 7 presents a list of cohorts from the soccer-coaching track from the start of the soccer program in June 2013.

One international student, from Hong Kong, was enrolled, in cohort 5. Five female students (one in cohort 5) were enrolled. In total, 76 active graduate students were working towards a master’s degree in sport coaching in the year of this study.
Table 7

Overview of Cohorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 1</td>
<td>15 students enrolled, 2 students withdrew. One student joined cohort 3. 12 students graduated May 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 2</td>
<td>22 began at the 2014 NSCAA Convention; 20 students still enrolled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 3</td>
<td>17 students began in Athens in June 2014. 17 still enrolled plus one student from cohort 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 4</td>
<td>21 students began in January 2015 at NSCAA convention. 20 still enrolled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 5</td>
<td>18 students began in June 2015.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Facilities.** Students in the program have access to all of the Ohio University libraries. Alden Library’s Learning Commons offers 24-hour access to information resources, computers, study spaces for students and groups, and expert assistance from librarians. Students receive introductory training in searching for literature during the residency program.

To the south of campus along the Hocking River are the athletic facilities. For this residency students stayed in the Ohio University Inn & Conference Center, a five-minute walk over the bridge by Richmond Avenue. To the immediate right is the parking lot for Peden football stadium, where all field sessions took place during the residential program. The stadium, originally known as Ohio University’s Athletic Plant, was built in 1929 with two side units that seated 12,000 people. In 1986, major renovations enlarged the permanent seating capacity to 19,000. In 2001, a $2.8 million project removed the
track, lowered the playing surface, and increased the capacity to 24,000. Approximately 2,000 lower-level, bleacher back seats—the Phillips Club—were added to bring fans closer to the action. In 2002 a Field Turf surface was installed. In 2003, an upgraded scoreboard featuring a large video screen for replays and graphics was added.

The stadium underwent a makeover in 2005. The athletic training facility was renovated and expanded to include a hydrotherapy room. Meeting space on the second floor was expanded and improved. The second floor is where the two cohorts met for lectures and class meetings. One room is a large team auditorium where both cohorts attended joint lectures or information sessions.

The auditorium consists of stadium seating and the seats are leather. The program director seemed proud that the program had access to those rooms. Two large projector screens made it easy to view PowerPoint presentations or watch video of soccer games. Next to the big auditorium is a smaller auditorium that seats 25. Having access to these two auditoriums made it convenient to separate the cohorts or keep them together. Small classrooms next to the two auditoriums were used for small group work.

The stadium’s tower, built in phases from 1989 to 1992, houses the football offices, athletic training facilities, team meeting rooms, and the Phillips Academic Services Center, located on the fourth floor. This space is equipped with a large classroom, two computer labs, tutoring rooms, and the staff office of Athletic Academic Services. The residential program did not use the third, fourth, and fifth floors (the cohorts only used the restrooms on the third floor).
In addition to the stadium, the facility contains locker rooms for the football, track, and field hockey programs, plus equipment and training rooms. The 10,000-square-foot Carin Center, Ohio’s strength and conditioning facility, was dedicated on November 12, 1999. This was where the head of athletic training at Ohio University gave the two cohorts a joint session on the principles of strength and conditioning. The center has Eleiko weights and a Mondo sports flooring system, and boasts the space to train 100 student-athletes at a time.

Next to the football stadium is the Walter Fieldhouse, completed in 2014. The field house and football stadium are separated by a small parking lot with some metered spaces. The 93,750-square-foot indoor multipurpose pavilion houses a 100-yard AstroTurf football field with two 10-yard end zones, two All-American scoreboards, a four-lane, 316-meter practice track, long jump and pole vault pits, golf and hitting cages, two filming platforms, and a netting system that can accommodate multiple events.

Walter Fieldhouse provides a practice and training area for all of Ohio’s outdoor varsity sports: baseball, cross country, field hockey, football, golf, soccer, softball, and track and field. It also has some classrooms. At the time of the residency, the university had not yet received a certificate of occupancy, so the program was not able to use it. It will benefit the program, since the university can run all field sessions regardless of the weather. During my visit, a field session with young players was cancelled due to inclement weather. A golf course is next to the field house.

Chessa Field, on the far west end of the Athletic Mall, has been the home of the Ohio women’s soccer programs since 2002. Previously a practice site, the area was
renovated and transformed into the competition facility. The Kentucky bluegrass and rye athletic turf grass mix sits atop a modern irrigation and drainage system. A soccer-specific scoreboard is across from the press box, and it includes a seating grandstand that can accommodate 750. During the residency program, the field was under renovation and was unavailable for use.

**Lodging.** For the residential program observed, students stayed at Ohio University Inn. All hotel profits fund Ohio University academic programs and projects. On opening day, June 14 2015, a welcome message to the students was displayed on the electronic sign outside of the hotel. The three-story hotel has 139 rooms and suites; some of the rooms have been renovated with granite countertops in the bathroom. Students paid a discounted nightly rate of $99 plus taxes and were encouraged to share rooms. The hotel has free high-speed wireless; students were given an access code at the opening session. In addition, there is a fitness center (with an outdoor swimming pool) that students could use free of charge. Students could also use the printer in the business center free of charge.

The hotel has 5,000 square feet of event space. Both cohorts used the meeting space for Sunday evening opening activities and before departure on Thursday morning. On opening night, the program served an Italian buffet. According to the program director, it is important to start with a good meal to set the tone for the rest of the week and provide an opportunity for students to get to know each other. The tavern at the hotel often served as an informal gathering spot for students. Many of the instructors and the
program director stayed at the hotel during the residency, so they were accessible and the program director was able to get to know the students.

**Research Sub-Question 1: How Did the Program Develop?**

Ohio University was a pioneer in the field of sports management and began offering degrees in sports administration in 1966. When the program director came to Ohio University in 1996, the university offered a master’s degree in athletic administration. The objective was to prepare students to become athletic directors.

The program surveyed the students in the athletic administration program in 1998-1999 and 1999-2000, and the results revealed that 8 out of 10 students wanted to coach before applying for administrative positions. But as the program director noted (2015 conference presentation), athletic directors tend to be more than 22 or 23 years old. The program director stated, “We’re sort of preparing these people to do a job that they probably would not do for about 20 years. Instead, let us prepare them to coach, let us make a bridge to coaching.”

At the same time, organizations such as the United States Olympic Committee and the National Federation of High Schools claimed that there was a need for effective sports coaching. Furthermore, the U.S. witnessed an increase in sports participation among youth, high school, and college students from 2001 to 2011. In sum, there was a demonstrated need to prepare coaches to serve an increasing number of children and athletes. The program director proposed that Ohio University replace its master’s degree in athletic administration with a master’s degree in sports coaching (program director, conference presentation, June 11, 2015).
When the program director made his proposal, the athletic administration program was part of the School of Recreation and Sports Services, which also offered programs in physical education, exercise physiology, sport, recreation studies, and athletic training. There was a discussion among the faculty over whether to call the new sports coaching program coaching education or coaching science and what the curriculum should consist of, but since the program director has an academic background in pedagogy, he wanted an emphasis on coaching education.

The first general (not specific to a sport) coaching education program at Ohio University was offered in 2001. The goal was to attract 20 students, and the first 16 students started in 2001. All 16 students were funded through either teaching or graduate assistantships. The academic content was built around existing course programs: Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy (PESS), Exercise Physiology (SAFM), Sports Administration (SAFM), Athletic Training (RSAT), Nutrition (HCFN), and Recreation (REC). The only exception was a nutrition class that was offered by another college. The School of Recreation and Sports Sciences continued to grow and add undergraduate and graduate classes and programming. An online master’s degree in sports coaching was added in 2008. It was a scalable program that took a year to complete, and it was modeled after the online Athletic Administration program launched in 2003. It began with one cohort per year, and 28 students began in 2008. The curriculum is set and offers no electives.

The college collaborated with Ohio University Without Borders, now named E-Learning, to deliver the online programs. After Cohort 3 of the online sport-coaching
program, Ohio University began to collaborate with Compass Knowledge Group (now Pearson) and entered into a contract for marketing and enrollment services for the program. This resulted in a higher number of enrolled students.

By 2010, Ohio University had decided to restructure its schools—according to the program director, to “put them in common academic areas, for lack of a better term” (program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015). For example, athletic training, because of its affiliation with the exercise physiology component, stayed in what became the new Health Sciences and Professions. Sports Administration was placed within the College of Business. That left Recreation, Coaching Education, and Physical Education to repackage and find a new college to call home. The program director argued that they did not fit within the new Health Sciences and Professions College, because of two programs with “education” in the title.

The natural home that we pursued, and we actually were proactive in doing it, was the College of Education. The College of Education later became the Patton College of Education because of a large donation. Roughly five years ago, Coaching Education became part of the College of Education. (program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015)

The new organizational structure made it possible for the program director to restructure the master’s programs. The business model changed and the university went from a quarter to a semester system, which resulted in the deans of the programs electing to have many of the courses taught in-house. Full-time faculty within the College of Education would teach the classes there, and the revenue would stay in-house. After negotiations
among the departments, the sports coaching education program was able to hold on to most of its courses and to receive its own COED prefix, which resulted in more control over its program—courses were no longer outsourced, but were offered within the sports coaching education program.

**The master’s program in soccer coaching.** The program director believes there is a value in having coaches representing different sports within one program so that coaches can learn from one another. However, several stakeholders had asked him whether it would be possible to promote a program that focused on soccer coaching. The program director knew that Ohio University did not have the funds to market a new program, which was why it had partnered with a management company for the online general coaching program. In essence, the program director was looking for a partner to help him reach potential students. In 2007, the program director contacted the board of the NSCAA, the largest soccer coaching organization in the world, with more than 34,000 members. The NSCAA offers soccer coaching education at all levels, including specialty-advanced courses. The NSCAA had an interest in establishing a partnership with the program director because of his extensive involvement in soccer in general as well as his work with sports coaching education in a university setting. As the official NSCAA representative at the residency told me:

> It was a natural marriage. NSCAA is involved with coach education; it’s part of our mission. Ohio University gets access to our members and we help promote the program. In return Ohio University pay us for each student. I think an academic program validate coaches knowledge. Students will do it to get ahead of the
competition. (NSCAA staff member and official representative, personal communication, June 16, 2015)

However, the plans did not materialize because the NSCAA director of coaching had just launched the master coach series. Furthermore, the NSCAA was reorganizing and changing its CEO. The new CEO brought in a new business model and tried to increase revenue (in part through more coach education courses), create corporate relationships, and increase membership. The NSCAA had also started online education (NSCAA representative, personal communication, June 16, 2015).

After these changes were implemented, the NSCAA then came back to Ohio University to collaborate on the master’s degree program. A series of discussions began. The program director was committed to keeping the same format, structure, and timeline as the other online programs at Ohio University, so that he did not have to “reinvent the wheel.” Since the college already offered an online and campus-based program in coaching education, the program director did not need accreditation approval for a new graduate program, just the approval from the university. That meant that he could not change more than 50% of the courses offered. The master’s program in soccer coaching had its first cohort in the summer of 2013.

Admission criteria to the program include a bachelor’s degree, preferably with a GPA higher than 2.9. If an applicant’s GPA is lower than 2.9, the student is required to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), according to the Ohio University graduate catalog (2013-2015). The program director noted that there is not a lot of value placed on the GRE test, especially since the writing component is relatively small in the program.
The program director also noted that three years of coaching is required, and students will only be successful if they are currently connected to and coaching a team. There are two enrollment periods a year, meaning four cohorts are enrolled over a 2-year period. The program director noted that NSCAA sends out a blast email about the program to all its members three times a year, which helps attract students (program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015).

**Research Sub-Question 2: What Are the Components of This Program in Terms of Objectives, Scope, and Sequence of Courses?**

The program lists the following objectives for the degree:

- Establish a foundation in coaching principles, methodology and a history of soccer and its evolution into the world’s most popular sport.
- Instill the coaching qualities needed for successful leadership and management on and off the playing field.
- Introduce latest strategies for effectively utilizing technology to enhance player development.
- Help coaches improve soccer sport skills and tactics and develop effective strategies to make important adjustments during practice and competition.
- Provide soccer coaches with current practices in injury prevention, recovery, fitness development, hydration, nutrition and other player development concepts.
- Improve organization, planning, evaluation and other administrative skills required to be an effective soccer coach.
• Develop perspectives and strategies for developing and training advanced level players.

• Present a framework for developmentally appropriate and athlete centered practices that will lead to long-term player development, beginning with our youngest players.

• Become a consumer of current research and its application to coaching and player development. (Ohio University, n.d.b)

The program is designed as an online program, but with two residencies, one in the beginning and one toward the end. In order for students and the program to be successful, it was important to the program director that the online master’s program start with a face-to-face residency:

My feeling, and it is supported by research, [is] that an online program should start with the face-to-face residency where you bring the candidates together. They get to know each other and they get more comfortable with who is in the program. (program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015)

The general online sports coaching program at Ohio University used to have three residencies: one in the beginning, one in the middle, and one at the end. During the middle residency, the cohort had visited the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado, but this trip became too costly. Ohio University later decided that the general online sports coaching program should only meet by the end, something the program director regrets.

The program director insisted that the soccer graduate program open with a
residency, so he knew that would be first in the sequence of courses, but he was now faced with having to design six new courses. He wrote the framework for all of them. He approached colleagues with content expertise to refine the courses. Since the program already had six courses, they needed to build the other six courses around those. As an example, the program had a four-credit research course (COED 6200), so it needed to develop a course that was two credits because of Ohio University’s rules regarding part-time study and financial aid. At Ohio University, six credits or two courses are required to be a part-time student and remain eligible for financial aid. A match with COED 6200 was the Performance Evaluation course, because it had variable credit in its design and could be made a two-credit class, according to the program director. Because the Performance Evaluation course came at the end of the program, the research class had to come late in the sequence. However, this was not an ideal solution, because a research class ideally is placed early in the sequence so students can apply the learned research skills for the rest of the courses in the program.

The program was committed to start with an opening residency and foundation course, with additional courses needed in the middle. A course on Using Technology in Soccer Coaching was paired with the Psychology class, and that left Training and Conditioning to be paired with Leadership and Team Dynamics. Not necessarily ideal matches, according to the program director. After the first year, the sequence was evaluated. The research class was rewritten and became a three-credit class; all classes became three credits, and that gave the program more flexibility to pair classes. The Research course and the Technology course were paired. The two physiology classes,
Performance Recovery and Training and Conditioning, were also matched and became the seventh and eighth classes in the sequence. The Psychology class was paired with Team Leadership and Dynamics. The coaching performance course became an exit criterion for the program, not a class. That allowed the program to offer a new course in either injury prevention or global coaching in a historical context. The program director predicts that it is most likely going to be a risk management class, as the medical side of coaching has become very important, and not every coach has access to an athletic trainer. If the students begin during the winter, then coaching workshop 1 will be at the NSCAA convention, and the second residency will be at Ohio University.

Below is the sequence from when the program started (the new sequence is listed in Appendix C).

Curriculum for June Start:

*Summer Session*

COED 6100 - Coaching Workshop I (3 hours) - Residency 1 - Ohio University (Athens, Ohio University)

COED 6210 - Coaching Soccer: The Beautiful Game (3 hours)

*Fall Semester*

COED 6180 - Using Technology in Coaching (3 hours)

COED 6140 – Psychology of Coaching (3 hours)

*Spring Semester*

COED 6220 - Concepts of Youth Soccer Player Development (3 hours)

COED 6270 - Advanced Soccer Player Development (3 hours)
Summer Session

COED 6300 - Training and Conditioning for Soccer Coaches (3 hours)
COED 6280 - Leadership and Team Dynamics (3 hours)

Fall Semester

COED 6200 - Research and Analysis Methods (4 hours)
COED 6400 - Coaching Performance Evaluation (2 hours)

Spring Semester

COED 6101 - Coaching Workshop II (3 hours) - Residency 2 - NSCAA Convention
COED 6340 - Performance Recovery: Concepts for Coaches (3 hours)

Curriculum for January Start:

Spring Semester

COED 6100 - Coaching Workshop I (3 hours) - Residency 1 - NSCAA Convention
COED 6210 - Coaching Soccer: The Beautiful Game (3 hours)

Summer Session

COED 6180 - Using Technology in Coaching (3 hours)
COED 6140 – Psychology of Coaching (3 hours)

Fall Semester

COED 6220 - Concepts of Youth Soccer Player Development (3 hours)
COED 6270 - Advanced Soccer Player Development (3 hours)
Spring Semester

COED 6300 - Training and Conditioning for Soccer Coaches (3 hours)

COED 6280 - Leadership and Team Dynamics (3 hours)

Summer Session

COED 6101 - Coaching Workshop II (3 hours) - Residency 2 - Ohio University (Athens, OH)

COED 6340 - Athlete Recovery: Concepts for Coaches (3 hours)

Fall Semester

COED 6200 - Research and Analysis Methods (4 hours)

COED 6400 - Coaching Performance Evaluation (2 hours)

Research Sub-Question 3: To What Extent Is the Curriculum Aligned with the International Sport Coaching Framework (version 1.2)?

To determine the extent to which the curriculum aligned with the International Sport Coaching Framework (version 1.2), Table 8 was developed. In column three, the primary knowledge domain for each course is listed.

Table 8

Courses in Relation to Knowledge Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Knowledge Domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| COED 6100 - Coaching Workshop I (3 hours)   | Focuses on the nature of coaching as a profession and acclimates students to the online coaching track | Professional knowledge content
<p>| Residency 1 - Ohio University (Athens, OH) |                                                                           | Intrapersonal knowledge component—reflection on knowledge presented and personal reflection |
| Face-to-Face                                |                                                                           |                                                       |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Knowledge Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COED 6210</td>
<td>Coaching Soccer: The Beautiful Game (3 hours)</td>
<td>Methods of coaching, technical, and tactical instruction, effective communication and the development of seasonal and daily planning are main objectives of course</td>
<td>Professional knowledge content (how to teach/coach) Intrapersonal knowledge component—reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COED 6180</td>
<td>Using Technology in Coaching (3 hours)</td>
<td>To assist the coach to use the web to support the performance and learning of his/her players</td>
<td>Professional knowledge content (tool to improve and aid the development of effective coaching)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COED 6140</td>
<td>Psychology of Coaching (3 hours)</td>
<td>Analysis of psychological factors and principles designed to assist coaches in their ability to describe, explain, and predict attitudes, feelings, and behavior of sports participants</td>
<td>Interpersonal knowledge (manage relationship, optimize performance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COED 6220</td>
<td>Concepts of Youth Soccer Player Development (3 hours)</td>
<td>Examines developmentally appropriate practices for coaches when working with children ages 12 and under</td>
<td>Professional knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COED 6270</td>
<td>Advanced Soccer Player Development (3 hours)</td>
<td>To challenge coaches to explore, in a practical way, the cycle of observation/assessment/planning/teaching and reflection</td>
<td>Professional knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COED 6300</td>
<td>Training and Conditioning for Soccer Coaches (3 hours)</td>
<td>To present principles and applications of athletics performance for soccer coaches</td>
<td>Professional knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COED 6280</td>
<td>Leadership and Team Dynamics (3 hours)</td>
<td>Explore leadership theory and practices for soccer coaches; identifying team building strategies, game and practice management responsibilities, and other pre/in/off season management issues.</td>
<td>Interpersonal knowledge (how to manage effectively)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COED 6200</td>
<td>Research and Analysis Methods (4 hours)</td>
<td>To help the coach understand the relationship between research and the practice of sport coaching; provide an understanding of research to develop students’ own philosophy and practice of coaching</td>
<td>Tool to help students understand how conducting research can help advance coaching. Intrapersonal knowledge in relation to improving as a coach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seven (two of those classes were residencies) out of 12 courses were devoted to professional knowledge. One course was a research methodology course. Three classes focused on the acquisition of interpersonal knowledge. The Coaching Performance Evaluation course (COED 6400) does have a professional knowledge focus, but coaches are evaluated on their ability to reflect-in-action. During the field sessions held at the residencies, students were also assessed on their ability to reflect-on-action. Although there is no formal class on the development of intrapersonal knowledge, the constant application of intrapersonal knowledge is embedded in many courses. As an example, the syllabi from the residency required students to post reflections after each day:

**Reflections.** Reflection helps one develop greater understanding about the how and why we may have changed as a result of your learning. It can help our critical thinking skills. Reflection also helps us see how we grow and change over time.
and can be very rewarding and motivating.

Sharing our reflections with one another can also help deepen our learning. It may be insightful and interesting to see what your colleagues were impacted by a particular assignment or event. It will hopefully create openings to new ideas and perspectives. Writing reflective statements take practice. It is not a summary of what you did. It is a sharing of what you got out of a particular lecture, field session, discussion (formal or informal). It may also include a response to a question, a challenge or a criticism. (Syllabus 6100, residency)

A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding how faculty infuse interpersonal knowledge into courses that otherwise focus on professional knowledge. After a demonstration lesson on using the “coaching in the game methodology,” the instructor said:

Go out and share your passion, build relationships. Your energy will feed off the children. In my club we always shake hands, and I ask them, “How is math going?” Building relationships is a big part of it, and teach life lessons. Go out and be passionate. (field notes, June 15, 2015)

As evident in data presented in table 8, the curriculum aligns with the ICCE framework, although the primary focus of the program is on acquiring professional knowledge. Not surprisingly, a master’s degree in soccer coaching will have a high amount of content in professional knowledge. A common theme throughout the curriculum and classes was the focus on sharing experiences and learning from each other. As such, a big component of the program is reflection-on-action, whether during
field sessions or during the coursework. All of the courses are structured in ways that require a significant amount of reflection—not necessary reflection in action, but reflection on coaching practice, which ultimately can help long-term development of the coach. As an example, one of the assignments from the online class Coaching Soccer:

The Beautiful Game states:

Please take an inward look at yourself as a coach. Identify your three biggest strengths and your three biggest limitations as a coach. How will you address your limitations and what steps will you take to lessen on your athletes and those you work with?

Student 1 responded:

Create the habit to understand that reflection is more than just a write down routines of the day but is rather a very complex method to attain complete understanding of the present reality and used to obtain understanding to further enhance the methods and processes.

Student 2 responded to student 1:

I will disagree but only to allow both of us to realize that reflection can start with a simple process:

1. After training, get in the car, turn on the A/C
2. Pull out your lesson plan and a pen (red would be great)
3. Go over each phase of the training session and document the simple things i.e. actual # of players you had, equipment you had, energy levels.
4. Go over each phase and comment on what things weren’t quite right i.e.
player numbers screwed everything up, lack of full-size goals, people were late.

5. Document what things would have fixed the issues above.

This could be 5-10 minutes and would get you miles ahead of most every other coach in the nation. It would give you what to think about differently when creating future sessions and ways to fix that particular session for next time. It will also get you thinking more critically on your training sessions and begin creating a very positive personal habit. (discussion thread, Module 1, Coaching Soccer, The Beautiful Game)

This dialogue provides a good example of how the sharing of expertise enhances the development of coaches and how intrapersonal knowledge is acquired indirectly in classes. The focus of the class was professional knowledge and the delivery of knowledge, but sharing reflections with each other enhanced student learning.

The above example demonstrates that determining whether a course is aligned with a specific knowledge domain is often difficult, as the educating of coaches is a holistic process due to the complexity of the profession. Combining the different knowledge domains in coursework seems to be justified and recommended when universities design sports coaching programs.

Lastly, a theme in the face-to-face classes was the focus on sports coaching education, which is at the heart of the mission of the ICCE. Faculty members stressed the importance of coaches continuing their coaching education and that it is a lifelong journey. It was also directly listed as an objective of the 6101 Workshop class
(residency): “Present an understanding of the importance of coaching education for soccer coaches.”

The NSCAA instructors were role models in that they would tell how they developed as coaches. Coaches bought in to continuing education (reflective memo). One student responded that he was less concerned about his grade than with becoming a better coach. As one student noted about the program: “As a coach, it provides an unprecedented opportunity for me to grow and learn as a coach” (student posting on Blackboard).

It can be concluded that the curriculum is aligned with the ICCE standards and that courses focusing on professional knowledge incorporate intrapersonal knowledge by developing reflection skills. By doing so, the program successfully creates a community of practice that enhances students’ learning.

Research Sub-Question 4: Based on Côté and Gilbert’s (2009, 2013) Definition of Effective Coaching, Which Knowledge Domain Is Delivered Through Online Learning, Classroom Instruction, and Field Experiences?

Table 8 lists information on the different knowledge domain areas delivered online versus face-to-face. The program is primarily an online program, with all classes delivered online except the two residencies. Classes are delivered in a scalable cohort format. Therefore, it can be a problem if a student cannot keep up with the sequences for classes. This happened to one student and he needed to join the cohort coming in behind him, which delayed his graduation. The courses focus on acquiring professional and interpersonal knowledge. The residencies have a very strong focus on professional
knowledge, but it serves a higher purpose, as it exposes the students to different aspects of reflective learning in coaching contexts. For example, students are asked to reflect-in-action during field sessions, and reflect-on-action when asked to post reflections after each day on Blackboard.

The structure of online classes. The courses are structured with three modules over a 7-week period, with three questions in each module. Students are expected to write a 500-word response to a question. As part of the grading system, students are expected to respond to fellow students’ answers in the online classroom. If a student responded last during the first question from the instructor in the module, then that student is expected to respond among the first for the next question in that module. This is stated explicitly in the syllabus.

An example of the desire to create an interactive learning environment was stated in the syllabus for the class Training and Conditioning for Coaches: “The idea of online discussion work is to learn from each other and explore other points of view and experiences.” Students are expected to be active: “Don’t be a lurker. There is no hallway for casual small group conversations like one experiences after a formal class” (general comments from course instructor).

During the residency, the program director demonstrated the Blackboard site with responses and noted that everyone was expected to respond. It was a common theme during the residency for faculty to remind students about what they had to do in order to be successful in the course. The program director also highlighted that students and faculty can learn from each other, reiterating the importance of responding to questions.
Experience had shown that if students were required to post only once a week, they became disengaged. Responding twice a week seemed better for students who were also working. The format then became to answer a question on Monday, follow with discussions on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday morning, then answer a new question Thursday, followed by discussions Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

The program director says that the routine is important for students to succeed. Students do not need to figure out new formats when sitting at home. There can be nuances in the structure and delivery of the courses. For example, an instructor could give quizzes, but the structure is the same for all courses. The focus on learning was also present, in that students were allowed to rewrite their responses after feedback from the instructor. “My philosophy is, I want them to learn it. If I just said, ‘That is all wrong,’ and we do not give them an opportunity to fix it, then they have not really learned anything other than the lecture” (program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015). Again, this is an example of making the program as applied as possible.

It is also important to note that the decision to create an online program was not made because of a desire to create a program with high enrollment. As the program director told students: “I decided a few years ago to develop a small group approach to learning online. The research is pretty clear that a smaller, more manageable group leads to better interaction between members of the group and the instructor” (posted on Blackboard, July 9, 2015).

It is also clear that one of the objectives of the face-to-face meetings during the residency is to enhance learning. According to the syllabus from coaching workshop 1:
“Create an interactive learning environment that will enhance online learning.” The residencies complement or are a prerequisite for online learning.

Field experience. There is no formal internship in the program. With an online program attracting students from around the U.S. and the world, there are no resources to supervise internships and visit students (program director, conference presentation, June 11, 2015). In order to be accepted to the program, coaches are required to have 3 years of coaching experience, and they need to be currently coaching. As the program director said, “their team becomes their lab.” He continued:

They have to be coaching. So if we explore a methodology, or training program, we want them to create a periodization plan for their team. So there is a significant applied portion of the content, then go use it. And then, through the structure of the course they report back in lots of different ways about how this worked, or how this worked, or they tried this, or this. Material that’s coming directly out of the course, try this. See what happens. We do a lot of reflective posting, go try it, see what happens, think about it and report back. We think that’s been pretty valuable. We really expect everybody to be coaching. (program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015)

In the program there are several opportunities for students to get feedback on their soccer coaching in the field. At the residency, students are asked to teach after the concept of micro coaching, developed at Virginia Tech University, where the program director did his graduate work. Students are asked to teach a skill or a game to their classmates in less than 7 minutes, and allowed only 45 seconds of instructions before
beginning the activity. Faculty then give feedback. Both the faculty and instructors from NSCAA and the program director made clear that the objective was to put the students under pressure. Micro coaching was an example of guided discovery with the teacher serving more as a mentor. The instructor would ask the students and classmates to give feedback before giving his or her own.

One of the field sessions was devoted to peer evaluations between the two cohorts. Students from cohort 2 were asked to evaluate students from cohort 5. Unfortunately, this session was canceled because of inclement weather. The idea was for students to learn to assess other coaches, which is a necessary skill for an advanced head coach. The class climate during field evaluations was supportive. At no time during the residency was there a competitive atmosphere among the coaches to deliver the best coaching session. Instead, students were ready to share feedback and experiences, and as such faculty succeeded in creating a supportive learning environment.

Students coach two times during the residency. The program follows the NSCAA teaching methodology of “coaching in the game”\(^6\) through seven fieldwork sessions. Students would sometimes coach themselves by using fellow classmates as field players. On three occasions, a youth soccer club or high school soccer team would come and serve as demonstration players for the graduate students. It appeared there was some confusion as to how strictly students were required to follow the NSCAA coaching methodology. The topic of the field sessions was taken from the NSCAA courses, and on

\(^6\) Other NSCAA methodologies are functional training, phase play, and shadow play (NSCAA, 2005).
one occasion, the program director would read out which student took which assignment. This process took some time, and students had many questions regarding the assignment.

I observed a staff meeting where there was some confusion among instructors as to which methodology should be chosen. One instructor from the NSCAA insisted on “coaching in the game” methodology. “Coaching in the game’ is a method of coaching whereby certain ‘patterns’, which occur in a game, are rehearsed. This type of training is common in dealing with advanced players but applicable also to junior football” (NSCAA, 2005, pp. 90-91). The coach must have a good picture of what he or she wants in terms of tactical patterns. The NSCAA instructors thought that the quality of coaching from the graduate students in prior cohorts was not at a satisfactory level because there was no strict game plan for the field sessions. Therefore, the faculty member did a demonstration of what he expected. “Last year they did not have this coaching session that we just had. I pushed for it because we need to see if coaches can coach” (notes from observation, June 16, 2015).

He told me privately, as well as the group of students, that if students were getting a master’s degree in coaching, “we need to make sure that you can actually coach.” In essence, the NSCAA faculty wanted the coaches to demonstrate, observe, and correct. Correcting is what differentiates effective master coaches from instructor coaches. It is this format that is used in the performance analysis course. This course is not going to be offered in the future, but rather as an exit criterion. In this course, students are required to post two videos of their coaching, using the “coaching in the game” methodology and giving feedback to their players.
The purpose of the fieldwork (coaching sessions during residency and the performance course) is to improve the effectiveness of the coach. Several faculty members told me that the program had to ensure that candidates could coach once they graduated. It was clear that the program differentiates the instructor from the master coach and that the aim of the program is to graduate candidates who belong in the last category.

**Research Sub-Question 5: With What Teaching Methods and Experience (Academic and Coaching) Do the Faculty Deliver the Program?**

According to the program director, the backgrounds of the faculty had to match the requirement of teaching at the graduate level. That translates into either a terminal degree or a master’s degree with an extensive background in coaching. Not every discipline in academia requires a terminal degree. The focus was on what instructors could offer within the given content area and not the number of years of coaching or their academic degrees. The program director would ask, “Which might be the two or three best people in this specific content area?” Ohio University already had two faculty members who taught in the campus program. Both faculty members had a soccer coaching background at the NCAA division I level, were connected to NSCAA as staff members, and held terminal degrees.

The program director had several options for the youth player development course and in particular the advanced soccer player development course. For the former, the program director went with the director of US Youth Soccer, an organization that also focuses on sports coaching development. For the latter, a scholar with a terminal degree
and extensive background in the game was chosen. Another adjunct was the coach with the most college soccer wins (division III), who also held a terminal degree. Another adjunct hire was involved in FIFA as an instructor because of his membership on the United States Soccer Federation sports medicine advisory committee. Either full-time or adjunct faculty with terminal degrees taught seven out of the 10 online courses. All adjunct faculty members had expertise in soccer coaching in the U.S., and all faculty members were highly specialized within their content area.

Table 9

Overview of Faculty Academic Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Terminal degree</th>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Classes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residency</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching methods.** Based on the observations, the online classes, and the interview, it is very clear that problem-based learning is the primary teaching method, and, as noted, that each cohort functions as a community of practice. The problem-based approach was designed that way from the beginning. As the director said:

I wanted to make it as meaningful and as applied as possible. We want to give them material that they are going to use, and they will go try, and then tell us how it worked or did not work. (program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015)

Furthermore, the degree emphasizes that students learn the critical thinking skills
that are expected at the graduate level. As stated in the syllabus for EDUC 6300, Training and Conditioning for Coaches, “But this is graduate school where one learns to expand their understanding by broadening their comfort zone.” This statement was evident when the program director told students they should read a variety of journal articles in order to see multiple opinions on a topic:

We have to get them beyond Google, we’ve got to get them to Google docs.

We’ve got to them into specific journals. That’s why I think there is some value in faculty posting really good articles that everybody should read. And at least get in a variety of things there, but good solid information that you need to read.

(program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015)

In order for the teaching to be applied, the master’s program does not have a strong emphasis on writing research papers. Instead, the focus is on problem solving. As such, there is a deeper meaning with the problem-based approach to learning. The faculty hopes that students will take knowledge from the program and become advocates for change in their communities. There are several problems facing U.S. soccer, at both the intercollegiate and youth club levels. As the program director said, “We have to be about solutions” (personal notes from class). The message during the residency was: if you have a problem, solve it.

The rationale from the faculty is that with a master’s degree, students have the credibility to be advocates for change. A section of the residency was called “Issues and Solutions.” The students were asked to write down problems or obstacles in their daily coaching and workplace that weakened player development. Other students would
comment and offer solutions and recommendations. As the program director said, “We really put a lot of value in the discussion component of sharing your experiences” (program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015).

The faculty also experimented with the flip-classroom teaching methodology, according to the program director, but the program director admitted that neither he nor the faculty had used it much. The researcher did not find any evidence of flip classroom methodology during the observation phase of the residency or the online classes.

It seems logical for the program to begin with the residency, because the program stresses the importance of students learning from each other by sharing experiences. The residency also gives students the chance to coach through field experiences, be evaluated, and get feedback from faculty. At the residency, NSCAA instructors are present and stay at the same hotel as the students. As such, there are opportunities for students to learn formally on the field and in the classroom, but also informally.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications of Findings

This chapter will discuss the findings, themes, and interpretations of the data, including recommendations for further research and the implications of the data for current practices. The objective of the dissertation was to explore a graduate program in light of the recent professionalization of sports coaching. As such, this chapter is intended to discuss findings in light of this professionalization.

The successful creation of the first master’s program in sports coaching education with a soccer-coaching track can be explained through a combination of three factors. First, Ohio University has a long tradition of offering sports management as a field of study. Second, professionalization processes and the need for educated coaches created a demand for a specialized master’s program in sports coaching. Coaches are simply ready to go beyond the mentorship process of learning from more experienced coaches. They are trying to get ahead of the competition and be the best possible coach. The third factor is the vision and experiences of the program director. The program director had more than 40 years of involvement with the NSCAA and was able to demonstrate a need for educating soccer coaches as the sports coaching domain became professionalized and more job opportunities developed as a result of more youth in the U.S. playing soccer.
Ohio University

Although the soccer coaching program began in 2013, the development of the program has to be understood in light of the work that Ohio has done in sports management generally and coach education specifically. In my interview, the program director talked about how sport management came out of the field of business management in 1966, when Los Angeles Dodgers owner Walter O’Malley indicated that the industry needed sport business people running baseball (not business people) and then talked to Dr. James Mason at Ohio University. Those talks resulted in the first sports administration program in the U.S. As such, when the program director came to Ohio University, he “inherited a sports management program,” but his professional background was in soccer coaching and his academic background was in pedagogy and instruction. He reasoned that it did not make sense to prepare young people in sports administration for a job they would not take until much later in their careers.

Students who wanted to coach had few options. One was to take a degree in sport management. A program in sport management can help coaches acquire interpersonal knowledge in areas that pertain to running a program from an administrative point of view. But in terms of acquiring professional knowledge, students would often need to earn a degree in physical education in order to gain knowledge about how to deliver content to athletes. Learning pedagogy theories is relevant for a coach. However, students would need to supplement their professional knowledge on their own by studying the game or taking courses through national sports organizations or other informal learning opportunities such as mentoring. According to the program director, it is not a stretch to
argue that sports coaching as a field could create its own niche, similar to how sport management broke out as an independent field from business management:

Similarities exist with sports coaching. We’ve got physical education, we’re working in the psychomotor domain, we are teaching children sport skills, and how to play. Early on when I went through PE, there was an awful lot of relationship to sport. There is a lot less now, but it wasn’t a stretch to build the bridge to coaching education as a profession from physical education as a profession. (program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015)

Ohio University added an on-campus program for general sports coaching education in 2001. According to the program director, it was easy to convince the university of the need for such a program:

But I was able to sell the concept that we have demonstrated that there [are] thousands of programs, either school-based or club-based or university-based, that sponsor athletic programs. Across all of those programs, there are literally millions of people coaching. The reality is when we started looking at how many had actually gone through any kind of preparation for coaching, the answer is an extraordinarily small number. If we are asking for certifications for people to be child-care providers or teachers or even people to cut hair to have a certification or a license, and we weren’t requiring anything for adults primarily working with children, then there was something wrong with that picture. How do you know what to do . . . it was pretty easy to take that argument and package it in a proposal as to why we can justify the need for a sports coaching education
program. (program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015)

The program director clearly speaks about the need for certifications in sports coaching. The coaches should have the same standards, so they have a specific set of knowledge before they start working with children. Ohio University later added the general online sport-coaching education program, starting with a small cohort, and then tried to attract more students. As such, Ohio University decided to collaborate with a marketing company to increase enrollment and cut costs by reducing the number of residencies from three to one. This effort by Ohio University to grow its online program can be seen in the light of what Bush et al. (2013) argue is the McNair University—the profit-driven instrumental rationality in higher education.

It was presented in chapter 2 that sports coaching can be regarded as a blended profession, with the majority of the jobs being part-time coaching for little pay. As a result, the program director did not believe in a bachelor’s degree in sports coaching. He believed it was more valuable to build a strong foundation with a degree in physical education, exercise physiology, health, or sports management and then add a coaching degree later (program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015). The program director’s academic background was in pedagogy, and he used that background to develop sports coaching as a discipline. His professional experience and background were in soccer coaching at the youth sport, high school, college, and professional levels. His longtime connections to the NSCAA and its staff instructors helped him create the partnership that was necessary not only to attract students to the program, but also to get the teaching experience to make the program successful. Due to his network, it was
possible for him to attract the NSCAA instructors to assist him at the residency. One instructor told me, “I will do anything to help the program director.” His network also helped him find adjunct faculty for the online classes. Finding quality adjuncts can be difficult, but the program director had several people he could appoint to teach the courses. In essence, his vision and network helped create the program. He teaches one class and arranges the two residencies. He is the point of contact for all new applicants, and he advises all of the more than 80 students in the program. The program director is the program.

Curriculum. The curriculum was aligned with the ICCE framework, although only one class was focused on interpersonal knowledge. In recent years, there has been greater attention to the transformation from the transactional to the transformative coach. Does the current curriculum have enough focus on the interpersonal knowledge component? If the goal of coaches is to be advocates for change, then they have to know how to navigate and build relationships with other stakeholders.

Another topic that is only given limited attention in the curriculum is sports ethics, which is done through a lecture at the residency. An important question is whether one lecture during the residency can cover such a broad and important topic as ethics. In today’s world, sports coaches often need to make ethical decisions, especially at the advanced level. Is there a need to expand this part of the curriculum? It was stated in chapter 4 that faculty had made minor changes to the curriculum. When they had the opportunity to change the curriculum, they added a risk management course, which is a testimony to the increased level of professionalization by adding an area of expertise that
soccer coaches now are required to be knowledgeable about. Today’s soccer coaches have to have knowledge of medical issues, such as the risk of concussions and how to treat them. After a recent lawsuit, the United States Soccer Federation banned all heading activities for children under 11 years old due to the risk of concussions (Strauss, 2015). A decade ago, the graduate program might have chosen a different course, such as a historical-cultural course exploring the development of the game.

It is worth exploring whether students should be allowed to take electives. The programs offer two player development courses: one that focuses on children and one that focuses on advanced players. Should students be allowed to just select one and then have the opportunity to do an elective? The curriculum also has two physiology training courses, and it could be worth exploring if coaches with an interest in the psychological side of coaching should have the option of selecting a course in that area. Allowing students to take electives could help them specialize within soccer coaching. The problem with adding courses in a curriculum is the need to remove courses, unless you make some portion elective. The sequence of the curriculum is set, and in any cohort program, it is problematic if a student is unable to complete a course. Students would need to wait for the course to be offered again. According to the program director, five or six students have had issues finishing a class. At the residency, the program stresses the importance of continued engagement. The courses are structured very similarly to each other in order for students to be successful. Constant engagement, such as requiring students to post twice a week as opposed to once a week, seems to be working best in the online program. Since there is no “small talk in the hallway” in an online program where faculty can
Field experiences are to some extent part of the curriculum. Given that it is an online program, students are enrolled from around the U.S. and the world. The coaching performance course used to be part of the curriculum, but has been moved to an exit criterion. This move seems to be justified, since the primary objective with the class was to evaluate students. The program does require student teaching, and this enables students to get feedback from faculty. Since student teaching occurs at the residency, it is critical that logistics work properly. In Ohio, there are frequent afternoon showers and thunderstorms in the summer. On one occasion, the program had to share the field with the football program. This seems to be a first-time occurrence, since field renovations were taking place and the university was waiting for approval to use the indoor facility. With access to an indoor facility, the weather problem would be solved. Another issue was that it was hard to find quality participants for field sessions, since the residency was in mid-June, when schools were closed and club soccer seasons were over. At the residency in Baltimore for the NSCAA Convention, the players available for field sessions were strong because the cohort used the same players that were recruited for the clinics at the convention. One option to improve the field sessions could be for students to be the participants at the Ohio residency, but this would require coaches to have previous high-level playing experience.

Field experience is also indirectly part of the program, given that players need to be training a team in order to be successful in the program. Courses are structured so that
students will need to apply the material learned and use their team as a research setting. I assume this could be a problem for high school or college coaches, who might not have year-round access to a team. It can also cause a problem if a coach is fired or takes a job elsewhere, when there might be a transition period with no access to a team. Student success is best achieved if students have access to a team throughout the duration of the program. Having students participate in the evaluation of fellow coaches helps them reflect on what constitutes effective coaching and develop their own coaching style. In addition, the students are planning to be master head coaches, and part of that job entails observing and evaluating assistant coaches. During the student teaching, one instructor had students (one student at a time) accompany him when he assessed another student-coach during field sessions. They then discussed the student coaching all together. Not all instructors used this method, but it could be recommended that all follow this model, because it started a reflective conversation and helped the student observe and evaluate a fellow coach.

The residency has multiple objectives. First of all, it brings students together and makes them comfortable with each other. Students’ reflection on their own progress and their responses to the questions of other students are key components of the program. The cohort functions as a community of practice, and to enhance learning, students must be comfortable sharing their experiences. I believe the program would benefit by presenting students with the work of Wenger and some of the research on communities of practice in relation to sports coaching. Students should become familiar with the scholarship on the value of being engaged in a community of practice. This would provide a strong
theoretical foundation and students would have a greater understanding of why the program emphasizes sharing experiences with each other. It would help the program achieve its goal of supporting continuing sports coaching education after students graduate.

**Residencies and Collaboration with the NSCAA**

The residency that accompanies the NSCAA convention is unique in that it is able to combine the learning opportunities that run simultaneously with the convention and the master’s program itself. For example, the program is able to invite guest lectures from some of the true experts in the field. Students in the 2016 residency program in Baltimore had the opportunity to attend a talk by Dr. Bill Beshick, a renowned sports performance coach who has worked with Manchester United and other professional soccer teams in England. In addition, the program needs to go through the same lectures and classes as in the Ohio residency. The days at the convention offer roughly 60 hours of instruction/field work over 5 or 6 days. A graduate program that collaborates with a national coaching organization is unique, and it makes the bridge between research on coach development and coach development in praxis, as recommended, for example, by Bush et al. (2011).

It was a natural marriage between Ohio University and NSCAA. Both parties create revenues for their organizations by collaborating on this program, and they help soccer coaches become better, which is part of the mission for both organizations. It was a theme throughout my data collection that faculty want students to become successful and make sure they are effective coaches when they graduate. Perhaps this is a result of being the first program in the world that offers a master’s degree in soccer coaching.
Faculty want to make sure they are doing their job the right way. It is not just a “training school” where check boxes are ticked off as coaches move through the program. Several of the adjunct faculty members are national staff members of the NSCAA and provide professional knowledge. The blend of faculty that are content experts and/or have careers in academia seems to optimize and prepare coaches for the demanding world that they are going to enter upon graduation. As scholars have argued, critical thinking skills as well as learning reflective skills are important components of sports coaching education and provide the rationale for graduate-level sports coach education programs.

There was a desire to make the knowledge as applied as possible, so that students could take the learning and make use of it immediately. The teaching methods were problem-based because the program objective is for students to be problem solvers. As such, the program indirectly trains students’ critical thinking skills. Those two areas are a focus of the program. The teaching tools are problem-based learning. Faculty do not have the answers to all the questions that they ask students. They want students to develop as problem solvers and as change agents in their soccer communities. Soccer in the U.S. is facing several issues in relation to how the sport is organized and, as the staff made clear, there is no shortage of issues. According to the program director:

Yes, you are taking a personal and professional step to get a master’s degree, and in this case in soccer coaching. That is a huge commitment and it will enhance you going down the road. Now, what are you going to do with it? It can’t be just about you being a better coach to these 15 kids; it has got to be what influence will you have on the development of the game at the youth level, at the junior
high, at the high school, wherever you are in your community, within your state, within your region, and potentially nationally. You have got to be an advocate for this, and you have got to push it beyond your little world. (Program director, personal communication, June 18, 2015)

It is clear that the program aims for sports coaching education, not sports coaching training with a checklist for coaches on which they are evaluated. This emphasis on education can be seen in light of the recent professionalization process, where the demands are higher for coaches’ knowledge and ability to navigate a more complex environment. The coaching role is multifaceted and requires communication with multiple stakeholders. As an example, during the residency there was a presentation on how to work effectively with administrators. Another example is the emphasis on utilizing research to improve sports coaching. Coaches might not need to write long research papers, but they do need to become cognizant of the research literature and then use it. And students are open to surveying the research in the field. As one faculty member told me:

Coaches are much more receptive to research; they want to win and if research can help me I will apply it. Paradigm switch happened 16 years ago. I did a conference presentation on sport psychology and had expected six people. I had a full room. (Faculty member, personal communication, June 16, 2015)

Today’s coaches will find information and then apply it, and this program teaches them to do that. There is a course on research methods and a course on how to use technology to help coaches be better at their profession. A strong commitment from the
faculty is to make sure coaches can coach soccer appropriately when they graduate, and it was a common theme throughout the data collection process. For example, it was visible in the methodology chosen for field experiences. “Coaching in the game” methodology is a more advanced sports coaching methodology. This is coaching in a nutshell: the ability to reflect in action and make changes quickly. This program did not reflect much upon the proper technique for kicking the ball, which is part of the curriculum at some of the other NSCAA courses. Instead, the focus was on helping the master coach acquire a skill set in order to be successful in the 21st century. Not only does the program prepare soccer coaches to successfully coach in the 21st century, it also prepares coaches to take on leadership roles in their communities and seed the ground for personal long-term coach development. In that sense, Ohio University can be seen as an important stakeholder in the professionalization process of sports coaches by helping soccer coaches become more effective on the pitch. The aim is that coaches with a master’s degree in hand will become agents of change and play a dominant role in their respective soccer communities.

If viewed through Evetts’s framework, the graduate program can be seen as a professionalization process from “within” in part helped by an occasional group, the NSCAA. As such, the unintended consequence may be that, by setting new standards, the graduate program in soccer coaching is on its way to creating a group of “insiders” in the soccer-coaching world. For those insiders, the outcomes can be more power in soccer communities and higher salaries compared to the “outsiders,” those coaches that do not have a graduate degree in soccer coaching. However, this should not be seen as a
negative, but just a consequence of professionalization processes. Ideally, coaches holding a graduate degree in soccer coaching would support and train volunteer coaches in soccer communities, so that soccer coaching can remain a true blended profession as advocated by the ICCE, to the benefit of all children across the U.S. who want to participate in the “beautiful game.”

**Implications for Future Research**

This study has explored a graduate program in sports coaching education. The focus was on the background, objectives, curriculum, and teaching methods. However, did graduates of the program improve as coaches and become agents of change in their soccer communities, as was the goal? A follow-up study would be needed, but it is difficult to measure whether a coach has improved, since it is difficult to determine the baseline. However, students could be asked about their experiences and whether they believe they have become better coaches and agents of change (if that is what they want).

One student shared with me his frustrations about the call for change; that graduates should take upon them to change some of the problems facing U.S. soccer. He believed that faculty members had been involved for so long without having solved some of the problems facing the sport and coaches in the U.S. A study of students’ perceptions of this call for change would be intriguing. Students enter the program because of the desire for knowledge, to get ahead of the competition and earn a master’s degree. A follow-up study on motivation for students and whether the program gave them the tools that they wanted should be conducted.
For coaches that had stayed in the same coaching jobs, interviews with athletic directors combined with coaching records could perhaps provide clues as to whether they become more effective. The program director expressed interest in a follow-up study with program participants. Comparison and sharing experiences with other sports coaching programs could also indicate whether the program has been successful. Continuing research and sharing among programs would enhance the field. Teacher education as a research field was also at one point in its infancy. Sports coaching education should look for inspiration in that research area and determine what can be applied to sports coaching education to advance the field. The development of an instrument to measure coach effectiveness would be difficult, but helpful. Much of the research in the field has been qualitative, and other research approaches to sports coaching education would enhance the field and perhaps help develop an instrument.

Very few women were enrolled in the program. Although not directly related to this study, studies exploring why many women do not enter the coaching profession could help coaching education programs attract more women and keep them in the field. There are plenty of female soccer coaches in high schools. Why has the online program not attracted some of them? There are several teacher-coach opportunities at the high school level, and this program offers a flexible way to earn a master’s degree, so why does the program not attract more female coaches?

**Summary and Conclusion**

The objective of this study was to gain knowledge about how a sports coaching program educates coaches for the 21st century and to what extent it is aligned with the
ICCE sports coaching framework for best practice based on research in the field. Interest in sports coach education is rising among coaches and in academia. It is becoming an independent discipline. But understanding this increased interest has to be seen in light of the increased level of professionalization and the desire from stakeholders in the field to make it a blended profession. The case of Ohio University is also a story about the general development of sports coaching education and how the role of the sports coach is evolving. In the 21st century, the advanced sports coach needs to be knowledgeable in many aspects of the coaching domain. The curriculum and the changes that the program has implemented make this clear. The dissertation demonstrated that with a master’s degree in soccer coaching, the program expects that students will take on a larger role in the soccer world. This just fuels the demands or expectations of advanced coaches as they are expected to be agents of change. Graduates are the first generation of highly educated soccer coaches. Sports coaching education today is more than just teaching coaches how to deliver the perfect inside kick. The master’s degree at Ohio University illustrates that point, and the program differentiates itself from a master’s degree in, for example, physical education, since it focuses on the complex role of the sports coach. As such, graduates from this program will enter the coaching profession and be expected to make a difference in their profession. Following this line of thought, it is relevant for the program to give more thought to ethics as a subject in the program.

Currently, only one lecture during the residency was devoted to ethics. As part of the professionalization process, the new profession creates a code of ethics with distinct professional values or moral obligations. In this process, an element of corporation
among members develops, rather than continuing to compete excessively. As a result, practitioner pride and satisfaction in work performance develop, which serve as individualized self-regulation. In this perspective, ethics is more than just the question of whether the coach will try to influence the referee during a soccer match in order to gain a little advantage for the team. Developing a code of ethics is important on two levels. First, if sports coaching as a professional field has high ambitions, then it is important that sports coaches continue to develop a professional pride—a practitioner’s pride with a strong element of self-control. Graduate programs should take on the role of promoting high standards and develop a philosophic skill set for their graduates, especially when the goal is for students is to become agents of change when they graduate. Second, sports coaches make decisions on behalf of athletes. For example, sometimes a coach will say, “It is better for your development to play on the second-string team, to get some confidence.” The coach becomes the knowledge other, and viewed in that light, sports coaches need to receive training on ethical decision-making as part of a university degree in sports coaching. As the knowledge other, coaches need to be able to self-regulate and operate in an ethical manner, because they often make decisions on behalf of their athletes. As mentioned earlier, the program was successful in creating a community of practice by valuing the sharing of experiences among faculty and students. This fosters collaboration, and hopefully graduates will instill a practitioner’s pride in their colleagues in soccer communities around the country. But it is a lost opportunity not to devote more formal time to ethics in the program.
This dissertation is also a story of soccer coaches who would like to become better coaches and a story about a visionary program leader. Today, coaches are open to research and formal coach education, and therefore ready to make the financial commitment to undertake graduate studies. They do it to learn, become better coaches, and be more attractive to future employers. Moreover, the study is also a story about a unique partnership between a sports coaching organization and Ohio University, providing sports coaching education to ambitious sports coaches. Ohio University has over the years successfully attracted students to their coach education programs; by partnering up with NSCAA, Ohio University got access to more than 33,000 NSCAA members and in essence tapped into a new marketplace. In return, NSCAA got their fair share of the revenue. However, this can also be viewed as part of the increasing profit-driven instrumental rationality in higher education. Critics could question whether it is necessary to offer such a specialized degree to the public. Does the degree have the same value to society as other degrees from professions such as medicine or law? Ohio University and the NSCAA have helped the professionalization process of sports coaches in the U.S. along. This can be viewed as professionalization from within, and both organizations earned significant financial benefits as a result. However, it seems like it is a collaboration that benefits all stakeholders, including the students, who get the opportunity to improve as coaches as well as earning a graduate degree. And, in the end, kids and young adults across the country will benefit from more effective coaches.

The future will determine if a graduate degree is the new benchmark for soccer coaches. Will the degree exclude other coaches from entering the job market?
Traditionally, the U.S. Soccer Federation “A” license has been the benchmark soccer coaches have been striving to reach. A longitudinal study that tracks the development will be intriguing to conduct.

I wanted to write a dissertation on sports coaching education because children around the country deserve to be well coached in order to enjoy sports. This dissertation demonstrated that a graduate sports coach education program was committed to student success and to making sure that coaches can actually coach when they hold a master’s degree in soccer coaching. But the program does not know for sure whether it succeeded in making coaches more effective. The issue of determining to what extent sports coaches become more effective is not an issue that is isolated to the coaching profession. The same issue exists in teacher education or other professions. Becoming an effective teacher or nurse is something that often requires years of experience, and not something that is easily taught. Great coaches never stop learning (conference presentation, Shape National Coaching Conference, 2016).

The program has made changes in the curriculum since it started to help coaches become more knowledgeable. For example, it added a risk management course after a decision was made to move the performance evaluation course to be an exit criterion. The sequence was also twisted. In addition, the program improved the delivery of the faculty instruction in regard to the coaching methodology (coaching in the game) to be used during the field sessions, and in the exit criteria, so that expectations for students were made clear. Those changes were related to teaching methods as well as the kind of knowledge that students are expected to acquire in order to become successful coaches in
the 21st century. The changes will benefit the students by making them more knowledgeable and more successful in the program. Since we do not have a baseline of the coaches’ effectiveness, it is difficult to determine if coaches became more effective coaches after graduating.

Kuklick et al. (2015) mention that students in an undergraduate sports coaching education program often had difficulties applying their role as a coach and what it may consist of in professional practice. For example, how do you balance being a transformative coach, creating a positive coach-athlete relationship, and still being a demanding coach who has the athletes’ respect? To my knowledge, no coach in the program at Ohio University failed because it was determined that they could not coach. Those who failed a course did so as a result of not turning in the required work listed in the syllabus. This is more measurable, as compared to whether you are an effective coach on the pitch. Higher education is about learning, but also about getting students through the system so that students can pay for the next course. Students were evaluated on the quality of their material posted on Blackboard and their level of participation on Blackboard. A rubric existed so that students could see how they would pass the course.

The framework from ICCE does not offer an instrument to measure whether coaches applied the knowledge gained to their coaching practice. In addition, the framework as an analytic tool has its shortcomings for the purpose of evaluating a sports education program. Often a course will have elements from all three knowledge domains, and therefore it can be difficult to judge if a course belongs in a specific knowledge domain. The researcher recommends that the program find ways to explore if/how
students apply the material learned in their coaching practice and to what extent it is relevant for the students in their specific coaching context. By doing so, the program can actually testify to whether the coach can coach with a graduate degree.

The article by Jacobs et al. (2015) highlights the value of student input when designing coach education programs. Although it is easier to design a series of coaching clinics, a student voice is also important in graduate programs. Now that the program has established itself, it might be time for students to help influence the program in order to make it better; the coaches can give input as to what helped them become more effective coaches in their specific coaching context.

This study has shed light on one way of educating effective coaches in university settings. The findings from this study can help existing sports coaching education programs improve, or provide a starting point for new programs, so that more avenues are created to educate sports coaches in ways to best support young athletes. As renowned sports psychologist Bill Beswick stated at the 2016 NSCAA soccer convention, “the demand for high-quality coaches from talented athletes has never been higher.” In other words, the demand is there for quality sports coaching, and as such, the sports coaching profession will only continue to grow, with demand for more formal sports coaching education programs and research in sports coaching education. The journey for sports coach education as a research field has just begun.
Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

DATE: March 11, 2015
TO: Dr. David Wiggins, PhD
FROM: George Mason University IRB
Project Title: [712989-1] Preparing Sports Coaches for the 21 Century: A Case Study of a Graduate Sports Coach Education Program
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: March 11, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: March 10, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited review category #7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The George Mason University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the Office of Research Integrity & Assurance (ORIA). Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed (if applicable).

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the ORIA.

The anniversary date of this study is March 10, 2016. This project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. You may not collect data beyond this date without prior IRB approval. A continuing review form must be completed and submitted to the ORIA at least 30 days prior to the
anniversary date or upon completion of this project. Prior to the anniversary date, the ORI/A will send you a reminder regarding continuing review procedures.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of five years, or as described in your submission, after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Motsinger at 703-993-4208 or kmotsing@gmu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within George Mason University IRB's records.
### Appendix B

**Literature in Sports Coaching Education (journals)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Method(s)</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert &amp; Trudel (1999)</td>
<td>Canadian amateur ice hockey coach</td>
<td>A level-2 national coach certification program in Canada</td>
<td>Observation and interviews</td>
<td>The evaluation strategy was successfully applied</td>
<td>To develop and apply an evaluation strategy for a large-scale coach education program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCullick et al. (2002)</td>
<td>25 golf coaches and 5 coach educators in the USA</td>
<td>The Ladies Professional Golf Association national education program</td>
<td>Document analysis, field notes, interviews, and participant journals</td>
<td>What counts as knowledge needs to be clarified; the quality and effectiveness of the facilitator are important</td>
<td>Evaluate the effectiveness of the LPGA national education program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammond &amp; Perry (2005)</td>
<td>30 soccer coaches in Australia</td>
<td>Two junior license soccer coaching courses in Australia</td>
<td>Documents analysis, interviews, notation analysis, and questionnaires</td>
<td>Inconsistent between the syllabi recommended delivery and the reality; too much passive learning</td>
<td>Determine the relationship between the aims of course and actual delivery of two courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowles et al. (2005)</td>
<td>Three single sports and three team sports education programs</td>
<td>Six different national sports coaching certification programs in the UK</td>
<td>Documentation analysis, deductive content analysis</td>
<td>The programs did not offer a potential structure for the development of reflective skills in conjunction with delivering more sport-specific skills</td>
<td>Examine current approaches to coach education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malate &amp; Feltz (2000)</td>
<td>High school coaches and coaching preparation students (n = 36)</td>
<td>Two 6-hour coaching education program sessions in Michigan</td>
<td>Quantitative, quasi-experimental design, multivariate analysis of covariance</td>
<td>Course attendance had a significant impact upon the development of reflective skills</td>
<td>Examine the effect on participation in coach education program on coaches’ perceived coaching efficacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTERPERSONAL KNOWLEDGE**

<p>| Abraham et al. (2006) | 16 expert coaches from 13 sports with a minimum of 10 years of experience | Coaches from England | In-depth interviews | Coaches see themselves as program leaders; great communication skills required (pedagogy delivery); coaches appreciate academic background | To develop a schematic scheme |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacobs, Knoppers, Diekstra, &amp; Sklad (2015)</td>
<td>Authors describe how they build a coach education course with a focus on improving interpersonal skills after input from stakeholders</td>
<td>Dutch amateur football coaches attending a course</td>
<td>Authors reflect on their work as coach educators</td>
<td>Authors believe that their approach provides a valuable opportunity to teach coaches about an approach to thinking about their problems instead of giving them solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTRAPERSONAL KNOWLEDGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Program Description</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nash (2003)</td>
<td>Coach education program in a higher education setting in the UK</td>
<td>115 undergraduate students</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Improve their ability to use theoretical knowledge in practice as a result of the mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones &amp; Turner (2006)</td>
<td>11 undergraduate students in higher education</td>
<td>Observation (field notes), semi-structured group interviews</td>
<td>Students started thinking differently about coaching and developing a better appreciation for the complex nature of coaching</td>
<td>To explore a PBL approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referenced Study</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowles et al. (2001)</td>
<td>Eight undergraduate students in the UK (Liverpool)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews and analysis of coaches’ journals</td>
<td>The development of reflective skills is not a simplistic process even with structured support; it cannot be assumed that it happens naturally</td>
<td>Seek to develop and assess reflection through a structured coach education program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demers et al. (2006)</td>
<td>The establishment of a university undergraduate competency-based coach education program in Canada</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Discussion-based article</td>
<td>Requires a great amount of faculty collaboration to create PBL approach; some difficulty for students to apply knowledge to internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowles et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Follow-up study on the 2001 study</td>
<td>Eight sports coaches</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews with each participant</td>
<td>Graduates continued to engage in reflective practice post-course; technical reflection focusing on more negative aspects and no journal writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassidy et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Eight rugby coaches in New Zealand</td>
<td>Coaches volunteered to follow a program over 6 months for a total of 28 hours</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews with each participant</td>
<td>Coaches appreciated the theoretical nature of the course as well as the opportunity to engage in reflection and discussions with peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Research Context</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culver, Trudel, &amp; Wethner (2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Five coaches, technical director, league manager</td>
<td>Case study of the Midget AAA baseball league (U17, U16, U15)</td>
<td>Establishing a cooperative environment in a competitive context required strong leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuklick, Gearity, &amp; Thompson (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td>21 coach education practicum students</td>
<td>Students answered weekly online journaling prompts over a 12-week period</td>
<td>Confirming research that practicing coaches learn through reflection to identify coaching dilemmas. Authors believe that when such situations arise during the student’s practicum experience, this study helps the practicum-supervisor coach prepare to facilitate reflection in action and on action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bertram, Culver, &amp; Gilbert (2016)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coaches created value within each of the five cycles of value creation in Wenger and colleagues’ framework. The value that was created was personally relevant to coaches’ immediate coaching needs. The coaches’ learning led to an increase in perceived coaching abilities.</td>
<td>To assess the value created within a coach community of practice, using Wenger, Trayner, and De Laat’s (2011) Value Creation Framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Araya, Bennie, &amp; O’Connor (2015)</td>
<td>17 performance coaches</td>
<td>Postgraduate course at a university in Australia</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Coaches developed knowledge through rich learning situations when they were relevant to their coaching context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

The New Course Sequence - June Start

COED 6100 – Workshop I – residency in Athens
COED 6210 – Coaching Soccer: The Beautiful Game – foundations class

COED 6180 – Utilizing Technology for Coaches
COED 6230 – Reading, Writing and Applying Research for Sport Coaches

COED 6220 – Concepts for Youth Player Development
COED 6150 – Injury Prevention and Risk Management (new course)

COED 6300 – Training and Conditioning for Soccer Coaches
COED 6340 – Performance Recovery for Coaches

COED 6140 – Psychology of Coaching
COED 6270 – Advanced Player Development

COED 6101 – Workshop II – residency at NSCAA Convention
COED 6280 – Leadership and Team Dynamics

Coaching Performance Evaluation now serves as exit criterion
Appendix D

Interview Protocol for Program Director

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project: Exploring A Sports Coaching Education Program</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time of Interview:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Read to the Interviewee:

The purpose of this study is to explore the program features of your coach education program. The data will be kept in locked, private files in order to protect your confidentiality. No names will be used in the final document. You will have an opportunity to review the transcript and the case study prior to conclusion of the member checking process. This research is part of my dissertation. The interview will take approximately one hour.

2. Have the interviewee read and sign the consent form.

3. Turn on the recorder and ask permission of the interviewee for you to record the interview.

Questions:

1. Describe how the program developed?

2. What is the objective of the program?
Follow-up Question: who is your typical student?

3. Why did Ohio University begin offering this program?
   Follow up question: What is the role of NSCAA in this program

4. Tell me how the program is structured in terms of scope and sequence of courses and the delivery format?

5. This program has high degree of professional knowledge given its focus soccer. What other knowledge areas or skills do students acquire, as they are moving through the program?

6. What role does field experiences/internship play in the curriculum?

7. To what extent does research in sports coaching education and your collaboration with NSCAA infuse the curriculum?

8. What athletic, educational and professional background do teachers need to have in order to teach the curriculum in this program?

9. Describe the teaching methods that teachers currently use in courses

10. Describe the online component of the program.

11. Describe the residential component of the program and how the residential program supplements the online teaching in the program.

Ask for clarification on any issues found in the textual analysis, such as the infusion of standards and guidelines as well as in observations

4. Read to interviewee:

Thank you so much for your time, cooperation, and participation in this interview. Again, the data collected will be kept private to ensure your confidentiality. With your consent, I will contact you if further information is needed.
Appendix E

List of Documents Examined

- Course catalog class description
- Interview transcript
- Ohio University history report from website
- Ohio University’s admission data
- Online class assignments and discussions (printout)
- PowerPoint’s from residency classes
- Program director’s PowerPoint presentation at National Coaching Conference
- Program material for future students
- Residency class schedule
- Sequence of classes document
- Syllabus
Appendix F

Themes

Agents of change
Class structure
Coach education
Curriculum
Design
Field experience
Knowledge domain
Making sure coaches can coach
NSCAA
Outgrowth
Teacher experiences
Teaching methods
References


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Jørgen Bagger Kjær received his Bachelor of Science in 2000 from the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, and his Master of Science in 2003 from the same institution. In 2010, he earned his master’s degree in Educational Leadership and Administration from The George Washington University, Washington, DC. He is currently the Head Boys Varsity Soccer Coach and Assistant Athletic Director at Sidwell Friends School. He is also an adjunct faculty member at George Mason University.