

Week 1 Lecture

Overview

Theoretical aspects of philosophy we tend to use:

- Axiology
- Ethics
- Ontology
- Phenomenology

Practical aspects of creating and using a coaching philosophy:

- What is a coaching philosophy?
- Why do you need a coaching philosophy?
- How do you write your coaching philosophy?
- Raising self-awareness and coaching philosophy;
- Understanding your environment;
- Writing your coaching philosophy.
- Using your coaching philosophy

Learning from others mistakes

A coach's practice is founded on his or her philosophy, it will affect their choices of what is right and wrong. This is extremely important in top-level sport, because there are many temptations to make short cuts (Atle Kvalsoli, 2005).

Impact of Coaches

The coach has a great deal of power and to be honest he or she does. That is why it is important to have a sound coaching philosophy to guide us when we coach which will allow us to reflect on our actions and behaviour.

Elements of Coaching Philosophy

Philosophical questions can be divided crudely into 4 types, those to do with:

- Values (Axiology)
- Morals (Ethics)
- Meaning (Ontology)
- Experience (Phenomenology)

Axiology (values)

- When coaches ask themselves the following questions they are considering their values and the area of philosophy that is axiology.
 - What is good about sport?
 - What is it about sport that makes them, athletes and all people who contribute to sport do what they do?
- We can describe two sources of values in sport and coaching, subjective and objective values.
- Subjective values – relate to what is important to individuals, or groups of individuals (coach and players).
- Objective values – the importance and significance of objects in and of themselves, such as a footy game, or the role of the coach.
- Conflicts of interest – arise when a coaches subjective and objective values are at odds.

Example 1: A coach involved in representative team selection should ensure **objective selection** criteria to avoid favouritism. These should be based on justifiable and persuasive accounts of what a good player looks like and clear evidence.

Example 2: A junior netball coach may value his or her role because it demands the application of certain qualities such as empathy, concentration, pedagogic skill, inspiration and motivation. This coach sees the coaching process as having **intrinsic value**.

Example 3: A rival netball coach may value sport and the coaching process as a way to demonstrate their superiority, or achieving recognition through winning trophies. They may be motivated by social status, financial reward, or fame. This coach sees the coaching process as having **extrinsic value**.

Most coaches possess a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic values, and they pass these on to their athletes.

Ethics

- Focuses on moral values – specifically how we treat ourselves and others, in the pursuit of our goals.
- Sporting organizations will provide a code of ethics that spell out the rights and duties of both the coach and the athletes (deontology). E.g. A player has the right not to be bullied by the coach and therefore it is the coaches duty not to act in a threatening manner. **Deontologist** have a clear idea of what is inherently right and wrong.
- **Utilitarianism** – actions are right when they result in an overall increase in goodness, pleasure or satisfaction, or a decrease in pain, suffering or badness. The ends justify the means. Gymnastics coaches may justify the robust physical treatment of junior gymnasts in terms of the eventual overall satisfaction and pleasure that will be derived from future success.
- Andrea Agassi's autobiography is a good illustration of this.

Ontology (meaning of life)

- Ontology asks fundamental questions about the meaning of life and illustrates how involvement in **social practices** and the roles we adopt shape our world! E.g. Our position in institutional frameworks such as the family, school, work place, or society.
- Coaching is a social practice, it is therefore a **way of life for some people** and is a way that they define themselves. It is their identity and for some their career.
- Coaching has been described as a hierarchical process, new coaches need to 'do their time'. Coach education has traditionally been considered as an apprenticeship

Phenomenology

- Phenomenology - Philosophical approach that deals with **conscious experience**.
- Attempts to explain **coaching from the perspective of the person through their lived experience**.
 - What is it like to be a coach?
 - What is it like to experience pressure?
 - What does fear mean to an athlete?
- Unlike psychology we do not want to be reductionist in phenomenology, we want to be able to reflect in the first person on our experiences. Psychologists might try to understand performance using ideas like stress, anxiety, motivation etc.
- Phenomenologists are keen to understand things by describing emotions, feelings and physical sensations (sensory ethnography).
- Important to note external perceptions of success in sport do not always mirror internal affect and reality.

What is a coaching philosophy

- A coaching philosophy is a **statement of what you value and how you will approach your coaching role**.
- It covers your **purpose** as a coach and how you will **approach** player development and winning.
- Your coaching philosophy consists of your major **objectives and the beliefs and principles** that you adhere to in order to achieve your objectives.
- Your coaching philosophy guides how you behave as a coach and how you interact with your athletes.
- It should reflect who you are and who you want to be.

Why do you need a coaching philosophy?

- As a coach, you need to be clear on where you are heading and how you will get there.
- Your coaching philosophy forms some guiding principles that help you to identify where you want to go and what methods you will use to get there.
- This will impact on how you design and deliver training sessions for the development of your athletes. It also guides how much emphasis you place on winning versus player development.
- A coaching philosophy can help you make the following ethical decisions:
 - Substitutions
 - Injured players
 - Bending the rules
 - Pushing players to train hard
 - Punishments

How to write a coaching philosophy?

To formalize your coaching philosophy you need to **write a statement that explains your coaching objectives and your coaching approach, which is based on your values**. This requires you to identify:

Your coaching objectives, and Your values.

Raise your self-awareness

Understanding

These questions could include:

- What is/are my objectives?
- How should I react?
- How do I react?
- What does this tell me / what should I change?

Reflection

Consider how you would answer the following questions:

- Why do you coach?
- Who do you coach?
- What kind of coach do you want to be?
- What is the most important thing to teach?
- What do you want your players to get from their sporting experience?
- How do you define success?

Understanding your environment

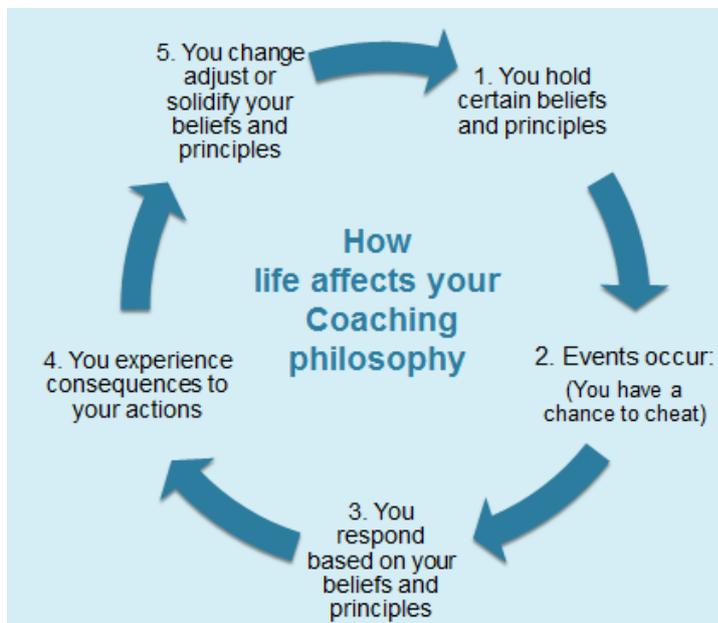
- As well as understanding yourself and your objectives, you also need to **understand your environment and the limits** that you are working with when devising a coaching philosophy.
- Who you are coaching and **where you are coaching** will impact on what you can do, and therefore must inform your philosophy.
- For instance, having a performance---focused philosophy will not be of use if you are coaching six---year olds. Being firm and expecting strict discipline may not be appropriate if you are coaching a social team. Before you identify your objectives and how you will coach your athletes, you first need to understand those athletes.

Writing a coaching philosophy

You want to have a statement that conveys the following:

- What your coaching objectives;
- The core values that will inform how you coach;
- The approach you will take to coaching your athletes.

To create this statement, identify the key elements of the three components above and start writing down statements that include these. You will probably have to revise what you write several times; try different ways of combining the components, or different phrases that get the information across. Keep going until you have a concise statement that sums up your philosophy on coaching.



For example your developing philosophy will be tested when you find yourself in situations in which you are uncertain about the best way to respond. Once you have responded, you can then evaluate the consequences of your response against your philosophy. Favorable evaluations will strengthen your philosophy, unfavorable evaluations, especially repeated ones may indicate you need to adapt your philosophy.

Some Teachers do not give much credence to this evaluative process. These teachers have philosophies that are insufficiently developed to meet the demands of Teaching. Other teachers form philosophies that are inflexible and inadequate to achieve their objectives, and some teachers adopt philosophies that are at odds with the values of society.