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Examining a coaching philosophy through ethnographic principles - Winter with Woolton

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Abstract

This paper intends to examine the coaching philosophy of an elite level Rugby League coach through ethnographic principles with the intention of demonstrating an intimate understanding of such a personal and significant element of a coach’s character. Data was collected during an extended period of field research in and around the professional rugby league setting during which progressive observations were made leading to focused interviews. The interviews referred back to these observations to sharpen the focus of the interview experience for the researcher and the respondent. The first author also draws upon his experience as a professional chef where there were many characters vying for attention in a pressured situation. Reference to this previous experience in life acknowledges that qualitative researchers enter new situations with an already formed stock of knowledge which may inform what they see. In this case the former life of working in a professional kitchen is positively embraced to compare and contrast the nature of being a professional chef with the nature of being a professional sports coach. The paper concludes that interpreting data from the senses may be one key to understanding concepts of excellence and quality between these two worlds – and therein, that one may inform the other.

Introduction

The winter of 2009/10 was a period of submersion in the planning, training, playing and evaluating of the Woolton Warriors Rugby League team. This was the research opportunity to explore the coaching philosophy of Anthony Baxter, who is the first team coach. An initial period of field observations helped to establish a representation of how Anthony’s philosophy may be portrayed through his speech, his actions and behaviour. Observations were followed by in-depth interviews providing some verification of the observed behaviour. It was also an opportunity to probe more deeply about what had already been noted and to elicit possible answers to questions arising about Anthony’s approach to coaching. Personal experiences from being a head chef in the world of the professional kitchen will be utilised to demonstrate the researcher’s attempt to relate with, identify and interpret meaning within Anthony’s coaching philosophy. These notes are identified as: personal note
from the chef world and they include a sub-section: contextual links for coaching which is intended to illustrate potential links from previous experience to the current research phenomenon in coaching. These asides are complimented with other personal notes which have more immediacy being made during the field research process, denoted as: personal note from the field: Winter with Woolton.

**Personal note from the chef world:** One of Michael Shaw’s dishes could be spotted a mile off, every ingredient perfectly square, aligned, effectively contrasting yet complementing the next, visually inspirational and with an enticing aroma that set the taste buds racing. However, one thing always gave it away, his obsession with odd numbers. During those hostile never-ending days his staff all thought he was just crazy, obsessed with 3 baby beetroots, 5 spoons of lentil ragout, meticulously measuring the length of fondant potatoes (which had to be 7 centimetres) and always trying to create a masterpiece on each and every plate. Upon reflection, it all makes perfect sense now. He was using the plate as a canvas on which to paint a picture of his character, emotions, state of mind and ambitions with odd numbers of ingredients.

**Contextual links for coaching:**
- Having an eye for fine detail may be a trait of good coaches.
- Not shying away from having high standards and high expectations especially when they may have been publicised.
- Individuality as a coach may help to define the coach and his products.

Early research within sports psychology was dominated by the positivist and quantitative approach of conducting controlled experiments to measure behaviour, emotions and motivation (Gratton and Jones, 2004:23). However, when considering the sensitivity of collecting such personally orientated data, Creswell (2009) suggests that a qualitative approach may be more revealing about social context and the feelings in a given situation. Creswell (2009) considers qualitative research to be a variety of methods and perspectives that when appropriately blended together form a coherent structure. Flick (2006) highlights that methodological practices, such as Ethnography or Grounded Theory have enabled researchers to develop an understanding of social sub-cultures through several layers of participation and observation. The context in this study is that the researcher and the coach are known to each other from the outset and both are interested in what each might discover from the close and personal aspect of this research. Sparkes (2009) advocates for closer consideration of a range of sense-data information to inform an ethnographic study, that phenomena are experienced in more than mere words, and one could suggest that in order to search for personal coaching principles within the world of rugby, one must get amongst the group being studied and literally look, listen, smell, touch, taste and speak the language of their world.
**Personal note from the chef world:** I think I was able to understand the motives of a Head Chef and cooking philosophy of workmates through getting close to them daily. I believe that such a detailed understanding requires patience, open mindedness and commitment. Although my experiences as a chef are considerably different in nature to those within a Rugby club, I have witnessed and experienced first-hand the driven nature of a head chef under pressure and the effects of that person’s perspective about cooking can have upon colleagues.

**Contextual links for coaching:**
- Motives within a team to contribute towards supporting the vision of a leader.
- As a coach, being resilient to stand for what you believe in.
- As a team member, work out how to play your part in the game.

**Question** - How might it possible to search for these principles and experiences within the Rugby Club? **Answer** - Get out of the frying pan and into the fire! The rugby league pre-season would permit the researcher a valuable settling-in period to establish how the coaches were to be observed and to develop some early practice of making field-notes at Woolton Warriors. A total of 14 weeks of training, friendly fixtures and competition would provide opportunities to observe, listen and interact with the head coach, members of the team and coaching staff. At all times the researcher was conscious to respect the privileged view which had been afforded to him and was also aware of his position within the group both personally and professionally i.e. the researcher was aware of his potential impact in a social setting, including their mere presence.

**NB:** The following acronyms are used to identify key personnel in this paper.
- CH - Chris Hughes
- AB - Anthony Baxter (Head Coach)
- CD - Chris Davies
- EF - Eddie Francis
- GH - Gary Hastings

**Ethnography and data collection strategies for the Woolton Warriors study**
With regards to gathering information about emotions, behaviours and experiences Creswell (2009) recognises that the researcher faces a critical decision in terms of choosing an effective method of data collection. Flick (2006:25) considers the role of observation to be at the centre of methodological discussions throughout the history of qualitative research and states that, “ethnography has taken over in recent years what was known as participant observation”. In terms of data sensitivity as mentioned by Creswell (2009), Flick (2006) considers that practices to collect data are only accessible through observation and that interviews and narratives merely create written accounts of what might otherwise have been observed. Considering the emphasis given to the importance of observation one could suggest that, when carried out in its various forms, it could effectively bring the research to life and
help to paint a richer picture of the field being observed. Statements in interviews can suggest how something is and how it should be, whilst observation enables the researcher to find out how that something actually works, fits into context or occurs (Flick, 2006). Therefore the query raised is what might count as data and research activity in this study? to which to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:1) reply,

Ethnography in its most characteristic form, involves the researcher in participating, overtly and covertly, in the people’s lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.

Conducting an ethnography can be a demanding but very rewarding process. The broad scope of what may count as data in ethnography required the researcher to focus in on the important aspects of information that might be formulating the beliefs and motives of the Head Coach - as was displayed through his interaction with his team. This was achieved by using a range of observation positions. For example, an application of ethnography in sport at undergraduate level was McCabe and Palmer (2007) who spent a period of time at a local high school to examine girl’s attitudes towards trampoline sessions within Physical Education. From an initial outside position as a “complete observer”, the researcher manipulated her position within the group to become one of “complete participant”. In the latter role she actively coached within the sessions, but was also researching the interaction within the group.

Complete participant: Complete involvement within the activity with the aim of becoming accepted within the “natural setting”

Participant as an observer: Comparative involvement with the studied group knowing the participation will only be short-term.

Observer as a participant: Comparative detachment as the researcher observes and records data with occasional contribution.

Complete observer: Totally observation based with no contact to the observed group.


Consciously operating across this spectrum of engagement in the field enabled McCabe and Palmer (2007) to gain the trust of the group, to gradually be accepted in their school setting and ultimately to achieve an insight into the language and actions used by the pupils to demonstrate their attitudes towards the sport. Consequently, awareness of this strategy for engagement in the field brought to the forefront a critical assessment by the researcher about his impact in a situation and
what might change if he altered it. This self-questioning about the researcher-method-data relationship took place during every instance of his observing presence at the rugby club or being with the rugby staff - and were recorded in the field notes.

**Recording field notes**

Schatzman and Strauss (1973) argue that the data elicited from observations require packaging into distinct records of Observational Notes (ON), Theoretical Notes (TN) and Methodological Notes (MN). Consistent with McCabe and Palmer (2007), the researcher identified that this method of data collection could provide a practical understanding of observational fieldwork and an organisational structure for the data to be recorded throughout the range of observations. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) consider,

*ON Observational Notes*: to be (descriptive) statements bearing upon events experienced principally through watching and listening. An ON is the *who, what, when, where and how* of human activity.

*TN Theoretical Notes*: (theorising) represent self-controlled attempts to derive meaning from one or several observational notes. The researcher interprets, infers, hypothesises or relates any observation to another in this presently private effort to create social science.

*MN Methodological Notes*: reflect an operational act completed or planned: an instruction to oneself, a reminder and a critique of one’s own tactics. It notes timing, sequencing, stationing, stage setting and manoeuvring. For example, noting what may or may not be possible in a given context allied with the pros and cons of your position as researcher.

This structure of recording notes was used in field-research but is presented in such a way (below) as to create a narrative to tell a story about episodes of fieldwork in which the researcher’s presence is recognised and plays an active role in the story imparted.

**Coaches’ motivation and philosophy**

As with any sport, there needs to be a degree of motivation both within the coach to teach his team and within the players to learn and commit towards their development (McMorris and Hale, 2006). With regards to motivation, Adler (1998), Frankl, (1988) and Maslow, (1962) have perceived humans to express themselves through something beyond the self, such as, through a vehicle of sport. For example, Leidl (2009) suggests that individuals see themselves advancing through levels of attainment, compelled to assert themselves in the context of something greater, such as performance on the sporting stage. To explore this idea Leidl (2009) undertook a series of semi-structured interviews to determine the source of motivation with seven elite lacrosse coaches in the USA. His findings suggested that the participants
felt a sense of belonging to the sport, with one of the participants stating “I am lacrosse”. Leidl (2009) concludes by acknowledging that within the sport of lacrosse, an explanation of the motivation to coach may extend beyond contemporary research related to intrinsic motivation, attribution theory and achievement goal theory. He suggests that broader historical concepts of motivating others through self actualisation, contextualised stories and socially shared goals of continued success may shed light upon the drive to coach elite level sport. This may in turn, help to inform the coaching philosophy held by the coach, as Cross and Lyle (1999:30) point out,

A coaching philosophy is a comprehensive statement about the beliefs and behaviours that will characterise the coach’s practice. These beliefs and behaviours will either reflect a deeper set of values held by the coach, or will be the recognition of a set of externally imposed expectations to which the coach feels the need to adhere.

Nash, Sproule and Horton (2008) conducted an interview based study which set out to explore the perceived roles and philosophies of sports coaches. They concluded unsurprisingly that novice coaches are limited in their understanding and articulation of a coaching philosophy as opposed to their elite level counterparts. Consequently, a well-formed coaching philosophy could impact positively upon practice and many coaches might usefully consider how and what elements of their philosophy are either consciously or subconsciously presented to athletes, colleagues, fans, parents or anyone else who may be involved with the coach.

However the coach decides to act, his actions will inevitably attract criticism of some kind which may stimulate a reflective process in the coach. Therefore, Cross and Lyle (1999) consider the role of primary and secondary feedback within the coaching process to be a critical element within skill acquisition and overall development. Primary feedback being when an athlete is feeling or thinking about how they have performed a specific skill, whilst secondary feedback is mainly coach led in terms of audible commentary or demonstration. Interestingly, with regards to feedback about a coach’s performance, the responsibility seems to lie with the coach himself, to evaluate his sessions, games and tactical decisions through critical self-reflection and occasional consultation with peers and players (Cross and Lyle, 1999:85). That is, the coach may not be in a position to receive any secondary feedback as a player might do, by virtue of his role as coach. This may highlight the need for some kind of coach-mentor or sounding-board opportunity for professional coaches who in the club setting may risk feeling isolated. A personal realisation during my visits to Woolton was that in my impartial role as researcher I was assuming that role for Anthony at times which polarises the sense of impact that a researcher might have in a situation, especially when opinions or at least
understanding may be asked for. Gilbert and Trudel (2005) (cited in Jones, 2006:120) reflect critically upon their research into the reflective process carried out by youth coaches and ask that, “...given the importance of reflection in coaching, and the importance of reflection to experiential learning, how can we facilitate the development of reflective practice in coaching?” This practical consideration for effective reflection in the coaching process is neatly summed up by Coker, Fischman and Oxendine (2006:29) who state, “after all, if people do not know how they are doing, there is no reason for them to change their behaviour”. In practice there seems to be no lack of criticism in coaching from coaches, the public or the media. However, for meaningful critical self-reflection coaches may need training to ensure their thoughts are structured and beneficial and not self-destructive – or even over inflated.

Considering such views, this paper intends to examine the motives and beliefs of the Head Coach, Anthony Baxter, as he may perceive them. It will also attempt to reveal his understanding of the implications of such motives upon his coaching philosophy through observation of his work (Mageau and Vallerand, 2003). The use of personal reflections and data collected from the field, inter-twined with the use of theory and recommendations from valued sources will provoke searching and critical questions about the role of a coach and his philosophy. Given the complexity of factors which may drive a coach’s actions/decisions, a research strategy that varies in intimacy through its methods of data collection was required to provide the reader with a vivid and authentic representation of the people and context being studied.

Research design
Sands (2002:20), considers ethnography to be “surviving a year or two of fieldwork, complete with the culture shock, loneliness and perils of living away from the familiar”. He acknowledges the fact that ethnography is not for everyone and the possibility that two years spent in the field may only partially represent a person’s life and experiences. However, throughout the academic literature reviewed there appears to be no set parameters on the minimum or maximum time to be spent in the field, although Sands (2002) questions whether researchers ever stop.

Personal note from the chef world: When reflecting on my 9 years spent sweating behind the stoves of several quality kitchens; I can’t help but feel as though those years represent not just a previous career but a past life. I look at my new direction in life and wonder whether my time was spent as an observer, a participant, an ethnographer? I feel as though I stepped into that world upon leaving school, I lived with the natives, I watched, tasted, listened and touched and then I stepped out and reflected (got the scars to prove it).

Contextual links for coaching:
- There is an apprenticeship of learning, mistakes and successes are important.
There may be a problem with the coaches stock of experience relating to how they transfer from being a player to being a coach.

Through reflection, the deep questioning of “what am I actually doing?”

Whereas Sands (2002) recommends several years of fieldwork, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:1) suggest an “extended period of time” – but how long is long? One can only venture that “it depends”. Therefore, considering also the time constraints applied to this research a full winter season at the club was a practical and realistic time-frame to engage in this ethnography. An ethnographical approach would require strategic thinking time and flexibility on the part of the researcher to enable him to capture as fuller picture as possible of the Head Coach’s interactions with his team.

Anthony Baxter has 20 years professional domestic and international coaching experience both at home and abroad. Thankfully, Anthony, who at the start of this investigation was starting pre-season work with the full Woolton squad and allowed the researcher an ‘access all areas’ opportunity to observe him and the team. A winter’s worth of strength and conditioning, ball work, tactical planning, physiotherapy, friendly matches and competition would provide an insight into the mechanics of a professional club and hopefully the strategy of the coach to guide them. Through utilisation of the observational spectrum as recommended by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:99-109) i.e. “participant observation” and the structure for recording field notes in Schatzman and Strauss (1973), could yield considerably rich data and be a rewarding experience for the researcher, as well as potentially being of some value to the coaching staff at Woolton Warriors.

Data collection – data leads the study, and data tells the story...

Initial impressions...
10th December 2009- The Eddie Waring Stadium, Woolton

Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton: Upon entering the gym, the first thing that hits me is two of the under 18 squad wrestling to the faint sound of The Pogues iconic festive classic “A fairytale in New York”. Weird.

Standing taller and significantly more intimidating than he used to look on the TV, the former Wigan juggernaut Gary Hastings barks short instructions to the two lads grappling on the mat, “good work”, “stay tight”, “turn him”.
AB- “Gary this is Chris, he’s going to be coming in to have a look round”
GH- “Aw reet mate”, “now change, next two, right go!”
Through the mass of squatting frames it is possible to identify the distinguishable blonde hair of another former Wigan work horse. The short, stocky machine pumps his way through a set of dead lifts, each rep closely followed by a rattle of steel crashing into the deck and a groan that if translated into English would go something like “I love these” or “that’s what a dead lift looks like”. With a grimace and quick wipe of the brow, Eddie Francis (EF) comes pacing over. Eddie looks after the majority of the strength and conditioning work within the club. After a brief conversation about my observation plans, he struts off with the look of a Rottweiler that hasn’t had a walk in a week, searching for the sand bag in order to do some triceps dips.

“Good work lads, keep working, come on”, the only difference with these words of encouragement is the fact they aren’t from any of the coaching staff. They are shouted at by a few of the first team players as they enter the gym to warm up; their snappy bursts of encouragement are aimed towards two lads on the mat. One of the players entering the gym was Kadga Duffey, a senior first team player who pays particular attention to the wrestling and proceeds to motivate the grapple-fest whilst leaning on a wall stretching his hamstrings. The gym, which on first inspection appeared to be roomy, comfortable and relaxed now seemed swollen with muscle and masculinity. The Pogues have been replaced by a deep thumping house beat whilst, Eddie is still marching up and down getting the forwards going with their workouts.

**Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton:** As I take a cold, damp front row seat within the stand adjacent to the pitch I feel the biting freezing air up my nostrils. Now at turf level, there is a thin carpet of mist covering the far end of the playing surface and I can’t help but wish I was limbering up with the lads as opposed to sitting on this wet plastic.

**Field notes – a training session**

MN- From this slightly uncomfortable but insightful vantage point, it is possible to see Anthony thinking, moving and conducting the atmosphere during the first man drill.

ON- As the players are jogging and passing their way through the mist, Anthony is considering every movement, pass and touch for the drill.

MN- One of the main advantages with observing in this cold, empty stadium is the fact that almost every word can be heard as Anthony pulls the lads together to give his instructions.

TN- When considering the simplicity of this, ‘play the ball, look to pass and beat the man’ drill, it would appear that Anthony is going back to basics so to speak. This could suggest that he has detected poor performance within this area last season.
however, as the drill quickly develops and adapts, it would appear that Anthony is merely wiping the dust from his machine.
ON- “Beautiful play” follows a scampering run from acting half back, “Paddy, you just need to show the inside pass to Kadga” as the move falls short. Every breakdown is preceded by a few specific directions for the next play and then Anthony steps out and lets the move develop. Again he steps in “Now I wanna see more pressure from a deep kick, make em work their way out”, the players adopt their positions and he steps out.
TN- Anthony’s positioning and short sharp directions allow fluency and quick progression through the drill. It would appear that he is merely giving the players just enough direction to highlight the desired impact and then he hands the responsibility over to them.
ON- On the near side I can hear a conversation between Kadga and one of the younger members of the squad, Paddy. “Tell me where you want me Paddy, tell me, I’m there”. A deep kick is fielded smoothly, first tackle made, Paddy splits from playing the ball, inside fake to Kadga and the line is broken.
TN- This interaction could suggest that the role of Kadga within the squad is pivotal to the development of the younger players. His previous words of motivation in the gym are consistent with his actions on the field. Although not the captain, Anthony considers the views and thoughts of Kadga to be influential within the squad and one could suggest that he has a key role within the style of play.
ON- Meanwhile, in the depths of Eddie Francis’s world, the forwards are squatting and bench pressing their way through an easy going pre-season session. “Come deeper into it”, “Step out further wi them lunges”, “Wanna see a straighter back”. Eddie jumps on every technical flaw, “it’s not about how much ya lift, its how much ya lift correctly”, “think of each one as a single movement, just get each movement perfect”.
TN- All the squad are performing their set, spotting their team-mate or recording their sets in a black ring binder. There appears to be a focussed production line feeling to the work being completed, do, record, spot, next set, record, spot, end result. Although Anthony is not participating within the gym session, it could be suggested that this regimented approach to the session with specific emphasis on technique may be consistent with the ball work out on the field.

Personal note from the chef world: Having stepped away from my previous life I can remember the first days blanching veal bones and pigs trotters, preparing mirepoix of vegetables, tying bouquet garnis and meticulously skimming and passing a crystal clear pungent veal stock. Through the tuition of Mark Dunn I respected, understood and cared for all the ingredients that entered the kitchen and hoped the diners would do the same on the other side. Having only previously experienced Rugby League from a spectator’s point of view, I am fascinated by the technical detail to every rep or dummy run. Admittedly, any previous bias towards
the idea of 13 big blokes smashing into each other has quickly been replaced by respect and appreciation.

**Contextual links for coaching:**
- With learning comes an appreciation for detail that may be previously overlooked through ignorance.
- What level of detail might spectators glean from the product of coaching on match-day? Does it matter that they may not understand the complexity of coaching or is it just a positive score they comprehend?

**17th December 2009- Eddie Waring Stadium, Woolton**

MN- Another bitterly cold evening sat on the front row. After a few brief welcoming nods of the head, the darkness of the stand provides a perfect vantage point to peer unnoticed at the scene.

ON- There appears to be a more dynamic feeling about the field session tonight, a significant emphasis upon putting the opposition deep within their territory. A buzz of communication, speed and significantly more physical contact.

TN- Local rivals from Avenshaw at home for the Boxing Day friendly provides an opportunity to witness the detailed preparation required for such an encounter.

ON- There is particular focus on the left and right hand sides of the team and a continual emphasis on “attacking B”. A constant reiteration of “you’ve got to get hold of B”, “suck him in” and “attack B and then slip the ball”. From the play of the ball the defending team has two markers directly in front of the tackled attacker, the defending line retreats ten yards, the defender behind the markers is A following on to B, C and D etc. running from the centre of the field to the wings. Anthony sets up the play with his brisk instructions, “I’m B, wanna see you quick play the ball?”. From a rapid pick-up at dummy-half the would-be first receiver heads straight for B, flat out with the sort of look that would suggest major pain (at least to an observer) however, the ball is slipped to the on-rushing second row coming in from a slightly different angle thus breaking the line of defence through B and A. What would appear to be crisp, precise work to the un-trained eye is not quite as precise as Anthony would like. “Your coming on to it too straight, make me think you’re gonna receive it, your running like a dummy runner, the pass needs to be closer, I want it shaving his back, it needs to be that close”.

TN- The session continues with the methodical routine of set-up, direct, play and feedback from deep and attacking positions on both sides of the pitch. Whist observing the players attempting to demonstrate the level of accuracy required from Anthony, consideration must be paid to the ability of the coach to understand the intricate movement of all players as they change position at speed and how to consistently manipulate and freshen up each play whilst maintaining the clear aims and objectives of the session.
CH: “So Anthony, what are the goals for this coming season, what realistically are you hoping to achieve?”
AB: “If things go our way then we could win everything but if not and we give it everything then we’ll still be happy considering that we’re up against it”.

**Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton:** What appears to be a straightforward answer to a straightforward question only begins to ignite my thought processes with regards to the motivational aspect of the research whilst shivering my way up the motorway back home. Is he motivated to achieve development as opposed to getting results and winning trophies? Are there factors affecting the team that I don’t know about? I need to get closer to Anthony to get a clearer picture about him.

**15th January 2010- Indoor Training Centre**

**Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton:** Anthony greets me with a firm handshake. He looks stressed as he tells me about how difficult he is finding the workload of his commitment at the club and his studies. We discuss an assignment of his that evaluates his coaching process. He appears keen to seek my input.

Recent bad weather has forced the majority of technical work to be completed at the impressive indoor facility of a nearby premier league football club.

ON- Anthony and Chris Davies (CD) again meticulously prepare the grid in which a defending line drill soon takes place. Anthony is considering the possible movements, angles and pace of the drill. He seems to be imagining the play developing in his mind; he assesses the area thoroughly and then moves each cone a further one yard outwards.

TN- Such attention to detail suggests that Anthony is not only extremely knowledgeable about anticipating the direction of the play, but takes pride and care in creating situations in which his players can work, be challenged and develop.

ON- Anthony appears slightly distanced as Chris barks short, snappy directions to his players “line speed”, “markers need to press”, “Hold off slightly and come in from a better angle”.

CH- “So how close is this to game intensity Anthony”?
AB- “F***ing zero”

Almost simultaneously, Chris erupts and the players get a royal dressing down.

**Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton:** I could see that coming, it was as though nobody knew each other, no communication, sloppy passes and limited movement. However, Chris has just turned the lights on and now we’re cooking on gas.
AB- “Only he can say that sort of thing, that’s why it’s priceless when he’s here”

TN- Why could Anthony not have done it? Consistent with previous observations, Anthony appears to continuously identify and address technical aspects of play. Body position and hand movement demonstrate his desired angle and shape of play during consultation with Kadga Duffey. Anthony appears to use Kadga as a means of transferring his message to the team. It is worth noting that Kadga, albeit one of the oldest members of team provides a clear technical blueprint of how to play at Woolton Warriors. His understanding of the game enables Anthony to feed him the desired movement pattern, whilst the other players translate his instructions through his leadership and example. Having witnessed Anthony’s technical focus on a number of occasions, it may be deduced that this stems from his academy background and experience. I get the feeling that ‘barking’ and ‘dressing down’ may not be strong features of Anthony’s character – perhaps there is a good-cop-bad-cop thing going on, or may be Anthony’s behaviour is the result of some deeper reflection. Interestingly, some of my discussions with Anthony centre about his Masters Degree assignment, and from his personal reflections he identifies that a critical component within his own coaching philosophy is that of identifying the needs of his players. Given Anthony’s extensive coaching experience within several academies, Anthony has identified that this considerably young, inexperienced team would benefit from the technical and professional influence of such a socially approachable figure like Kadga.

**Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton:** So far I haven’t heard or seen any mention of the specific goals or ambitions for the season. I have identified Anthony’s connection with the senior players, how will this work on match day? And will Anthony’s appearance and behaviour change during competitive play? I am feeling some form of acceptance from Anthony now, he is increasingly keen to listen to me and equally inform and direct my thoughts with regards to the game. I’m getting the impression that he is a caring and considerate man who enjoys interaction with like-minded people.

19th January 2010- Eddie Waring Stadium, Woolton

ON- The opposition squad appear to be significantly larger than the Woolton lads. Although this is a friendly game there is a speculative atmosphere within the stadium.

TN- Several additions to the Woolton squad create chatter and there are eagle eyed observations of the warm-up within the stand. Fans are getting their first glimpse of the new season’s talent and it will be interesting to see how Woolton’s ball playing style of rugby can compete with the power and speed of Super League opposition.

ON- Anthony circles the perimeter of the warm-up grid watching closely while Eddie Francis confidently and vocally gets the lads up to temperature. The sides trade tries and conversions over the 80 minutes with little in the way of full steam.
Anthony remains in constant communication with Chris Davies who has adopted a lofty vantage point, and Eddie tears on and off the pitch with messages.

TN- Yet again it would appear to any outsider that Anthony is distanced from the squad, however, previous observations and interactions strongly suggest that Anthony is comfortable to guide and assist the individuals whilst allowing them to ultimately take responsibility and develop.

MN- Although I am seated in the stand and too far away to hear the fine details of instructions from Anthony, this position has given me an insight into the way in which Anthony and Chris want their squad to perform. My relative detachment provided me with a fly-on-the-wall view of how the team are performing – that performance being a product of coaching. It also provided a perspective on how the Woolton Warriors operate as a unit, how coaching staff, support staff and players may be responding to each other on match day. What was Anthony’s reaction to the game?

CH- “Thought they did really well Anthony, what were you looking to get out of the game?”

AB- “Just to get some muscle on bone and get back out on the grass”

Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton: Although the game was relatively event free, it enabled me to see how Anthony wants his lads to play. My early reservations towards the size of the squad were rubbed through their accurate passing and work around the rucks. How would this style develop throughout the season? And what are Anthony’s motivations or inspirations to play in such a style?

Personal note from the chef world: I reflect on my cooking style now and I can see the influences of Raymond Blanc’s passion for colour, the clarity and simplicity of roasted cep’s with linguine tasted in Rome and the precision and respect taught by Mark Dunn. I understand that each plate was born and developed through such influences however; I believe that each and every experience has and will continue to develop my personality, character and ability. (NB: Ceps are a lovely wild mushroom otherwise known as Porcini, really earthy, very expensive and delicious when roasted in butter.)

Contextual links for coaching:
- The road to excellence involves trial and error.
- What appears to make Raymond Blanc excellent may be the way he keeps experimenting from a position of learned and therefore informed excellence.
- This may help to keep his passion and interest alive. What he produces may be reflection of his personal standards.

21st January 2010- Eddie Waring Stadium, Woolton

Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton: I enter the lounge area of the gym expecting to hear the thudding stereo and see the usual mass of steel being
thrown around. All the squad are sat at desks watching the video screen as if to be acting out a scene from a US Marine film in which they are given orders to complete a specific mission. I am not too far from the truth.

MN- Positioned at the back of the room it is possible to observe clearly the workings of the meeting with no attention drawn to me or contribution made by me. This may be close to the concept of Complete Observer (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 99-109) and I chose to maintain this mode for this brief phase of fieldwork. My position in the room enables a clear view of the player’s facial expressions and allows me to see body language displayed by the coaching staff.

ON- Chris Davies highlights areas of weakness from the friendly game with specific focus upon the retreating line speed, shape and tackling. Anthony again appears to be quiet yet thoughtful. Chris notices that the group appear to be switching off after approximately 30 minutes, however, Anthony steps in and pulls the video back to a sloppy try (scored against them) that as he demonstrates with one of the players, could have been avoided with a minor adjustment.

TN- Anthony’s quiet persona was demonstrated by the manner in which he gave his analysis and consideration of the fine technical details. Whereas Chris appears very vocal and autocratic with his directions, possibly due to his not too distant playing career and his current position on the coaching staff. Conversely, Anthony seems to actively look for the problem solving approach to help the players understand their actions. There is definitely a pattern (learned/habitual) and trend (type/style) with Anthony’s behaviour around the team.

CH- “Do you use much video analysis then Anthony?”

AB- “Yeah, I do a lot of individual analysis with the lads, at least that way they can look at their individual performance and we can work together”.

**Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton:** Just as Anthony informs me of how he works individually towards the player’s performance, he shows me a model of analysing a player’s motivation, belief and attitude on the white board. Considering his academy experience it is becoming evermore apparent that he thoroughly recognises the importance of addressing each player’s needs. There is a developing theme of identifying and meeting the needs of all within the group. When Anthony explains such processes there is a caring, listening and considerate nature to his speech and behaviour.

ON- Out on the field the players work their way through the drill which Anthony has designed to combat the switch-off at the play of the ball. With minimal physiological effort, the defensive line communicates, shifts left or right and effectively tightens up the area highlighted earlier as a weakness.

TN- Anthony has identified the workload completed against a larger, more physical opposition earlier in the week and has developed the drill to actively recover the
body more efficiently whilst stimulating the players decision making and communication.

24th January 2010 Eddie Waring Stadium Woolton

*Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton:* The poor young lad on the near side wing is in for a tough afternoon. I think he has been drafted in from the academy and yet again fellow spectators are already scrutinising his physical appearance.

ON- Anthony is working closely with the young winger. Deep kicks both high and long suggest that Anthony recognises the demands and responsibility required for the fixture. There is only the young lad’s teammate at centre working with him throughout the warm-up, surprisingly none of the forwards have been drafted in as protection. Woolton 0 – visitors 48, thrashed on home turf, a poor performance all round. Anthony maintains his dug-out position and shows no emotion. Only the frequent interaction with Chris via radio and to Eddie Francis running messages. However, the winger gets a slap on the back and a big smile from Anthony at the end of the game.

TN- Each kick and retrieve is followed by Anthony’s ever more apparent technical feedback and instruction in the form of hand signals and body positioning. He uses tackle bags to meet the winger’s progress and appears to be speaking to him constantly throughout the tackle. Anthony even puts his arm around the lad after one mistake which would suggest caring, understanding or even compassion. Anthony has not previously demonstrated such a personal connection with any player and consistent with his views on identifying the player’s needs one could suggest that he recognises also the tough physical demands of the next 80 minutes.

MN- As a complete observer within the stand it has again been possible to view the playing dynamics of the team. The usual relay of messages gives little away to the observer in terms of the intricacies of tactics however, considering the nature of the research, my position in the stand is ideal to witness Anthony’s personal interaction with the squad.

*Personal note from the chef world:* I could make the assumption that Michael Shaw used odd numbers of ingredients because that was what Pierre Gagnier does at his 3 Michelin star restaurant in Paris so that’s why we did it.

*Contextual links for coaching:*
- There are developing trends within Anthony’s behaviour; I have seen a caring side to his actions and witnessed his use of experienced players.
- What might be the subtle clues that indicate meaningful communication from the coach; a nod of the head, eye contact or the denial of these – as reinforcement of a job well done.
Might Anthony have benefitted from such personal coaching tactics earlier in his life; finding this kind of behaviour rewarding for others and himself, and has learned to replicate it in his current role as coach?

**Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton:** I need to ask questions and seek some theory behind these actions and not wait around in ignorance just to discover that “odd numbers are more appealing to the eye”.

**Interviews about observed behaviours**

Silverman (2006:113) questions the appropriateness of interviews in that, although interviews are relatively economical in terms of time and recourses, why should the researcher depart from the “naturally occurring” data and use contrivances like interviews? In the light of this criticism the researcher has considered carefully the use of interviews in this study and when and how to use them. Working from the data elicited from the observations, the researcher has witnessed aspects of the apparent working philosophy of the coach, and used the interviews to recollect situations, incidents and key events from the previous several months. A summative comment about the observations is that a consistent element throughout the training sessions was the setting and manipulation of situations in which the players may learn and develop. Therefore, the focus of research interest in the next phase of the study would be contexts for learning and developing, for the coach and the players. Silverman (2006:80) points out that “narrowing down is often the most crucial task when fieldworkers are tempted to throw the kitchen sink at their data”. Considering such words of wisdom, the researcher decided that through the creation of situation recollection, the interviews could generate considerably more detailed and personal data by focusing on already observed situations and avoiding hypothetical questions. That is, as opposed to leading the interview and possibly suggesting answers, this would be an attempt to reduce researcher-bias; the interviewer would recollect situations in which Anthony had already exhibited a certain action or behaviour and seek his views and reasons for choosing and initiating them. The concepts drawn from the observations in the field (which now covered a period of nearly 4 months) would form the structure or vehicle for poignant and focused questioning.

**Interview One**

**Date:** 15\(^{th}\) February 2010  
**Location:** Starbucks Coffee Shop

**Personal note from the field, Winter with Woolton:** Just before the interview Anthony orders a large Latte. I notice that he likes a generous sprinkle of bitter chocolate on the top and has three sugars to sweeten the smooth warm milk. A complex blend of taste sensations, least of all for the coffee which was probably obliterated by the excess of other ingredients. Interesting.
CH- “What is it about Rugby League that does it for you?”
AB- “I’ve always been fond of team sports; I enjoy the camaraderie, the coming together, the friendships ... the opportunity to go play in Australia was massive, I stayed there for 8 years which took up most of my career really... I got injured and I was finished. Like anything you work your way back don’t you and I played professionally at clubs in the UK where I got into coaching”.

Anthony speaks warmly and comfortably about his attractions to the game, he smiles and uses an open stance which appears to suggest that he is comfortable with me and enjoys talking about the game. There is a particular connection and fondness to his time in Australia, however, his tone of voice suggests that he was more than happy to return home.

CH- “So that’s where it started again, back in your hometown?”
AB- “Yeah, yeah I went back there... back home, where I was living I started coaching at one of the small towns where I lived, you know I was helping build up kids, kids playing sport. I was working with 12 and 13 year olds, stuff like that but I was doing really well at it”.

There is a definite emotional attachment to his home town. He emphasises the words “build up kids” with what could only be suggested as a growing tone to his voice, he almost replicates the growing action through his hand movement and body language.

CH- “Would you say that where you were then, coaching was the natural progression?”
AB- “No, no I think you naturally do it don’t ya, when you’re the captain or when you’re mixing, you know when you’re managing up and managing down, you’re communicating messages in the right way aren’t ya. But one of the big barriers even still today Chris is my dyslexia, I have a big fear of it. But coaching helps me break through that barrier. I had a hunger for more knowledge; I was quite studious in my approach”.

CH- “I’ve noticed a few times that you almost look at some of the older guys, guys like Kadga and discuss technical issues”.
AB- “That’s right, there are 2 or 3 of them, Kadga’s major influential and a real down to earth character, you do have to play games with them you know, to get the best out of them and also facilitate ideas. But working with young players is the real dream, they are so enthusiastic, they have a hunger to learn new things and new ways and you can really inspire them”.

CH- “I noticed at the 0-48 game that you were doing a lot of work with the young lad on the right wing. As soon as I saw him I thought this lad’s in for a rough day”.
AB- “Yes. I do that sort of thing all the time, you know you’ve got all the different learning styles and different phases of learning that they go through, you’ve got to have a really good feeling for that as a coach. There are some people where you have to create a climate for them just to understand what you’re talking about, that climate needs to be there all the way through the training sessions. I’ll focus on
kinaesthetic contact, feeling, moving and making them experience what I’m talking about.”

Anthony appears totally at ease talking about the technical elements of his job however, again his voice warms and his eyes light up when explaining his influence upon the younger players. He mimics the touching actions with his hands and emphasises the words climate and hunger. It could be inferred that he has developed this understanding through his own personal experiences within the game. He takes a deep draw on his warm, sweet, milky coffee.

CH- “I noticed that during the video analysis session after the Avenshaw game, you picked up on a slight technical flaw on your own line. Now Chris Davies appeared to be more concerned with line speed and marker work”.
AB- “I was looking again at creating a climate where they can understand how they need to manoeuvre using cues and signals. One of the things we agreed to was, whatever he drops or misses, I pick up and that was missed. I used all the parts and then they got the whole at the end, so by the end it was very dynamic and continuous and they experienced a lot of different things. Whereas Chris got more involved when we went live ball, but the part, ... the technical part, I’d built up for it, so by the game activity he had been influenced by some of the coaching from me really”.
CH- “I’ve picked up as well that when you’re setting up a drill, you’re very thoughtful about positions you adopt and the movements you make. You seem to be aware that players may be reading your body language”.
AB- “Yes, I think you need to be, you need to be aware of how you manipulate techniques. I know I’m studious but when you look at NLP which is a great tool, lots of people have rubbished it but it is very, very effective for performance intervention strategies within your coaching. They have an element called loops; you can, say, remember that day when we were playing that line off the far post, now some of them will be able to remember the colours, climate and feeling if he was fatigued. Now straight away you’ve almost hypnotized him cos you’ve captivated him by reminding him of that situation. Now you get into your loop and in the middle of the loop is all the tactical, technical and strategic information and the more you think about it and the more you experience it then the bigger the loop gets. That’s what you hit em with”.
CH- “So do you believe that they wouldn’t access that if you hadn’t captivated their attention?”
AB- “Absolutely, absolutely. This is what learning is, what its about, its got to be relevant, alright its got to be relevant to that person, if it is you, put it into context, soon as its into context you have a motive, alright, and once you’ve got motive you’ve got scope, you can go wherever you want with it, now to me if I can reach people by coaching that way, right, that is exactly where I would say I want to be in practice”.

Anthony’s hunger and studious nature are demonstrated in the intensity of his speech with regards to creating such learning climates. Considering the technical
focus throughout the observations, it is now apparent that what I was witnessing was merely a small piece to a complex puzzle. There was more going on than met the eye and it was perhaps up to me, as researcher, to educate my eye as to what was actually going on. The change in research strategy to interviews was proving to be a good strategy at this stage of the study.

CH- “So would you say that this is the main point of your coaching philosophy?”
AB- “Over the years my philosophy has built up Chris. I’d have sports science and psychology and it all written down, I didn’t know much about them then, but I knew where they all belonged and I knew what was important. Now I just have this phrase, do you know what I mean, and it’s just about becoming a caring guide to self discovery and self fulfilment.
I’m a big believer in the self-determination theory and I’m a big believer in the construction theory, attribution theory, I’m a big believer in all that. So the more barriers life presents to my athletes then more solutions can be thought about, obstacles are opportunities in disguise ... inspiration for the barriers they need to overcome.
That may be science, technical, tactical, emotional, physical, financial and if I can nurture that, you know, ‘then this is how we overcome this problem’ then they will never have a barrier.
Even when I’ve worked with some of the greatest players in the world, and I really have... you know the Trent Barretts, the Kevin Sinfields of this world and everything else, they all have barriers. Sometimes they would say, ‘look Anthony, I can’t go there’, so long as I’m there willing to say if you really want to win, this is what you need to do.
I am that type of coach, I am a development coach...
So this is a new addition to my philosophy, its something I’ve only picked up recently you know, about creating this climate, you do that by understanding where they’re at and what their learning preferences might be and follow that continuum.

A caring guide to self-discovery and self-fulfilment. It would not have been possible to extract such a sentence to explain Anthony’s philosophy from mere observations alone, however, upon reflection it is clear that such an evolving coaching philosophy has been evident throughout all the sessions witnessed and his personal interactions throughout the previous four months. The ideas emerging from this interview prompted a second, shorter, interview.

Interview Two
Date: 8th March 2010
Location: Stansfield Country Club

CH- “During the previous interview we identified your caring guide to self discovery and self fulfilment, how do you think this philosophy has been shaped throughout your life, playing and coaching career?”
AB- “There are two things in sport for me, I was nurtured by a really good PE teacher and my involvement within sport at club level was very mixed, there were some lovely people who had me when I was coming through and there was some awful people as well, basically, who gave me some bad experiences. It was down to the way that they viewed what they wanted to get out of me and the team in anything that I played in...
I could distinguish between ...erm, you know a really good, caring and sincere coach who wanted to make a better player and one that wanted ...erm, something else, you know, the by-product of performance sport.
I’m aware that there are different times and situations when you need to be a different person and the ugly one needs to come out now and again. I don’t have a problem with that ‘cos sometimes they need to see that, we’re different people at different times but with the sincere approach you see that in terms of sport the decent person, the person with integrity and determination and sacrifice probably wins more games than anyone else. That probably applies to the most successful athletes as well because they are champion people as well as Champions aren’t they, they are caring people. I’ve thought that if I can instil those values into young athletes or any athlete or generate a culture that has those behaviours, I will be doing a good thing and working towards success”.
CH- “Results would follow?”
AB- “Well if they didn’t at least you’ve still added value to someone’s life rather than just a sporting experience, which could be damaging...”

Maintaining strong eye contact and with a purposeful tone of voice, Anthony demonstrated what may be described as resentment towards some people or the sport that contributed to bad experiences. It wasn’t that he disliked the sport, rather he seemed to dislike the manner in which the coach appeared to manage the sporting experience for others. It is clear that such experiences have influenced his coaching philosophy and coaching style and one could hypothesize that consistent with the previous observations and interview, Anthony recognises the sport to be much more than just rugby; it’s a means to teach values and develop people’s lives.

CH- “Prior to the Christmas friendly I asked you about the desired goal for the season, you said that if things go our way then we could do well, but if we give it everything then I’ll still be happy. Throughout the observations I have not heard of any goals for the season...”
AB- “I don’t do that. When you have an argument for say, with someone that isn’t grounded in the sciences, they seem to see goals as something other than they actually are, and for people to become really intrinsic which is the greatest strength, regardless of what motive it is ...erm, I think it’s important to create a climate in which they just want to constantly improve, they value other stuff the camaraderie, friendship, commitment, sacrifice ...erm, and I think in a way of checking against an appraisal then in my view that is probably an ideal way to nurture a team. Rather than winning, it’s about everyone giving their best, ‘I played my part’, ‘I did this well’, ‘I value this’, ‘when it got really physical and our backs were against the
wall I was at my very, very best’. Rather than looking fantastic in a 40 point win, when you learn nothing about yourself at all.

The interview, however short was particularly intense and purposeful in terms of direction and richness of data collected. Anthony demonstrated a desire and passion both with his tone and body language to clarify his values and beliefs as a coach. Upon consideration of such caring values, Anthony may be perceived to be a socially perceptive coach and a fair coach, however, such a humanistic approach must inevitably require understanding and commitment to the challenges ahead and the qualities of his players to face them.

**A caring guide to self-discovery and self-fulfilment – what could it all mean?**

Considerable hours of planning, observation, discussion and interview have provided a story or documentary about the unfolding events of the Winter at Woolton. Data elicited from early observations permitted a glimpse of the technical focus which was initially thought to underpin not only the demands of such a dynamic sport but the coaching philosophy of Anthony Baxter. Nash, Sproule and Horton (2008) acknowledge the work of the researchers Jones, Armour and Potrac (2003) in stating that coaching philosophies are generally not able to be distinguished by viewing coach’s behaviour alone. It is worth noting that the initial technical focus Anthony’s coaching style was later to be questioned within the interviews to delve deeper into his meaning of connecting and communicating with his players, thus to explain some deeper aspects of his rugby knowledge and reasoning for his actions.

If the structure of Anthony’s coaching delivery were to be critically analysed, specific consideration could be paid to the fact that he uses technical drills and practices to deliberately set up barriers at which his players would have to stop, think and work out a solution. A caring guide to self-fulfilment and self-discovery is not a name and number on the back of Anthony’s training jacket, nor is it on a sign above his office door. The small sentence of powerful meaning is etched inside him and if one is to fully analyse his philosophy then there is a need to strategically observe closely and then excavate his reasons for certain actions and possibly instil some of the values into our own coaching if they may be deemed as being useful and transferable in some way. Yes, Jones *et al* (2003) and Nash *et al* (2008) may be correct about the limitations of observation, however, if the small but important sentence had been uncovered purely through a two hour interview without the use of an observational platform then it may have had little meaning or impact as a self generated doctrine to guide his coaching behaviour. In such an instance we may not have been able to derive any useful meaning from his ideology and fully appreciate its use in Anthony’s context.
The soft and subtle interaction with his players, the meticulous drill set-up, the arm around the young winger and his willingness to explain elements of play and learning, to an outsider all provide the glue with which Anthony’s coaching philosophy is held together. Such a humanistic approach to coaching and life require significant determination as was apparent through Anthony’s hunger to learn and study, find an effective balance of work commitments with his desire to positively affect anyone who shares his desire to improve and develop. In speaking of sacrifice, one may reflect on the freezing evenings at the Eddie Waring stadium. Unluckily for Anthony he didn’t have the shelter of the roof during the sleet and snow as I did, however there was an unrelenting commitment to consider positions, deliver cues and quickly and accurately feedback to his players. It was evident to see how the barriers fabricated to stimulate learning; problem solving, which Anthony speaks of during the interviews benefitted many of the players during those sessions. Although a pair of gloves provided some comfort to the researcher, there was a constant need to overcome each of my barriers and remain motivated throughout.

**Conclusion**

This research has demonstrated how personal values and beliefs in coaching may be revealed to the team, staff and outsiders. We have witnessed Anthony’s philosophy towards his professional job bodily played out by his actions to his audience. However, this it is not a simple process to document and store for all to read – some things will be lost in the transformation from real life into this presentation of Anthony and his beliefs. A coaching philosophy must be felt, tasted, heard and seen first-hand - for meaning it seemingly has to have some kind of life. This is what I think I witnessed during my winter at Woolton.

The series of personal notes about my previous life as a head chef in a kitchen of a fine dining restaurant are intended to draw parallels between the behaviour of professionals in two different worlds; chefs and coaches. The personal observations are an attempt to acknowledge that I have witnessed, issued to others and indeed have been on the receiving end of very particular and strict guidance when high standards are to be maintained in high pressure situations; to deliver on expectations to a paying public. On this point there are stark similarities between the two worlds. The reflective personal notes are accompanied with some contextual ideas about the coaching process observed, which may be regarded as the researcher’s attempt to illustrate that there may be something that high level coaches could learn usefully from experts in other spheres, or at least that could be followed up as specific probes to investigate further the subtleties of coach behaviour.
The analysis of coaching behaviour, whether through the coach’s auto-analysis or by a visiting researcher, may not reveal a definitive coaching philosophy for that coach. A problem may lie in what is being termed as a philosophy. What seems to have been termed as a philosophy by Anthony may actually be closer to an educational statement of intent; a preferred way of teaching emerging from his experience of what seems to work best for him. His statement and what he regards as his coaching philosophy, “a caring guide to self discovery and self fulfilment” does seem to embrace his beliefs and values about the coaching he provides and is acted out in some manner in his sporting context. However, his concept of a philosophy in coaching does not appear to be wholly indicative of a traditional philosophical stance whereby human behaviours may be dictated by a doctrine, maxim or rule, such as in various religious codes or adherence to positions or beliefs that may be permitted or strictly forbidden by the doctrine, for example, in hedonism or altruism. In such a case this could become known as coaching philosophically, by keeping within the confines of the doctrine identified. By adopting a necessarily restrictive stance the coach might demonstrate their discipline of adherence to the rule, even if at times it was contrary to the outcomes of the sport or achievement at a competition. The philosophical aspect of a coaching philosophy may be to embrace and acknowledge the weakness of their philosophical stance and to think of ways to combat against them, as might a preacher persuade non-believers against claims that God does not exist. Without this kind of discipline the concept of a coaching philosophy could merely be a fashionable way to sum up an approach to teaching. Consequently there may be a risk from this position that the coach could latch on to whatever concepts they feel describes their endeavour best at the time, only to move on to the next fad that emerges as it suits them. If there is no doctrinal weakness or philosophical down-side to a stated position it may actually lack the discipline required of being a philosophy and be detrimental if used to guide concepts of coaching philosophy within coach education. A well-reasoned statement of educational intent may be the closest that is achieved by Anthony, which in itself seems honourable and no less valuable for not being philosophical.

A final outcome emerging from this research has been to provoke further thought about why people get involved with coaching – why am I a coach? For example, what are we as members of a community actually promoting when we coach under 12’s in the local football league? Why does a volunteer community coach engage with troubled youths after having a long day at the office? And how has our outlook and personal philosophy towards coaching been shaped by our experience? Consequently, it may be helpful if a coaching philosophy is thoroughly reasoned and understood by the holder with specific consideration paid to its potential effect upon others. It need not simply be an answer to a question posed by coach educators or
tutors, on the contrary, it may be considered to be the questioning of our behaviour when we attempt to provide an answer to a coaching problem.

References


**JQRSS: Acknowledgement Footnote:**

1. Authors Reflective Comment: At the time of writing Chris was completing his Dissertation as part of his BA (Hons) Sports Coaching.

2. Author Profile: Chris has since graduated with a First class honours degree and is currently studying at Liverpool John Moores University. The writing process has further developed Chris’ interest in research and he is now working towards a PhD that is concerned with exploring the role of the human sensorium within sports participation and coaching.

3. Dear reader, if this article has stimulated your thoughts and you wish to find out more about this topic the authors can be contacted on: Chris Hughes c.hughes3@2010.ljmu.ac.uk and Clive Palmer capalmer@uclan.ac.uk.