# 'Empowering connections': developing a coach mentoring framework

## By
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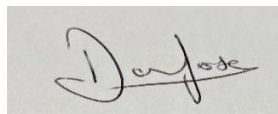
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# Abstract

Mentoring has often been advocated as a method of harnessing the influential power of experience through guidance, observation, and reflective practice, allowing coaches to become better equipped to deal with the uncertain nature of coaching. Although much of the discourse on mentoring is set in a positive light, it continues to lack conceptual clarity, with no current universal definition available. Aligned to this, specific research into the programme at the heart of this study, also highlights the need for both wider, and more contextual research. Therefore, with this research being conducted into an established programme, broadly pragmatic research methods were adopted to ensure the research was sensitive to the social, historical and political context of the enquiry.

The purpose of study one was to investigate the mentoring process from the mentee's perspective. Employing a questionnaire, the results of the study indicated a lack of clarity and understanding of the role of the mentor/mentee relationship in supporting coaching practice. Hence, building on the outcome of study one, study two interviewed four key managers within The FA with responsibility for mentoring to explore how they conceptualized the role of mentors in supporting coach development. The outcome of this study indicated an emphasis on ensuring mentors build healthy rapport with mentees to help provide clarity and understanding of the mentors role in supporting the grassroots coach. Clearly, a conceptual gap appeared to exist between what mentees were experiencing and what The FA were aiming to deliver. Consequently, study three created and presented an applied mentoring framework to support mentors in defining their role and help mentees understand the mentor/mentee relationship. Using a Delphi Study approach, the mentoring framework was shared with an independent panel of mentoring experts who provided constructive critical feedback to shape and help develop the mentoring process in context. As a consequence of this research, the mentoring framework is now employed by the FA to support the delivery of the national FA mentoring programme.

To support the research and findings further, a reflexive thread, and my own personal narrative is highlighted via the text, sketches and doodles to help the reader navigate my thoughts, reflections, and experiences on this research journey.

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Mentoring is my passion, but I have enjoyed stretching my understanding and skills despite my academic limitations and the many external 'life' constraints I have encountered on this journey. I feel I have developed so much both personally, and professionally with the support of those listed above.

In addition, I would also like to also acknowledge all those people who have helped me through my educational journey, and in so many ways. Special mentions to: Andy Somers, Steve Smithies, Mike Nolan, John Folwell, Tom Leeder, Keith Webb, Rebecca Garlick, and my entire family. All have constantly encouraged from near and far. Finally, and most importantly of all, my wife Julie. Without Julie's constant support and love especially during moments of stress and self-doubt, this would have been an impossible task. Julie, you have provided me with the motivation, love, resilience at the darkest of times to carry on.


Thank you.

I hope to use this learning experience to set up another adventure in supporting others to be the best they can be. As my personal mantra goes.

*'Inspire to Learn, Learn to Inspire.'*


Darren Moss – February 2024

# Chapter 1.

## 1.1    Why mentoring, me, and Nepal.

'You are never going to learn if you keep asking questions, listen to me, or get out'. My history teacher, 1978. I was sent out of class many times and I am not naive enough to think it was probably not very well deserved at times. However, I did have an inquisitive mind and if I was told that Zeus was addressed as the all-father even by gods who were not his natural children, I would ask why, only to be told, 'he just was, so write it down'. I met my first mentor during this time, Mr. Bull, an art teacher. After the head teacher had grown tired of finding me outside the classroom and questioning me about asking questions, he said, 'hey you like drawing don't you, maybe you should spend more time in the art block'. It was true, I did like art, a lot, and I liked Mr. Bull, but I wanted to learn. On reflection, Mr. Bull taught me a lot by not engaging me in directive teaching. He once asked me to paint something interesting based on a shape of my choice, I chose a triangle and spent the afternoon sketching ideas. He came over to my easel, said,' hey, I like that, have a little look at this, see if this helps'. It was a book on Egyptology, I used this to learn about hieroglyphs, the eye of Horus, which led me on an esoteric learning journey of painting obscure pictures based on mythology, philosophy, and history. Many years later Mr. Bull's approach resonates in my approach to teaching, coach education and tutoring.

I was pretty much put in a box at school, but it suited me at times. School football captain, county captain, London Schools Captain, forms signed at West Ham United, I was going to be a footballer, and the teachers were fine with that. West Ham also meant me getting an early train during school times or, when my parents were free, an hour and a half car journey around London's North Circular in our old Mk1 Escort twice a week, so it probably fitted both the school and me. It was only in later years did I appreciate the emotional and financial implications this must have had on my hard-working and supportive parents who sacrificed far more than just money to support me. I signed forms for West Ham the same year as this section started in 1978, aged just 14. In school football and early club football I was never coached, just told. I was quick, had a decent left foot and made decisions early, that fitted. I had spells at Spurs, Arsenal, West Ham, and

Barnet. The 'usual,' knee injury that was probably exacerbated from too much terrace running and over heavy weights ended the so-called dream with my final season in non-league football in my early twenties. Over this period, I had a few famous managers, one an ex-England international, none however, were coaches. I loved the game and playing, but my overriding memory now of being a player, was that football taught me how 'not' to mentor. Years later, following a 20+ year career in FE, HE, sport, and education, and having coached at a professional Centre of Excellence with three internationals in the ranks, managed two first team representative sides, both male and female as well as being the Head of Coach Development within a semi-professional non-league environment, I have come to appreciate Mr. Bulls approach much, much more. Even more so as an FA National Manager, 17 years as a coach educator, a University Lecturer, a father of three, and a grandfather of five. Empathetic, mentee/person-led, and supportive. In 2013, following the loss of my father-in-law in late 2009, I had the chance to witness his 25 years of voluntary work in Nepal; building a school, sponsoring a female teacher, manufacturing a water filtration plant, and supporting the Sherpa community whilst combining his love of mountains. I spent 28 days high in the Khumbu Valley, which cemented my professional approach to life. I met the teacher and climbed with her (Now the regions first female mountain guide), I spent time at the village, spoke to the Lama Ishi, the regions Buddhist spiritual leader, spent time with Sherpa's, for me, the epitome of what a mentor is, and climbed to over 19,500 feet. Sherpas may seem to be 'carriers' that in the main, support climbers logistically. However, spending time with them in their environment, they are much, much more than this, and many of their values align with mentoring. For example, it was only after our expedition finished that I discovered that one of the sherpa team had scaled Everest four times. His whole focus was on us. He went on to say:

*'We exist as a community, to guide others. These mountains are our home, life, and legacy. We treat every summit as our first, every ascent as our first; not only in respect for the mountain, but we must also respect the mountaineer, our honour is in their achievement and in sharing their journey'.* Sherpa 2013.

Regarding this academic journey at time of writing, at the start of Covid-19 lockdown; apprehensive, vulnerable, excited but at base camp, with the main climb about to start. **Darren Moss (2020).**

## 1.2   Introduction, context.

The purpose of this thesis was born out of working as a football coach and coach developer for some twenty-five years. More specifically from my (at time of writing) six years working within an inspirational, creative FA team on a well-intentioned, formalised national mentoring programme. During this time, I had a real nagging voice in my head around needing to hear the coaches voice more and their experiences from their perspective. Furthermore, to understand the 'wider' voices such as those of FA Staff to try and learn more about the impact of such a large scale, formalised mentoring programme that had cited being coach connected, and people centred. The programme cited supporting some 10,000 coaches within this time, the number of affiliate mentors rose in the same period to around 370 on the ground. Having been solely responsible for the forty plus mentors within a region of eight counties, I was acutely aware of some success stories, highlighted during the inspirational yearly Mentor Development Days held at St Georges Park, the positive feedback from mentors of the impact on the ground, and the recorded impact on the clubs we supported. However, the voice kept nagging, and following my PGCert and subsequent MSc thesis, which examined the relational impact of FA Grassroots Mentors on Coach Mentees, across the wider programme, it was clear we needed to better understand the 'what' in terms of what mentees had experienced to help inform and support the 'how' for future delivery of such a large-scale formalised programme. My MSc thesis of some thirty-eight mentees across eight counties highlighted some inspirational stories, but also a real variance in delivery, and a lack of conceptual clarity as to what the programme was and even, what they had experienced. Furthermore, 48% of the mentees within this study highlighted feeling nervous and having a sense of trepidation of working with a mentor. From this former research, mentees did in the main enjoy having support, and again, in the main, felt it helped their confidence, but there were also examples of coercive practice, cloning by the mentor and an inconsistency in approach. This was especially apparent within the initial stages of the relationship where initial rapport building should be so important, but in several cases the dyad was significantly mentor led, with the mentee uncertain as to the real purpose of the relationship other than just receiving some structured practices to boost their confidence and delivery. A valid and worthwhile outcome. However, could we be more transformative in the way we mentor/support coach mentees? If we are looking

for more cognitive creative coaches to inspire, and as cited by FA Education; produce more skilful players, offer more inspirational opportunities, and develop more transformational coaches, was there a way for us to help measure the programme better, 'How' we set the relationship off in a purposeful, reflexive, and consistent way.

As Potrac, (2014) highlighted following the first academic study into the then Club Mentor programme 2014; 'while the project focused on the mentors' experiences in delivering the pilot programme, it is suggested that further qualitative research addressing the experiences of the mentees (and other stakeholders) would provide the FA with a richer understanding of the impacts and issues related to the grassroots Club Mentor Programme'. Furthermore, Potrac discusses that there remains considerable conceptual debate concerning mentoring (i.e., what it is), limited theorising related to the structure and delivery of the mentoring provision (i.e., how it works), and significantly, a paucity of empirical evidence related to the nature of the mentoring process, especially in terms of how it is experienced and understood by those involved at the micro level of social reality (Jones *et al.,* 2009).Therefore, listening to the mentee's voices, and their experiences of the programme, whilst also considering both the mentors and FA Leaderships understanding and perception of mentoring in this context may well help support any future delivery and practice for a more consistent approach across the programme. Therefore, based on this introduction, the aim of this research and the wider objectives are:

1) To construct a framework, to develop and support the delivery of a national coach mentoring programme.

a) To critically investigate the subjective experiences of mentee coach practitioners and relevant wider stakeholders within the programme.
b) To critically analyses different mentor/mentee needs based on their level of operation and experience.
c) To create a bespoke mentoring process via this research to support future professional practice and delivery.
d) To provide recommendations on the mentoring framework for future application and direction within the programmed.

## 1.3   Methodological considerations.

Research methodology is a philosophical stance of worldview that underlies and informs the style of research (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006). Adopting a research strategy which both fits and supports the objectives of a Professional Doctorate whilst also problematising the delivery of a nationwide programme, needed considerable thought. Furthermore, the author needed to consider a methodology which would acknowledge their own position as a National Manager within the organisation (FA). Therefore, a broadly pragmatic research philosophy was adopted. This is where the researcher is sensitive to the social, historical, and political context of the inquiry and considers the moral and ethical issues that may emerge through the research process (Giacobbi Jr, Poczwardowski, & Hager, 2005). Pragmatic philosophy also argues that the most important determinant of which position to adopt, is the actual research questions themselves (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Saunders *et al.,* 2009).

Considering these methodological considerations and importance of the research questions, and whilst understanding that there is no single definition of mentoring (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2004), this study will also aim to review the impact of the FA Mentoring programme by utilising a broader relational and interactional lens. The study needs to consider the mentoring dyad further and relational impact on both mentor and mentee to help support any future FA Coach Mentoring practice within context. Generally, relationists are primarily concerned with understanding social life in terms of individuals' relationships with, as well as interconnections to one another (Crossley, 2010). And although relational ideas and thoughts can be traced back to a variety of scholars (Hegel, Marx, Simmel, Bourdieu, & Foucault), for clarity, in this context, the interactionist approach, influence, social interactions and networks relates directly to the mentors and mentees within the programme and its importance therein. In summary and for clarity, when making methodological decisions within this thesis, I was aware of the subjective nature of choosing and analysing the data for each study based on the specific research question asked. Therefore, as I was the main instrument of the research process, a multi method approach was adopted to provide a more detailed and balanced analysis of the data needed in each study. As an example, Chapter three consisted of a survey of coach mentees, and considered the logistics and wider demographic. Also, taking into consideration the Covid-19

Pandemic and the restraints on research methods at the time. Whilst Chapter four considers the FA senior managers viewpoint post Covid-19 on mentoring. A qualitatively orientated case study approach was undertaken here to understand the previously under researched area of an NGB's leadership perception of mentoring within its own coaching workplace (Hodge & Sharp, 2016; Stake,1995, 2006). Therefore, although Chapter four focused on a select case and the experience of each of the four FA Managers, a greater emphasis was placed on understanding the object of study, i.e., there interpretation and view of mentoring within the programme's delivery context, (Leeder, Russell & Beaumont, 2019).

Based on my experiences of being involved within the FA Mentoring Programme since its inception, there is also the potential for an 'Epistemological Divide' between what the FA Coach Mentors think the mentees might need and what the mentees may actually want. Grecic and Collins, (2013) have argued that coaches would have greater role clarity, functional understanding, and developmental potential if they proactively and regularly engaged with their epistemology (i.e., their core beliefs on the origins, constructions, and use of coaching knowledge). Therefore, although bridging this potential divide is not the main focus of this thesis, creating an initial clarity on the process, and understanding better what the mentees say, and what the FA Management expects may form a base for some future research in this area. Chapter five considered a pragmatic methodology by an adapted Delphi Model approach, purposively selecting an expert panel from both within and outside the sporting context of mentoring to directly test and challenge the relational framework. In research methodology and philosophy, quantitative and qualitative approaches are the two main traditional methods, but also the mixed method approach exists, which is also known as deductive/inductive (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, within this thesis, a choice of a particular method was influenced by certain factors such as: the topic to be researched; the objectives; and the specific proposed research questions themselves. The overall view, however, is to support the development of the programme by analysing for the first time the wider voices, evidence, and outcomes.
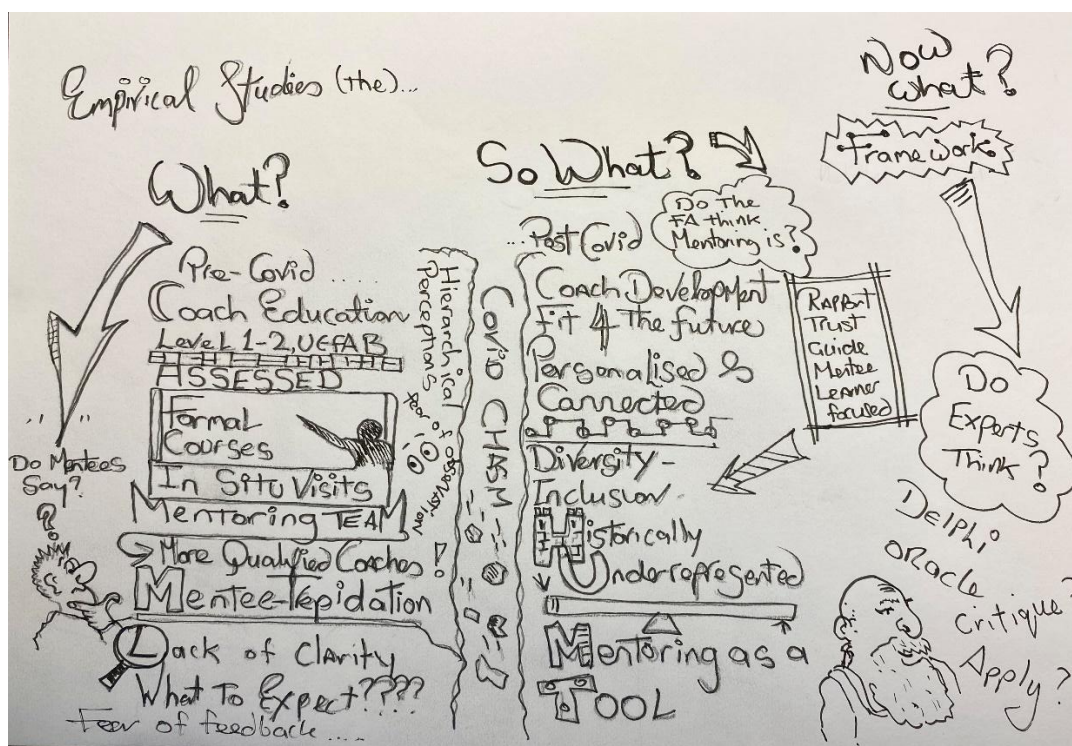
**Sketch Note 1. Methods, contemplating the studies.**

As a prelude to Chapter 1.4, this sketch note is an example of how I have used sketches, notes and mind maps throughout this body of work to help navigate my research journey. This sketch aligns not only the methodological considerations above, but also to the: what, so what, and now what of the entire work including reasoning and studies. These sketches are not time bound, e.g., this sketch does not just exist in this section, but evolves, grows and develops as my thoughts and research develops.

## 1.4    A Reflexive thread. My personal narrative.

Following on from 'Why mentoring,  me, and Nepal' and the brief introduction, and as with the first sketch note above, I wanted to continue a reflexive approach across this work, why? Because I am a reflective person, I am a doodler, illustrator, and 're-visitor' in all I do. Therefore, I wanted to bring this voice to life across this work. Being a Professional Doctorate and therefore, having the need to align my work to the impact on wider practice, my work and day job, I feel this is a good way to gauge, revisit and record the impact of the research not only on my day-to-day work, but also on me as a researcher-practitioner. By many, including my high school teachers it would seem, doodling

may be seen as a means of students losing their concentration and focus (Tadayon & Afhami, 2015). However, other studies such as those by King, (2014) have highlighted the potential for doodling and drawing to help students and learners 'visualise' their ideas and new concepts. For me, this falls closer to home and a few of these 'doodles' find their way into this work. Reflexivity can be seen as an important component in qualitative, research (Patnaik, 2013). By demonstrating reflexivity, a researcher adds further credibility to the trustworthiness and robustness of their findings (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Qualitative researchers engage in reflexivity to account for how subjectivity shapes their inquiry. Reflexivity is tied to the researcher's ability to make and communicate nuanced and ethical decisions amid the complex work of generating real-world data that reflect the messiness of participants' experiences and social practices (Finlay, 2002). In other words, the researchers own subjective perspective (or bias) is absolutely woven within any qualitative research process. Considering this further, the researcher's perspective should add positive layers for the reader. However, if we fail to attend to reflexivity properly, it may negatively impact on the understanding of the relevant and important details. Furthermore, reflexivity is the process of engaging in self-reflection about who we are as researchers, how our subjectivities and biases guide and inform the research process, and how our worldview is shaped by the research we do and vice versa (Wilkinson, 1988).

Although not a full auto-ethnographical study in context, the concept of mentoring and my lived experiences of it are well embedded in social research and I feel noting key reflections as the researcher will help my thinking, and my processing by 'wearing some of this on my sleeve'. For me personally therefore, taking a reflexive approach so as not to only reflect on what went well, or what went wrong, but by embedding reflexive practice to record my considerations and thoughts to help future mentoring practice will I hope; help both me and the reader, sense make. With regards to my own personal narrative, whether reflecting on a lifetime event, an experience, or research literature, we evoke and compose work to try and tell the stories that give our lives and therefore, our work meaning. Personal narratives may be more meaningful than other types of oral narratives (e.g., fictional narratives) because personal narratives are rooted in one's social interaction, cultural setting, and personal experiences (McCabe *et*

*al.,* 2008). We can refer to our 'narrative' as a more encompassing term that explores how people make sense of life and situations through the act of narrating, (Rodríguez-Dorans, & Jacobs, 2020). Therefore, lots of what is to follow is based around what I observe on this journey, what I experience personally on this journey and how I reflect on the  social interactions that shape mentoring in the context of the study. Wolcott, (2011) describes ethnography as the process of learning about culture as manifested through distinct and observable patterns of socially shared behaviours. Capturing the things, I 'notice', learn and being able to document these will help me tell the story. Personal narrative: is a method of writing and depicting personal experiences, often written in the first person with a more relaxed, non-formal approach, and often does not fit the typical criteria of narrative (Langellier, 1999). Considering this further, I hope many of my personal experiences, doodles and reflexive, critical explanations will weave a path throughout this somewhat Himalayan expedition.

## 1.5    Overview – FA coach education structure (2014 – 2020). Context towards the initial aims for the research.

The concept of 'In-Situ' learning has developed where less teacher-centred approaches create learning environments where students are motivated to learn in rich, relevant, and real-world contexts (Herrington & Herrington, 2006). Within the Football Association (FA) Grassroots department, the phrase 'in-situ' has become much more prevalent in coach development terms. Up until recently (2019), forty FA County Coach Developers (CCD's) Managed by six Regional Coach Development Managers, delivered the bulk of the FA Grassroots Departments formal coach education courses; namely, Levels one to three. These courses included a minimum of three in-Stu visits per candidate at Level 3, and two in-situ visits at Level 2. Currently there are 20 FA PE Staff including 4 managers across the country supporting trainee teachers in both secondary and primary education as well as coaches to develop their understanding of how to build relationships within their personal learning plans.

Also included in the wider departmental work programme is the 'Developing Coaches through Mentoring' Course, which was delivered by the FA Coach Mentor Team delivered by a team of 8 Regional Coach Mentors who oversaw a team of part time FA Coach Mentors deployed across 50 county

Football Associations. Whilst the introductory course in mentoring qualified approximately seven hundred coaches a year, many voices within the organisation believed that the course was underutilised in terms of embedding the concept of mentoring in the grassroots game to elevate and support the development and improve coaching. At time of writing, (April 2020) the FA education department are introducing the phrase 'Personalised and Connected Learning' as a lens for their approach to the new FA Strategy and this would seem to initially connect well with the concept of mentoring as a tool to coach learning.

Historically, much of the coach education literature has tended to treat mentoring practice as uncomplicated and a one-dimensional dyad, encompassing a naïve portrayal of knowledge sharing (Bloom 2013; Bloom *et al.,* 1998; Jones, Harris, & Miles, 2009), however, in wider and more specific mentoring research mentoring can be conceptualised as formal or informal in nature. Cushion (2015), proposes informal mentoring is frequent and ongoing, referring to observations and interactions with other coach practitioners without oversight from an organisation. Alternatively, formal mentoring programmes are often controlled by National Governing Bodies (NGB's) where dyadic mentorships are structured and monitored through the obtainment of objectives (Sawiuk, Taylor & Groom, 2018). It is only in recent years (since 2013) that the FA itself has seen the importance and value of mentoring in a more formalised way. Although a formalised and national programme has been in place since this time, the benefits and research has been in the main anecdotal and as such, the programmes potential and its impact are little understood. In short, it has delivered a formalised programme but with little research into the mentorship experiences within the structure itself. Therefore, within the FA Coach Mentor Programme, there has been a potential disparity and lack of understanding of what the mentoring support may look like for grassroots coach mentees, and more specifically, across the non-intentional assistant and Level one qualified coaches, and even the arguably more intentional Level two and Level three UEFA B coaches. Understanding the impact on both from within the programme could have a significant bearing on future mechanisms and theory of how the programme is delivered and how coaches are supported. Being a neophyte parent coach may well have many different challenges to a coach who has completed the level 1 and 2 coaching awards and who is now embarking on a

UEFA qualification. Understanding what good mentoring practice is in this context, what is transferable between FA and wider sport programmes has never been fully researched or understood in this context.

The FA Coach Mentor Programme supported a network of 327 mentors (2019) across fifty county football associations and supported coaches in-situ, at their club both pre and post formal learning qualifications. It also supported coaches within the BAME, Girls and Women and grassroots club environments. Although a formalised programme, the support was offered with an informal approach, with most mentees being volunteers. Clutterbuck, (2004) argues that there is a need for both formal and informal learning as the formal provides an essential structure, meaning and direction, but also states that individual relationships will flourish when allowed to do so as informally as possible. As Leeder and Sawiuk, (2020) propose, mentoring is frequently conceptualised as either a formal or informal 'learning situation' for coaches, the wider nuances of mentorship (e.g., mentor behaviours, development of rapport and trust) within the coach learning process are often overlooked. The FA coach mentor programme potentially provides an example of this, an obvious (NGB) formalised programme but with little evidence and therefore the understanding of the nuanced behaviours witnesses, observed and experienced on the ground.

There is some evidence that the FA Coach Mentor Programme provided a tangible service to grassroots coaches on the ground as mentioned in the FA Coach Mentor Programmes Feedback Report, (2017) as to how the FA Coach Mentors have reviewed the impact, they have had on the grassroots mentees they support. However, feedback from the mentees themselves although positive, has in the main been anecdotal. This evidence from within the programme often mentions a marked improvement in the mentees 'self-confidence' and/or 'reflection' however, there is little research to either define or underpin why this is, within the sparse formal research undertaken, namely (Potrac 2014; Leeder *et al.,* 2019, FA Coach Mentor Survey 2017). To support this further, sport coach mentors receive limited professional development, training, and ongoing support opportunities for navigating trust relations in their work, (Leeder & Sawiuk, 2021). This has resulted in Potrac, (2016), and among others such as Leeder and Sawiuk, (2021), arguing the need for research that better prepares 'mentors to understand more and gain the trust and "buy-in" of

those they engage with. Furthermore, much of this valuable research comes directly from the mentor's perspective and potential bias and with no adopted or created theoretical framework to support the wider practice. This initial research should help us better understand the mechanics and indeed culture of mentoring and its potential impact on delivery, training, and practice for dissemination within the Education department.

The bulk of this desk top study, and chapter one of the wider thesis, was conducted during the Covid – 19 lockdown period of 2020 and looks to understand the bigger picture, via wider coach education research and specific FA Coach education delivery and asks the question around what kind of coach the system is trying to produce. It also draws upon wider mentoring research as well as the former FA mentoring programme to help understand any commonalities in practice that may support any national mentoring framework in this context.

## 1.6 Covid – 19, The FA restructure and the impact on FA coach education (Early 2020).

In March 2020, Mark Bullingham the FA CEO, conducted a 'Town Hall' conference to all FA Staff. The impact of Covid-19 on the Association was to be substantial. Loss of revenue from England matches, the use (and outsourcing) of the Wembley National Stadium, the cancellation of all FA Coach Education Delivery, and the impact on income streams via other stakeholders and partners pointed to a potential 300-million-pound deficit. This also called for an immediate seventy-five-million-pound annual budget reduction. On the 29th of June 2020 it was announced that 124 redundancies were to impact the business, with the majority coming directly within the FA Education department. 42 staff from within the County Coach Developer, PE Unit and Regional Mentor team were placed at risk. Also, the FA Coach Mentor Programme and its 327-part time FA Coach Mentors were suspended. Any FA Coach Mentors who wanted to be considered for future mentoring work once the landscape was constructed, were asked to forward their details centrally. Mentoring work then ceased across the department for the entire lockdown period. In alignment with the impact of Covid-19 across the business within this period, the four year 'Fit for the Future' strategy was

launched and delivered to staff. Within the aims and objectives and to fit to the FA's new 'Future State'. The following five points were highlighted:

- Adopt a Learner Centric Approach, built on the needs of learners and the game.
- Quality and support a more diverse coaching workforce throughout the game.
- Reduce the suite of qualifications, with a more accessible entry point into coaching.
- Develop a strong CPD portfolio to develop manage encourage ongoing learning.
- Deliver and manage an FA learning experience platform that provides a personalized experience for users that is agile, flexible, and responsive.
- Within the personalized and connected learning experiences as a tactic were the further areas below.
- Develop brilliant insight built around needs of the learners.
- Develop a dynamic curriculum, a rich and integrated offer.
- Establish an adaptable, skilled workforce supported by a positive workplace culture.
- Be digital first to support learning.
- Provide expert operations and relations that engage effectively.

All to provide World Class coach development.

As of September 2020, the FA Grassroots Delivery team now consists of four super regions: North, South, East, and West. Within these super regions are sub regions where each region now has a national lead, and six regional coach developers. Two Coach Developers, for Education (PE Unit), two coach developers for Girls and women, and two coach developers for Diversity and Inclusion. Each of the four regions has a National Lead with overall responsibility for a specific target area, namely, Education, Girls and women, Diversity and Inclusion and Mentoring. Mentoring will sit across all areas and fits into the personalised and connected experiences highlighted within the strategy. Albeit with a much-reduced headcount following the re-structure, mentoring is seen as a fundamental tool to support the development of the grassroots coaching workforce.

So, the question remains, what is mentoring in this context?

***Reflexive Thread:***

*As highlighted at the end of this chapter, four months into my research and studies, I was forced to pause, reflect, and adjust my work aligned to the impact on Covid – 19 and the restructure, as when I started my initial notes and ethics plans into this doctoral journey the mentor programme existed in its former guise. Within the process listed above, I was made redundant from my role as an FA Regional Mentor. My team of forty-two FA Coach Mentor staff in the East of England were suspended, and all mentor contracts across the country expired in June 2020. Furthermore, all FA Education's full-time coach development workforce were put 'At Risk'. Subsequently, following three further months of real uncertainty, rounds of individual and group consultation and for me personally, three separate interviews, I was successful in obtaining a regional coach development role within the same region (East) From September 1st, 2020. Sadly, forty of my full-time colleagues and friends were not so fortunate. So, a new role, a different regional demographic, and a realignment regarding mentoring in terms of numbers and target audience. Mentoring remains a real focus and although the structure has changed my role and region significantly, the aims and objectives for this research still aligns to the FA 'future state' and objectives laid out in the 'Fit for the Future' strategy. At time of writing, I have been asked to support the national lead (Mentoring) in my work in defining a new mentoring approach for the business following these changes and across the FA coach development teams having already completed an MSc around the FA Mentoring delivery, and in currently undertaking this doctoral research. Although handed this opportunity adversely, this gives me real tangibility in developing a coherent framework and in ensuring the applied ness of the work aligns directly to FA Mentoring Practice. My research will dovetail into my full-time role to challenge and critique current practice and to utilise mentoring as a main enabler to the objective of creating a personalised and connected learning experience for all. I have to say, this has been a worrying few months, and it has 'wobbled the wheels' a bit with uncertainty as per my Professional Doctorate, however, this change may well help me align my research directly to future working practice.*

## 1.7    Historic (FA) Football Association coach education context.

Historically, the FA's coach education programme was centred on football coaching and involved the attainment of qualifications recognised and awarded solely by the FA. Initial qualifications included the FA Preliminary coaching badge and full badge awards up until 1996 when coaching levels were awarded for level 1, level 2, and level 3 respectively. The pathway was again reviewed in the early 2000's when the level 1 and level 2 awards were NQF National Qualifications Framework (NQF) the level 3 qualification was accredited on the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) along with the UEFA A license and UEFA Pro License. (Allison, Abraham, & Cale, 2016). Further changes followed to the structure around 2010 with the adaption and implementation of the FA Future Game Document, a technical guide for young player development. The document laid out a philosophy for creative, players and coaches based on an innovative playing philosophy.

Amongst the reasons for change was the perceived need to develop the technical competency of young players and therefore to support this message the FA introduced new awards; the FA Youth Awards, Modules 1, 2 and 3. The final piece of the youth award pathway was the creation of the Advanced Youth Award, which is the equivalent of the UEFA A for youth development. Chapman et al., (2019) reference how FA courses were later influenced by the NVQ framework, which embraced learning objectives. Additionally, the development of the FAYA (FA Youth Awards) somewhat aligns to the concept of problem posing education where tutors provide opportunities for coaches to engage in dialogue on courses. Furthermore, the FAYA encouraged coaches and tutors to embrace a pedagogy, which used representative case-study scenarios. Similarly, participants reported that tutors sought to challenge coaches on courses by using question and answer approaches rather than tutor led instruction. However, as a FAYA tutor and an advocate of the course myself at this time, I remain unsure if my tutor training equipped me sufficiently to understand the depth and academic underpinning to best support the coaches on the courses. I drew on my experiences as a coach and educator to guide and support, I also undertook self-directed research to support this rather than rely specific coach educator training.

In 2014 building on these courses the England DNA was introduced, the DNA was produced to establish a world class approach to player development to

support the England team's pathway. Core principles: Who we are, how we Play, the future England Player, how we coach and how we support were introduced to support coach education and player development. The Youth Awards 1, 2 and three were removed but with some content absorbed into the mainstream Level 1, 2 and 3 courses. At time of writing, 2020, the FA is undertaking a restructure of its FA Education Division. The Level 1, Level 2, UEFA B, and other courses are under review. Level 2 will become UEFA C. One of the lenses currently being used is 'To Provide a Personalised and Connected Learning Experience'. Although this current adaption is 'fluid' at present, personalised and connected learning as a concept does raise some interesting questions as to how this may be achieved and its perceived benefit to coaches? *Is the classroom or video call the best place to adapt such a complex and nuanced personalised approach?*

As already mentioned, the use of esoteric language, learning theories adapted or borrowed from other fields and broader education could well be impacting on the success of coach education programmes and this includes FA Education. Thompson, Potrac, and Jones, (2013) highlight that coaching and learning to coach involves a myriad of dynamic, contextual, and political variations, tensions and social dilemmas that make it highly situation specific. Personalised? Gilbert, Gallimore and Trudel, (2009) refer to the fact that coaches spend most of their time coaching when compared with the amount they spend participating in certification programs and this again indicates that we need to understand much more about the potential of learning on the ground to support the formal learning better rather than to try and just extend on current more formal coach education. Maybe then, the starting place for such unique conceptual development and understanding needs to be grounded in practice and empirically supported, (Stodter & Cushion, 2017). I feel the FAYA awards were well received 'because' they mirrored and highlighted more issues that the coach could relate too than the former more structured courses. They were more 'personalised and connected' to the learner's experiences. They aligned to the multifaceted tasks coaches undertake. Therefore, taking all this into consideration, understanding coach development and how it works best in practice has been an area of heightened interest within the sports coaching field over recent years. At present, we are aware that coaches encounter situations for learning in variable ways, with current thinking proposing learning to coach through practical experience,

observations, and interactions with others is inevitable within sporting environments (Cushion, 2015; Stodter & Cushion, 2017). Some recent specific research supports this. In July 2020 Barnham Raynor submitted their commissioned FA National Grassroots Coaching Survey research outcomes internally. The survey included both qualitative and quantitative research across 7,586 current grassroots coaches, 1,525 ex-grassroots coaches and 1,094 non-grassroots coaches. Among the findings from the qualitative research seven key points were listed and they included the following:

- Current coaching Qualifications are not fit for purpose, given the realities and the broader role of a 'coach'.
- A need for better ongoing communication with grassroots coaches, especially in the 'early days' many feel isolated and face a steep learning curve.
- No coaches felt truly 'engaged' with the FA. The vast majority have no contact beyond initial qualification.
- There is a call to 're-work' current coaching provision and resource to make support more accessible, valuable, and bitesize.

Other interesting findings included the fact that over a quarter of the coaches are in their first two years of their journey but almost a third have coached for almost ten years or more. 14% of coaches were deemed 'at risk' of dropping out and although within this there would be some expected dropout, 36% of these coaches do not feel supported by the FA. Within the quantitative results, 'Coaches receive support from another experienced coach at club, FA Course tutor and Mentors. Although 25% claim to receive no support at all. Of those who received support:

- 43% from more experienced coaches in club
- 35% from FA Tutor
- 20% from FA Mentor
- 16% County Coach Developer
- 8% County FA Staff
- 6% Other (friend, chairperson, official

## 1.8   Initial thoughts to consider.

As indicated in the Barnham Raynor, (2020) research, the FA need to be visible, agile, and adaptable to suit the evolving field of coach education and more so, in understanding the coach's needs. Mentoring is one alternative to the historic 'train and certify' approach, to develop coaches more effectively, but as this research highlights, any coach education programme on a national scale needs to take the learner needs into consideration or we fall into the same trap of assuming and constructing support mechanisms in isolation and away from real lived coaching experience on the ground.

Whilst the former FA coach mentoring programme was well established and had national coverage, the lack of an agreed and coherent process especially at the outset of the relationship to support a large part time mentoring workforce arguably impacted on its ability to be a more effective coach development tool. Loose guides were apparent from a national perspective, but nothing tangible supported the process on the ground.

To make learning 'Personalised and Connected' it must support coach learners to be critical thinkers, connecting to the FA coach developers and importantly, the learning in their world and to their direct lived experiences. The internal research from Barnham  Raynor indicated that 43% of neophyte coaches sought their initial support from more experienced coaches, often located within their own club. Consequently therefore, if these experienced coaches were supported by the FA centrally, then some tangible practice based on need may be transferred to support coaches on the ground whilst building a legacy of club-based mentors. Reflecting further, whilst the Clutterbuck and Lane, (2004) Phases of Mentoring Model was referenced at strategic FA level with reference to FA mentoring practice, it was never disseminated in any detail or a useable tool or reference. With its phases of, Building Rapport, Setting Direction, Progression, Winding Up and Moving and with the concept of legacy within, this may have been a much more tangible way to produce club-based support on the ground which would support the Barnham Raynor findings. However, the model was not largely, or uniformly distributed. The concept of supporting existing experienced grassroots coaches to mentor less experienced coaches is supported by Leeder, Russell and Beaumont, (2019) who highlight the need to explore in greater depth the process of learning to mentor and the specific facets

which influence this developmental process. Reflecting on this, if mentoring is to be fully utilised and effective, it is vital that mentor learning and development is prioritised (Scandura & Williams, 2001), and by creating mentors on the ground who can support locally would seem a viable outcome and priority for any large-scale mentoring programme aiming to be both personalised and connected.

One of the strongest emerging messages from the initial programme thus far via internal FA Coach Mentor reports, is in building coaches' self-confidence, addressing trepidation and also the importance of building rapport which aligns to Clutterbuck, (2004), in mentoring having beneficial outcomes characterised by support, trust and mentee reflection and furthermore, to coaches feelings of acceptance and confirmation (Noe, 1998), as well as the potential to directly impact on mentee self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Nash, (2014) highlights coaches work in very many different environments e.g., within the Football Association (FA) there are different activities, ages, and contexts. Some of these environments are more controlled than others depending on many factors including the level and age of participants. Therefore, considering coaching more widely, and its many nuances, understanding what the coaches, feel, need, and indeed experience in their own context would seem of importance.

**Some further considerations:**
- If we can identify what has worked well and not so well from a mentee perspective nationally, this may help us determine what support coaches are seeking and/or need?
- What does 'Personalized and Connected Learning' look like and what do coach mentees think this looks like based on their experiences?
- Taking into consideration the perceived nervousness, lack of confidence and trepidation, how do we deal with this relationally? Are we, for example, practice before a person driven in our approach?
- Good mentoring practice in this context, what is it and what has worked from a mentee perspective?
- What mentoring support do grassroots coaches' want, rather than what we think they want?

This desk top study has gone someway to understanding the changing landscape and the initial impact of the FA mentoring programme. 'In addition,

early indications of where it may be able improve its mechanisms for even more tangible and credible support to coaches on the ground, and towards supporting the future coaches it needs to facilitate. It also highlights from wider research where, as the country's largest sporting NGB supporting our national sport, it too needs to understand far better how coach education and development may need to adapt to address coach learners needs. However, the impact of Covid-19, the new 'Fit for the future strategy' FA Coaching strategy and commissioned research, shows the FA's willingness to change and address these issues. Within this research, the next step must be to ask the mentees who have been part of the FA national mentoring programme specifically, to better understand some of their lived experiences and expectations to fully appreciate both the real benefits and limitations of the programme. As no research has ever taken place to understand the mentees perspective and with some 10,000 coaches already affected, then this is fundamental to help understanding what a theoretically grounded mentoring framework may look like in practice.

# Chapter 2. Literature Review.

**Coach education and mentoring in wider practice.**

## 2.1    Formal Coach Education – A brief overview.

Formal coach education is in the main concerned with the delivery of an array of (NGB) National Governing Body awards and structures and as such is organised, accredited, assessed, tutor led and directed, (Crisp, 2018). Traditionally, coach developers have focused their role on mediated 'formal' education (coaching awards and degree programmes) and to a lesser extent on 'informal' opportunities (for example through clinics, seminars, mentoring and communities of practice). Mediated coach education (especially in formal learning situations) is often classroom-based, assessment focused, and qualification based, (Nash, 2012). Formal coach education has been subject to much academic scrutiny with previous courses described as decontextualised (i.e. divorced from the coaches own coaching context), inadequate (i.e. failing to meet learners' needs) and bureaucratic (Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009; Sawiuk, Taylor, & Groom, 2016; Chapman, Richardson, Cope & Cronin, 2019) However, Coach education/training and subsequent continuing coach development is still considered to be essential to both sustaining and improving the quality of sports coaching (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003). Although much of this research shines the light on the importance many may place on formal coach education, the question remains unanswered as to what is needed in terms of developing the coaches of the future, expert coaches, who can support players, athletes and the diverse environments in real terms moving forward.  When we ask therefore, what we need to develop this expert coach of the future, research throws back to us a plethora of skills and attributes including: curiosity, experience, formal courses, playing experience and work ethic, (Abraham, Collins & Martindale 2006; Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2004) and the complexity of this variety may indicate why many feel current and past formal coach education has not had the sustainable, influential and measurable impact required.

To understand coaching and coach learning needs, we need to understand the complex environments and the landscape coaches operate in. Potrac & Jones (2009) refer to the micropolitical action within coaching as an 'unfolding story' and

this once again highlights the complexities of the coaching arena and transferring this in its entirety to a classroom setting, is a difficult and complex undertaking. Nelson, Cushion and Potrac, (2013) state that one explanation within literature for the limited impact of coach education arguably lies in its having been designed using a 'top-down approach'. From reviewing and analysing historic and wider literature, there would seem to be a paucity of research from the coach mentees perspective with regards to the impact on them from working within formalised coach mentoring programme. However, more recently, the sports coaching field has encountered a rhetorical "rush to mentoring" (Bailey, Jones, & Allison, 2019), with literature that explores sports coach mentorship steadily increasing (e.g., Bloom, 2013; Chambers, 2015). However, the mentees voice is still lacking in many research projects. Therefore, it would seem logical to consider further the mentee coach learners' experiential journey more when planning, developing, or constructing any coach education. To support this further; research suggests that coaches learn more from practical experience and interaction with other coaches (Carter & Bloom, 2009), so there is a need to take formal coach education out of the classroom and onto the track, gym, pool, or court (Nash, 2014). Stodter and Cushion, (2017) add to this by saying, at the very least, formal learning provision needs to begin to acknowledge the complexity of learning in its design and delivery, with a more sophisticated 'pedagogy of coaches' at its core. Furthermore, much of the research undertaken into formal coach education highlights that whilst the attendance of courses is high, the impact of formal coach education may be somewhat limited (Abraham and Collins 2011; Abraham, Collins, & Martindale 2006; Chesterfield, Potrac & Jones 2010; Lemyre, Trudel & Durrand-Bush, 2007). Furthermore, Stodter and Cushion, (2017), Cushion and Nelson, (2013) highlight the fact that coaching has tended to recycle learning theories from other domains and present idealistic representations and prescriptions for practice, for example situated learning, communities of practice, and problem-based learning.

Potentially then, one of the main challenges for all sport National Governing Bodies (NGB's) is the transference of consistent, lucid messages and theories to support coaches throughout their coach education journey by stripping back some of the wood to help coaches determine who they are, what they need and the importance of understanding their own athletes' development within their chosen

sport. To highlight the complexities further, Cushion, Griffiths, and Armour, (2019) mention how much contemporary research remains coach centric, neglecting the coach educator themselves. They further highlight, the limited research considering coach educators has taken an instrumental approach addressing issues such as training and support, skills and personal development, or recruitment of coach educators (Abraham *et al.,* 2013; Nash & Collins, 2006). Consequently, there has been little research that seeks to analyse the coach educator in depth or position them within the broader relational system of coach education. Taking this into consideration, the lack of research into the deliverers of courses only compounds the problem of understanding what coaches need and what coach educators think they need.

Navigating formal coach education, its literature, its impact, and effectiveness is an ever-growing area for research. Abraham and Collins, (2011) speak of the potential over use of esoteric language, hierarchical language, and how some organisations may use this to paper over some of the cracks, adding a covering veneer to the already many existing layers. The authors also refer to a need for breadcrumbs to help navigate and support the proposal of scaffolding a clearer model by 'tidying the field'. A question here is, if this is a reflection on how the literature defines formal coach education, then what does this mean for the coach who is trying to learn? How can a daunting and hard to navigate journey entice learners to learn and know more? Dohme *et al.,* (2019) suggests that coach developers can indeed raise coaches' aspirations by explicitly outlining the positive impact they can have on the holistic development and well-being of athletes and others involved in their development. Dohme et., al go on to say that it may be necessary that coach developers to clearly communicate this information to foster an enhanced sense of purpose and duty in coaches of all ages and developmental stages. Once again, demonstrating the importance of training, support, and personal development needs of coach educators (Abraham *et al.,* 2013).

It could be argued that any profession should be built upon the foundations of effective education and continuing professional development (CPD) (Armour 2010), but the idiosyncrasies, nuances, and specific environments need to be at the heart of the bedrock. Coaching and learning to coach require a context or coaching-specific 'coach learning' theory (Cushion & Nelson, 2013). Speaking of

wider learning in a social environment, Rodriquez *et al.,* (2013) speak of students coming into the classroom unprepared and reference their initial curiosity as being 'under-stimulated'. As a coach educator I too have witnessed the 'I am here because I have to be here' approach, the authors speak of the impact of learner's busy lives impacting on their engagement and learning. Do we do enough pre-course to both stimulate and spark curiosity? Especially when as Dohme *et al.,* (2019) state, coach developers can indeed raise aspirations and a sense of purpose in coaches. Can we link the learner's world to that of coach education better, parents, players coaches? Linking learner value into the fabric of delivery may create more solid initial foundations. Chapman *et al.,* (2019) refer to coaches' experiences 'decades' ago in the 1980's and 1990's where they describe 'three distinct memories' of coach education courses. These memories included 'running around a lot (routines)…how well you can almost replicate the tutors when it's your turn (rules) and…the need to demonstrate practical skills (regulations)'. My own personal experiences within formal coach education have shown some tendencies to towards this approach across a few sports into the early 2000's. Specially to set routines, rules, and replication of practice to pass a course. I remember waiting to go into a 1-2-1 with the educator to 'tell me where I went wrong'. We have come some way since then, but this may again highlight where we miss connecting to the learner's curiosity and engagement.

## 2.2 What kind of coaches are the FA trying to produce and what is coach expertise in this context?

Regarding expertise in coaching, Nash, Martindale, Collins, and Martindale, (2012) state that whilst much of the research until 1993 was behaviourally orientated, the complexity of expertise in coaching and some of the cognitive demands of it were starting to be recognised. Abraham, Collins, and Martindale, (2006) relate to a shift in the definition of expertise within coaching research in coaching practice and development reveals a position that directly or indirectly infers that coaching is, fundamentally, a decision-making process. Nash and Collins, (2006) provide a summary of the key themes that emerge consistently across disciplines such as chess, music, clinical diagnosis, and sport: 1) Expertise is domain specific and developed over a prolonged period of time 2) Experts recognise patterns faster than novices 3) Expert knowledge is structured to allow easier recall 4) Experts sort problems into categories

according to features of their solutions 5) Experts initially are slower to solve problems than non-experts but are faster overall 6) Experts are more flexible and are more able to adapt to situations 7) Experts develop routines to allow processing capacity to be focused on ongoing environments 8) Experts take deeper meanings from cues than novice. Given the diversity of parties interested in examining the education or learning of coaches, complete consensus regarding the terminology used to describe the ways in which coaches learn to perform their work is difficult. Whilst appreciating the expert statements above, does a grassroots coach need to be an expert to perform their valuable work? Coaches, like teachers, do not work in isolation; their effectiveness depends on individual and group interactions, (Mallett *et al.,* 2009).

If we align to and agree with the premise that coaching is fundamentally a decision-making process, (Nash et al., 2012), and that coaching and 'learning to coach' involves a myriad of dynamic, contextual and political variations, tensions and social dilemmas that make it highly situation specific, (Thompson *et al.*, 2013), then surely, we need a coach education/development approach that directly engages coaches in these coaching specifics and relates them to their own specific environment. To support this further, Cote' and Gilbert, (2009) state that, to be successful, coaches must interact regularly with their athletes, and assistant coaches, parents, and other professionals, none of which aligns with a purely classroom-based approach. Furthermore, standardised, content-driven instruction based on rather simplistic views of learning has made way for shifts towards more participatory, 'learner centred' perspectives (Dempsey, Cope, Richardson, Littlewood, & Cronin, 2021). As a licensed coach educator with 17 years practice and added to attending several coach educations courses of various levels over the last thirty years, I would agree that coaches that feel the learning directly links to their own coaching world and experiences connects better. Helping coaches conceptualize their practice, recognise patterns and importantly, structure recall maybe traits that are attributed by some to 'expertise' but also aligns to experience. However, despite an increasing emphasis on the processes and structures through which coaches learn and develop their knowledge, the evidence bases on which to develop optimal learning opportunities is limited (Williams, Alder, & Bush, 2016; Culver, Werthner & Trudel, 2019) and therefore, formal coach education remains a heavily contested subject.

Cote' and Gilbert, (2009) take the view that coaching expertise refers to specific knowledge in particular contexts and that a specific knowledge base provides the foundation for expertise. Second, effective coaches are those who demonstrate the ability to apply and align their coaching expertise to athletes and situations to maximize athlete learning outcomes. In other words, one can be considered an effective coach if he or she demonstrates coaching effectiveness (as measured by context-specific athlete outcomes). A focus on learner outcomes is consistent with the most current views on effective teaching. Finally, coaches who demonstrate coaching effectiveness over an extended period of time (i.e., "consistent application" in our definition) may then be considered expert coaches. Traditionally coach education has taken a train and certify approach to coach development and have presented coach development in a decontextualised manner that does not adequately prepare coaches for the realities of coaching practice (Cushion *et al.,* 2003). However, in recent years the FA have recognised the limitations of such approaches and introduced formal coach education courses that have attempted to utilize the coaching contexts of candidates to support their learning through in-situ assessments supported by the development of a formal national mentoring programme. However, if we can relate these real-life skills to their coaching effectiveness, and the undoubted time they have spent in honing these skills, then it may be argued, they may be considered experts in particular areas of their coaching. At the very least, they are making certain skills and attributes relatable. The coaches feeling of being valued in the field may also be enhanced. Could this support their curiosity to learn more? Vracheva, Moussetis and Abu-Rahma, (2019) highlight that enhancing curiosity and engagement for students can help them seek eudemonic outcomes on their learning journey. Creating environments and conditions for students to build character and wellbeing goes a long way to create curious coaches on the road that may lead to expertise in certain areas. Therefore, institutional visits may well be a step to supporting coaches in their own environment, but how does being 'visited' observed, make them feel?

Coach education/training and subsequent continuing coach development is considered essential to both sustaining and improving the quality of sports coaching (Cushion *et al.,* 2003). Coach development is assumed as an all-encompassing term that refers to the process leading towards enhanced

expertise. This learning occurs from accessing a range of opportunities (informal to formal). Attempting to support this development, coach education systems around the world have been developed and are in a constant process of renewal and reconstruction Mallett *et al.,* (2009). Nelson, Cushion and Potrac, (2006) highlight that formal coach-learning programmes have been widely criticised. Importantly, this evidence is largely based on the key assumption that formal provision of coach learning has been an educational endeavour. Formal coach learning programmes could be more appropriately labelled coach training or even indoctrination in certain cases. This myriad of opinions of what coach education is or should be makes determining what is needed in an evolving FA context interesting and complex when also considering the views and thoughts of the coach themselves.

However, as already mentioned, learning occurs in many different contexts and much of it informally (Nelson *et al.,* 2006), coaching research indicates that practitioners learn through various avenues, including previous experience as an athlete, informal mentoring, practical coaching experience, plus interaction with peer coaches and athletes (Leeder, Russell, & Beaumont 2019; Abraham, Collins, & Martindale 2006; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004). Time spent on formal and nonformal learning programmes is dwarfed by the hours spent as an athlete and coach (Gilbert, Cote' & Mallett, 2006) and as such coach education is moving towards a more informal and contextual approach to address and support coaches learning. However, for NGB's, coach educators and organisations to manage the learning that occurs in these less formal situations is somewhat difficult and time consuming, with both micro (individual) and macro (contextual/cultural) factors interweaving to either enable or prevent meaningful learning from occurring (Cushion, 2015; Stodter & Cushion, 2017).

One of the ways in which coach education has developed to accommodate more informal approaches is via in-situ visits to compliment the formal course structures. Cushion, (2015) states, attempting to facilitate experiential learning opportunities through appropriate pedagogical mechanisms would appear logical, to develop coaches in a relevant and consistent manner in situ. The challenge for the coach educator is then in personal bias, NGB directives, and real-life experiences. Also, in-situs linked to courses are inextricably linked to course criteria. Complex indeed if we are trying to be 'personalised and

connected'. If we make coach education more personalised, it could be argued over time that this could lead to more domain specific expertise. Crisp, (2018) states, there is now much more emphasis on self-directed learning, non-formal coach learning, which incorporates a variety of methods such as workshops, courses, and general continuous professional development (CPD). Many National Governing Bodies (NGB's) are developing their delivery to support coaches out in the field. The concept of 'In-Situ' learning has developed where less teacher-centred approaches create learning environments where students are motivated to learn in rich, relevant, and real-world contexts (Herrington & Herrington, 2006). Speaking specifically about FA Education and learner feedback, Chapman *et al.,* (2019) highlight how courses now include in-situ visits, which enable learning to be more personal, and include regular opportunities for reflection, in which coaches can consider the relevance of new knowledge to their own practice. However, we must consider the differences in an in-situ that is linked to the assessment especially through the lens of the learner, an extension to a qualificational route, rather than a purely mentoring visit?

As previously mentioned, at the time of writing the FA are exploring new avenues to their approach to coach learning and coach education, coach education or coach development? 'More agile, blended with virtual learning, personalised and connected'. With coaches spending much more time coaching than in attending courses (Gilbert, Cote' & Mallett 2006: Herrington & Herrington, 2006), then in-situ visits and learning within the coach's own environment, with their athletes and players would seem a logical progression to compliment coach learning. Nelson *et al.,* (2013) refer to coaches wanting content to be not only relevant, but also easily applied to their coaching contexts. Usable content that can be easily transferred to practical situations. This again would support in-situ work at supporting coaches within their delivery environment.  So, if we can accept via the depth of literature, that a blended approach to coach education; some formal classroom work, signposting and regulations but linked to some real-world support in-situ on the ground is a good approach, then what does the 'in-situational support' look like? Is a utopian view amidst the constraints on budgets and time, to merge in-situ with mentoring, more contact time, more longevity? How do we ensure a personalised approach to learning, and remove the qualification constraints? Should mentoring therefore sit apart from in-situ tutor

visits? Coach Education – or Coach Development. At time of writing, the FA have an opportunity to help shape and define not only the coaches they want to produce, but what is the best way to do so. As Sawiuk, Taylor and Groom, (2016) highlight a number of scholars have suggested a variety of approaches which may be used to inform the education of coaches, such as the establishment of mentoring schemes (Bloom, Durand-Bush, Schinke, & Salmela, 1998), competency-based programmes (Demers, Woodburn, & Savard, 2006), problem-based learning (Jones & Turner, 2006), communities of practice (Culver & Trudel, 2008) and reflective practice (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). Furthermore, research since 2010 has tended to portray mentoring as a solution for the professional development of coaches due to its ability to provide contextualised learning, which overcomes some traditional critiques of coach education (Cushion, 2015; Griffiths, 2015). Therefore, with such an array of approaches highlighted, what works best from a coach's perspective? Is mentoring a solution or a tool to support wider mechanisms? What do the coaches think?

Therefore, focusing particularly on the concept of mentoring as this is the base of this document, how mentoring is defined and deployed to support coaches is important. Also, finding out what has worked from the coach's perspective, where they feel they learn best, and what environment has impacted on them both negatively and positively is relevant.
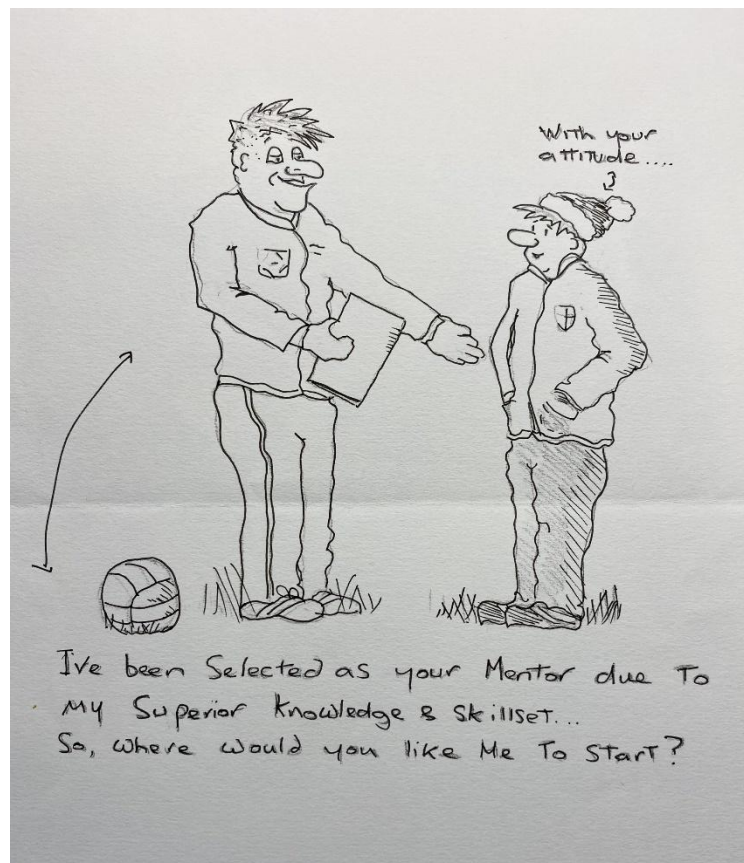
**Sketch Note 2. Hierarchical Mentoring.**

***Reflexive Thread: FA coach education – personal experiences.***

*Throughout my time as a coach and a mentor I have experienced coaches who's 'go to' behaviour was an hierachical stance. As an example, within coach mentoring, I have witnessed mentors highlighting their own coaching experience in what could be interpreted as an intimidating way to a neophyte coach. Furthermore, these mentors often suggest to the coach, that their 'way' may be best way. Whether this behaviour is transferred through their own historic experiences, learned behaviour, or even just a performance via their own vulnerabilites, I remember how it made them feel, nervours and unworthy at times. As highlighted in **Chapter 1.4.** I have permiated a few sketch notes throughout this body of work. **Sketch Note 2.** Highlights some thoughts and reflections made during my FA mentoring work and based on these reflections, to highlight the importance to me of a personalised and connected coach development approach. This is highlighted further in the experience below:*

*This section more than any other so far resonates deep within my own experiences. I attended my UEFA B licence over 20 years ago, one of the tutors*

*was keen to show their prowess and knowledge and let us know at the time how much we didn't know. Post UEFA B (Level 3) I attended an intro to the UEFA A (Level 4) some 18 months later. The educators parked separately, literally, sat separately, and in essence, told us (as a collective we were 'probably' a long way from being 'up to standard'), and asked how many had played professionally and all this was in the intro to the three days! Add this to my 'Nepal and school introduction' to the thesis, where I was never coached but 'run' and spent hours lifting weights at fourteen/fifteen then my bias and search towards coach connection, learning and curiosity is probably more obvious. From 2008 to 2012 I was asked by the FA (prior to me being an FA employee) to attend the National FA Young Leadership Camps. These ran for a week at a time at venues across the country. For example, 2008 was at Warwick University, 2012 Was at the National College for the Blind in Herefordshire. The camps were for outstanding young people who had, often via adversity, set up charities, supported people with disabilities, performed great work in low sociodemographic areas all were inspiring individuals. A hugely inspiring and diverse group of people. My role was to be lead mentor. Either for the Staff supporting the young people as in 2011, 2012, or in directly mentoring the young people as in the other years. I raise this in this reflective thread as this was a transformational time for me to see what the power of mentoring, support and dialogic practice can achieve. As highlighted above, in my own 'coach education' journey, the same kind of environment was severely lacking. I wanted to share this here particularly as it demonstrates the motivation I have for this piece of work. I am still the mentor for four of the individuals within these camps today.*

*Having been a coach educator/tutor/developer for quarter of a century has really helped me really understand (In my opinion) what works, and what doesn't to engage with coach learners. Within this section, I can really relate the academic reading and review directly to my own experiences and reflections. Connecting the educator to learner, the mentor to mentee, the learner to the learning, mutual trust, understanding, and rapport starting the journey with positive and developmental challenge rather than from a hierarchical leadership perspective, something I have witnessed and experienced personally. If I can truly use this work to try and ensure a more conducive environment for the*

*mentee/mentor and to embed it into practice, then this would have made the effort more than worthwhile.*

## 2.3 Learning approaches and models utilised within FA education. Considerations for FA learners/mentees.

Over recent years the FA Education Department has been an advocate of the 70;20;10 model (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1996; McCall, Eichinger, Lombardo, 1989), as way of supporting coaches learning and coach education development. This has been reflected in my own coach education journey and personal development journey within the department over recent years. The 70;20, 10 model was cited during the FA Coach Mentor Development Days at St. Georges Park, where the entire coach mentor team were invited in for two days of networking, workshops, and presentations, and it was also used on my UEFA A license course in 2018. Furthermore, it was used within course delivery on the UEFA B License of which I am a tutor. The breakdown of 70% (on the job) Learning from experience, 20% (near the job) learning from others, 10% (off the job) formal training and certifications would seem to resonate with the role of mentoring within coach education. Furthermore, the FA Education Decision Making in Coaching Continuum; interdependent guided learning to more independent learning features early within the FA Level 2 qualification. (It is worth noting that at time of writing, the FA Level 2 is being revisited to be re-formatted as the new UEFA C qualification).  Already highlighted within this document is the FA's approach and lean towards more in-situational support within coach education, especially following the introduction of the England DNA in 2014. In the main, the tutor/educator whilst facilitating the mediated learning within the principles highlighted above, would also undertake the in-situational support extending this into the coach's 'workplace', 3 x in-situ visits at Level 3 for example.

As Cushion *et al.,* (2019) highlight, there has been little research that seeks to analyse the coach educator in depth or position them within the broader relational system of coach education. Taking this into consideration, the lack of research into the deliverers of courses only compounds the problem of understanding what coaches need and what coach educators think they need. Therefore, a genuine question may be, what is the point of this form of in-situational support? Is it merely to extend the mediated classroom learning?  Is it to help

ensure practice is transferring from formal learning into the coach's practice? Or is it to help coaches become more questioning and cognitive of their own delivery supported by the tutor?

It can be argued however, that placing support at the coalface helps tackle many of the logistical problems experienced in past coach education courses; coaches playing in all sessions, travel to venues, time away from players etc but as positive as this step may seem, 2-3 visits 'in-situ' would appear to be too few to truly understand the whole picture, the idiosyncrasies, nuances, and specific environments that need to be at the heart of the bedrock (Armour, 2010). Furthermore, the FA learning principles frequently lean towards constructivist principles, citing scholars such as Piaget and Vygotsky, and the importance of coaches constructing their own knowledge. And that learning is an active rather than passive process. There are several aspects to Vygotsky's work that may appeal to those relating to coaching and coach education. One of these could be how coach educators offer guidance and advice to prepare learners when support is no longer there (Vygotsky 1978, 1987) and this may be related to training environments and competitive match day environments, however, how does having the coach educator affect the learner in-situ? Evidence suggests that coach educators remain key to coach education systems and can play an important role in learning in formal coach education (Nelson, Cushion & Potrac, 2012) and furthermore, (Nelson *et al.*, 2012, Stoszkoski & Collins, 2016) suggest that coach educators can leave a long-lasting impression on coach learning that contributes to experiences and perceptions of formal learning and its effectiveness. This resonates with my own experiences as an experienced coach educator, I am ever mindful of my impact and influence on coach learners.

Historically, FA Coach Education courses within counties have been delivered by a small team of full time and part time FA/County FA linked coach educators. Also, in the main, formal CPD events within counties have been delivered by the same key staff, therefore coach learners grow accustomed to the style and behaviours of the coach educators they see. Also, all these interactions are placed in formal settings. Whilst transferring some of the coach learner's delivery to their own informal setting (2-3) times per course, can be seen as a step towards informal approaches, with the formal coach educator extending their support from the course, it can be argued strongly that this is merely just an

extension of the formal provision. (Cushion, Griffiths & Armour, 2019) work into coach educators in situ, speak of the coach educators needing to possess appropriate symbolic and social capital and that to enhance and strengthen their position in the field, coach educators often aligned with coaching practice ideology that reproduced rather than challenged existing coach education ideology and rhetoric. Coach educators extending their own delivery and observations into in situ situations may well have a vested interest in controlling and maintaining a particular body of knowledge. In fact, the in-situ visits are the route to the learner being signed off as 'competent'.

According to Nelson, Cushion and Potrac, (2006), coaches learn in three different situations: a) i.e., formal learning, large scale curriculum-based education b) nonformal learning i.e. (CPD/Workshops) c) informal learning i.e., intentional-incidental day to day learning experiences. Added to this, there is further evidence to suggest that coaches primarily learn via the informal learning opportunities such as coaching opportunities, self-reflection, interactions with peer coaches, communities of practice and mentoring; (Cushion, Armour, & Jones 2003; Nelson, Cushion & Potrac, 2012). Furthermore, if we agree that coaching and 'learning to coach' involves a myriad of dynamic, contextual, and political variations, tensions and social dilemmas that make it highly situation specific, (Thompson *et al.,* 2013), then we need to enhance the learners experience, and ensure we align to what best helps learners, learn to coach. With the host of rules and regulations around the practicalities of coaching (enhanced at time of writing via Covid-19) then mediated learning either face to face or via virtual platform is undoubtedly an important part of supporting coaches learning. However, for the learner coach to make sense of the nuances, contextual variations, and day to day challenges of their own coaching environments, simply extending formal coach education into this space would seem counter intuitive. Although, as highlighted throughout this document there is evidence and support for the effectiveness of non-structured learning, and mentoring as a potential tool toward this approach, coaches gaining access to truly informally structured mentoring opportunities is far more complicated. (Bloom, 2013) goes as far as to say, there is currently no set path to acquire an informal mentor. This may well indicate why many researchers over a long period have called for the development of and implementation of formalised mentoring approaches (Jones, Harries, & Miles 2009; Lyons & Pastore 2016;

Weaver & Challadurai, 1999). The challenge within the current FA mentoring structure is to best understand the needs and wants of the coaches on the ground. If, with variations we are to support coaches via the 70;20;10 model (Lombardo & Eichinger 1996; McCall, Eichinger, Lombardo 1989), then we need to find a way to better understand how to enhance, support and develop the 70% on the job learning. The FA Fit for the Future strategy 2020-2024 is committed to personalised and connected learning experiences for the grassroots coaching workforce, and also to using mentoring as one of the key tools to achieve this. It also has 'Brilliant Insight' as a key enabler within the plan. Therefore, we need to understand what the actual impact of seven years of a formalised mentoring programme has had on the coach mentees to help us develop, change, improve and learn from what has worked, or what has not worked historically.

***Reflexive Thread:***

*It is worth highlighting that at time of writing the Coach Development, Learning and Development department and the wider FA Education Team are developing/re-writing not only the UEFA C (Level 2 qualification) but the wider offer for grassroots coaches within the parameters of the 2020-2024 fit for the future strategy of being personalised and connected, digital first following Covid-19. During this complex department wide work, much of the focus is on moving things forward positively. Part of my work aligning mentoring delivery directly to practice needs me to ensure my focus is to still try to understand 'what' coach mentees and the wider programme had experienced to bring this important aspect into the conversation for the first time, whilst also ensuring I had a real understanding of what the wider developmental changes and focus areas were. If we are indeed moving to be more 'personalised and connected' approach, and as I have always firmly believed throughout my time in coach education, that the coaches voice, the mentees voice needed to be heard more to help shape any delivery, then I need to champion this accordingly. Being Agile, having online webinars, delivering resources all has its place but I have remained focused on hearing the voice, the needs, wants and concerns of those we are trying to support – its important!*

## 2.4    Mentoring in wider practice.

Merriam, (1983) concluded that the phenomenon of mentoring represented different things to different fields. Some saw mentoring to be an intense emotional relationship contributing to adult development in all aspects of life, with the business world primarily focused on how the mentor can guide the protégé's career, and the world of academia viewed the mentor's role to be similar to that of a teacher. This research concluded with a call for future research to clarify the muddy concept of mentoring by continuing to integrate studies scattered across several disciplines and systematically examining for common findings, trends, and generalizations. Contemplating mentoring research more widely, (Sawiuk, Taylor & Groom, 2017; Colley, 2003; Jones, Harris & Miles, 2009) refer to the paucity of mentoring research, research as a defined practice. Mentoring is a practice which operates across various domains, yet suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity, with no universal definition currently present (Dawson, 2014; Lefebvre, Bloom, & Loughead, 2020).

In recent years, mentoring as a concept has received more exposure across a wide range of disciplines beyond sport coaching and in a variety of other fields (e.g., education, healthcare, and business) positioning mentoring as a common social practice underpinned by relational trust (Baker *et al.,* 2019). More specifically, it has been associated with enlightened, good practice in relation to developing wider 'knowledge and expertise (Bloom *et al.*, 1998). The term developmental mentoring has also been used widely to denote a beneficial form of mentoring characterised by support, reflection in conversation, contributions to extend the newcomers horizons and openness to different professional approaches (Clutterbuck 2004; Harrison *et al.,* 2006). Mentoring, as a planned activity, has undergone a spectacular expansion over the past two decades. It has become an integral aspect of initial education and continuing professional development in business management, teaching, healthcare and many other fields (Colley, 2003). However, Colley continues by considering that many models for mentoring have been based on fairly crude and simplistic concepts of empowerment and where the mentor is seen as the powerful member of the dyad, thanks to his or her greater age or experience.

Along with the research above which considers social health care, education and business, mentoring continues to be a tool used more widely

including the field of social inclusion where Newburn and Shiner, (2006) suggest 'the reality of mentoring cannot be conveyed adequately through a 'mentoring works' or 'mentoring does not work' formula, but that mentoring shows real potential as a means of working with disaffected young people. Ghosh, (2012) regarding mentoring in education and business, articulates the need for more integrative literature reviews that can then compare and critique the expanding knowledge base on mentoring as it continues to develop in different disciplines.

*The question I am always asking is what transcends good mentoring Practice? Is it as Baker et al., (2019), suggest a social practice underpinned by trust? The wider literature here suggests a lack of conceptual clarity, is trust and connection something to consider further?*

Taylor and Black, (2018) research into postsecondary education mentoring programmes highlight that whilst outcomes are very important to the success of partnerships and programs, mentoring relationships are not always successful due to poor mentor–mentee matching, or unclear programmatic goals set prior to the relationship. Such a mismatch would seem to indicate a potential lack of planning, preparation and understanding of predispositions prior to any mentoring relationship taking place. However, research indicates that successful mentoring models and applications tend to include a trust mechanism; (Millwater & Elhrich 2007;Cox 2004) refer to teacher education, and indicate that without rapport there is likely to be no connection to each person within the dyad, and therefore, transformation rarely occurs, the emphasis on the relationship within mentoring is the main distinction from its close but suspect neighbour, "supervision", which often implies a more distant relationship and the presence of "performance assessment". Whilst Liaquat and Nasreen, (2020) referring to mentoring in secondary education state that; a mentor is commonly a capable personality, a coach, an advisor, or a supporter. Once again demonstrating mentoring can be different things to different fields (Merriam, 1983). Once again in the field of teaching and education, Feiman-Nemser, (2001), highlights, that the most traditional conception of mentoring is the so-called novice-expert model which emphasizes teaching, the transference of regulations and normative practices, modelling, and repetition. The question is of the socialization of a mentee and, when the teachers are concerned, the socialization into the practices

of a certain school or institution. Once again here, the supervision question may potentially overshadow the mentoring in this context.

In relation to mentoring models utilised in nursing, the type of model used often echoes that of apprenticeship or competency-based model which seems to mark the initial stages of inducting novices into an organisation (Jones, Harries, & Miles, 2009) and that the supervision provided by nurses to novice practitioners is both frequent and extensive. The word supervision again in such an environment would seem to be deemed appropriate. However, with regards to more contemporary nursing research, Pramila *et al.,* (2019) state that several factors have been identified that can strongly influence nursing students' experiences and therefore, the development of nursing competence and that includes the engagement with nurses in the clinical environment. Furthermore, clinical mentors need pedagogical expertise in guiding clinical reasoning and provision of professional role models for students. This is essential because mentors ideally should: convey the culture, ethics, and values of nursing; provide guidance and teaching; display decision-making competences in teamwork; and while providing and planning nursing care, develop nursing care and leadership (EFN, 2015). This raises some interesting points regarding mentoring. Whilst the European Federation for Nurses recognise the vital importance of nursing clinical competence and technical expertise, lectures, instruction, and formalised classroom learning, it also recognises the importance of workplace engagement and mentors displaying more widely recognised mentoring skills such as being role models, guidance and sharing values and teamwork. This would be refreshing if adopted in other settings such as sport. Therefore, considering this research further it does raise some questions: If some wider contemporary research into mentoring advocates this technical/transformational blended approach, then is this the same in sports coach education. Why do many NGB's advocate a purely formalised classroom approach towards education. Potentially hierarchical and directive when there seems such potential for learners' working in their own environments. How does this then reflect in the volunteering world where mentoring also takes place. Does a blended model offer volunteer coaches a more balanced and realistic approach to learning.

Pramila *et al.,* (2019) also mentions that mentors' competences in pedagogical practices include abilities to identify students´ individual learning

needs, support students' learning processes, orientate students towards their own learning goals, foster students' motivation, conduct student-centred evaluation, reflect upon students' performance, provide constructive feedback, and understand nursing competence. However, despite this, some students had reportedly been dissatisfied because mentors lacked time for mentoring due to heavy workloads and stress. They also indicated their own workloads impacted on their engagement.  Other studies into mentoring within nursing highlight mentor personal characteristics as a competence area such as involvement, satisfaction, attitudes to obstacles and commitment to role (Oikarainen *et al.,* 2018; Tuomikoski *et al.,* 2018). Lack of time, heavy workloads, and stress of both the mentor and the student, however, did also impact on the dyadic relationship and therefore the effectiveness of learning. Despite mentoring's positive discourse, in many areas, the sports coach mentoring literature is less advanced in comparison to domains such as business, nursing, and education (Bloom, 2013; Jones, Harris, & Miles, 2009). However, there may be some similarities in many aspects to where mentoring is viewed as a positive contribution that transfer to a successful relationship: including being – learner focused, reflective in practice, offering guidance and influencing. *How does this sit in other fields?*

Werner, (2007) conducted a study into the poor ethnic communities in America and the research identified risk factors for the vulnerable young people, chronic poverty, mental health, and criminal offending amongst them. The study identified that with difficulties they faced, many showed resilience to achieve and better themselves. One of the protective factors to emerge was that several of the young adults demonstrated the ability to seek support and advice from informal mentors amongst their community. Whist there was no evidence to establish if this informal mentoring was successful overall, and that the advice they received had a significant impact on this resilience, it does indicate how social networks may be a rich opportunity in offering support even in adverse circumstances (Colley, 2003). To support this further with regards to, Newburn and Shiner, (2006) work in social inclusion setting, their research indicated that although they felt mentoring had real potential, that many of the participants within their study were volunteers who had already indicated the desire to change prior to mentoring. Therefore, mentee drive, perceptions and predispositions would again seem important to understand when measuring the success of or seeking

clarity on any mentoring model or programme. Taking the research into account, then workplace mentoring models with a more hierarchical and performance-based context may not transfer verbatim into less formalised or the volunteer sector. However, as highlighted by (Pramila *et al.,* 2019; Colley, 2003) building rapport, fostering learner needs and motivation whilst offering constructive feedback may transfer well into the volunteering arena.

Following on from the questions above, Griffiths and Armour, (2012) relates to mentoring as a formalised learning strategy within a volunteering context, and that sustaining engagement was a challenge and heavily influenced by the volunteer's perceptions and predispositions of mentoring as a tool in supporting their practice. Mentee 'by-in' from a volunteer perspective and the perceived benefits prior to engagement would seem important. If time is available, and with relationships and connections formed, then in whatever context, this may be a key to sustaining a mentoring legacy. *Is it then, that good personal skills and mentoring attributes are one of the key fundamentals to any successful mentoring outcome?*

Highlighting this further, there are many suggestions 'for' but limited evidence 'of' successful coach mentoring provision, with it being argued the practice is "perceived as important, but there seems little evidence to support this" (Cushion, 2015). Therefore, taking this research into consideration, and with little evidence to highlight mentoring practice, or successful mentoring provision whether with volunteers or in other domains, then understanding the particular context of the setting would seem important.

Taking this wider research into consideration, the new Football Association tactic of providing a 'Personalised and Connected Learning Experience' would seem to align at least on the surface, to potentially good mentoring practice. However, also reflecting on all the wider mentoring research in this chapter, understanding the specific context, the environment and the stakeholders involved would seem crucial in determining what practice may work best and where.

*Reflexive Thread:*

*Mentoring affords personalised learning for growth. Research across disciplines has shown mentoring to positively affect behaviour, attitude, motivation, job performance, organisational commitment, and career productivity and success (Doyle et al., 2019). When people ask what it is I am studying, and I say mentoring, people often reply, ah, that's a fluffy area. My reply is usually, yes, quite complex. But I do understand the comment. For me, this is what makes this area fascinating, well researched, often mentioned in a biography, movie, or documentary but often ambiguous and undefined. As Doyle mentions here, mentoring research, as in this review, cites a wide arrange of benefits, across a multitude of areas, including volunteering, sport, education, and business. However, it is not often 'nailed down' in terms of a specific formula or components that transcend the areas researched as common denominators. Therefore, I often reflect on what the FA programme context is, what is it trying to achieve. What do those who mentor say, what do those who have been mentored refer too? What do the FA leadership understand mentoring to be?*

*My own MSc research into the FA Mentoring programme highlighted that with little understanding of what the process was from the outset, rapport building was important almost vital for 'buy in' and this also, took time. Furthermore, there was a clear indication of trepidation and nervousness from mentees of 'what they were getting into'. Therefore, If the process can be clearer, more defined then potentially, this would help mentees understand accordingly. If we accept the FA Education 'Personalised and connected' standpoint cited for coach development, then adding this approach aligned to insight of what coaches have previously experienced from will hopefully help in defining what mentoring relationships could be in this context.*

## 2.5 Mentoring in sports coaching.

Within Sports coach literature there is a consensus that there is a need for more empirical research into coach mentoring to gain a deeper understanding of mentoring as a viable concept and its impact on coaching practice (Bloom, 2012 : Jones, Harris, & Miles, 2009) Furthermore, specifically to sports coaching Jones *et al.,* (2009) as well as Pitney and Elhers, (2004) refer to the lack of specific mentoring research within this context, or to it often being ill defined. Although

many in various fields agree on its value, mentoring in coaching, as in other areas, seems to lack a clear conceptual definition (Bloom *et al.*, 1998). However, Coaches who have access to a mentor or critical friend are said to receive sport-specific knowledge, alongside increased professional growth and self-confidence (Griffiths, 2015; Purdy, 2018). Therefore, much of this research seems to align with mentoring in other disciplines, that mentoring has value, but it generally lacks clarity or definition in specific contexts. However, as highlighted earlier, the sports coaching field has encountered a rhetorical "rush to mentoring" (Bailey, Jones, & Allison, 2019), with literature that explores sports coach mentorship steadily increasing (e.g., Bloom, 2013; Chambers, 2015, 2018). Therefore, we have more literature to explore and understand in context and as highlighted by Potrac, (2016) the mentoring process entails various stakeholders, including mentors, mentees, (Governing Bodies), GBs (if formalised), clubs, athletes, and parents. Thus, mentoring practice does not operate in a social, political, or technological vacuum. Making the subject of mentoring complex, nuanced, and as mentioned, sometimes ill defined. Mentoring is a pedagogical approach which supports the experiential learning of sports coaches (Nash & McQuade, 2015), with learning from "experience" playing a significant role in coach development (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Groom & Sawiuk, 2018; Lyle & Cushion, 2017).

Many National Governing Bodies (NGB's) are developing their delivery to support coaches out in the field. The concept of 'In-Situ' learning has developed where less teacher-centred approaches create learning environments where students are motivated to learn in rich, relevant, and real-world contexts (Herrington & Herrington, 2006). Therefore, mentoring in such situations would seem a perfect fit in supporting coaches in-situ and therefore in the coach's own environment.

*However, my questions remain, what are the tangibles that transcend good mentoring practice, and are there any, what are the components? Also, in many cases, is this mentoring in its truest form, or is it an extension of coach education or a separate support mechanism? Furthermore, and more specifically with regards to sports coaching and neophyte, volunteer coach's, what is the hook? What is the benefit of them engaging in mentoring support?*

(Zehntner & McMahon, 2018) illustrate the complexities and the connection of power and knowledge for the mentee-mentor relationships within a coach mentor programme for novice coaches they may need to navigate, and the impact on their knowledge construction. Also, how the mentor's approach may inhibit the beginner coach's creativity and how they may expect mentees to 'conform' to the mentor's way. Potrac, Nelson, and O'Gorman, (2015) relates to a grassroots coach mentee choosing to initially 'hide' his true thoughts and feelings, anxieties and emotions from his mentor and engaged in 'surface acting' due to their reservations as to the governing bodies chosen approach. This is alarming and reflects on NGB's understanding what good knowledge skills and attributes may look like in a mentoring context especially in the volunteer coaching sphere. This is also brought starkly into focus as within sports coaching, mentors rarely receive any form of professional development or training (Chambers, 2018). Mentoring is generally a secondary profession in addition to a coach's principal role of developing their athletes (Chambers, 2018). This factor amongst others has contributed to the minimal or insufficient training provided for coaches when they transition into mentoring positions (Leeder *et al.,* 2019). Chambers, (2018) goes on to highlight; The lack of support available to sports coach mentors may relate to how the practice is perceived, alongside assumptions about what a "good" sports coach mentor constitutes. Generally, mentoring is often treated as a secondary role for sports coaches, a sometimes unwanted "add on" to their primary profession of enhancing athlete development (Chambers, 2018).

Klasen and Clutterbuck, (2012) define the roles of coaching and mentoring and articulate them as: Coaching includes: "determining and specifying an individual's learning needs and objectives in relation to work issues; working out how the individual is going to improve performance deficits; helping the individual to explore the problem, develop alternative solutions and decide which one to implement and how; and using appropriate and timely feedback". Mentoring includes: "supporting individuals in discovering and defining their own development needs and setting their own objectives; fostering independent learners; allowing individuals to raise and talk about their issues, occasionally clarifying, reflecting back, and challenging; helping individuals to reflect on their beliefs, feelings, thoughts and behaviours, and to view issues from multiple

perspectives; guiding and encouraging individuals in the self-reliant analysis and solution of their problems and opportunities; enabling people to become effective decision-makers; and supporting the solution of issues by embracing an integrated approach''. More recently, Leeder and Cushion, (2019) explored the extent that a NGB's coaching culture was reproduced through a formalised sports coach mentoring programme, evidencing issues with external GB interests. Specifically, the coaching culture was embodied by mentors during their training, before later being espoused and reproduced during their mentoring practice. Therefore, if we are to be true advocates of more informal learning approaches to develop cognitive, critical thinking autonomous coaches of the future, then surely, we need to foster an approach and define a contextual support mechanism that helps clarify what mentoring should be to support coaches on the ground and in their own environment.

Clutterbuck's, (2004) mentoring phases model: Building rapport, setting direction, progression, winding up, moving on, raises an important point at the building rapport phase. Namely, 'the initial phase is where mentor and mentee decide whether or not they want to work together'. Historic FA mentor training has periodically cited Clutterbuck and Lane, (2004) five phases of the mentoring relationship as a loose guide, and in 2016 it produced a graphic based on Clutterbuck and Lane to support mentors on visualising the possible journey. With – Placement, Building Rapport, Development, Consolidation, Continuation, with Legacy as a central theme. However, with 370 mentors and hundreds of coach mentees the practicalities of monitoring the delivery across the FA Coach Mentoring Programme, (and Training Mentors) has left little evidence of how this was implemented by mentors and what conceptual processes were utilised within the support to mentees from within the model. (See reflexive Page 48 Thread for this section).
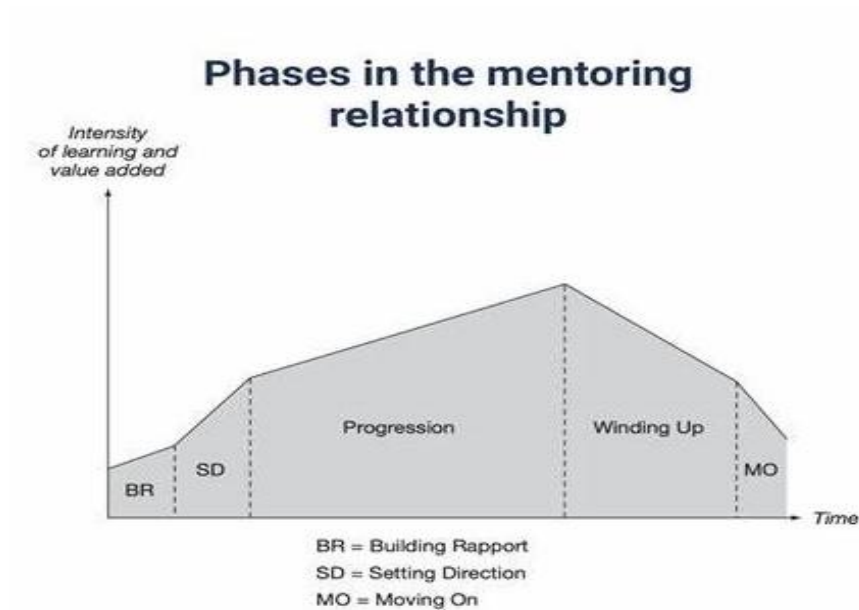
**Figure 1 Phases of the Mentoring Relationship, Clutterbuck and Lane (2004)**
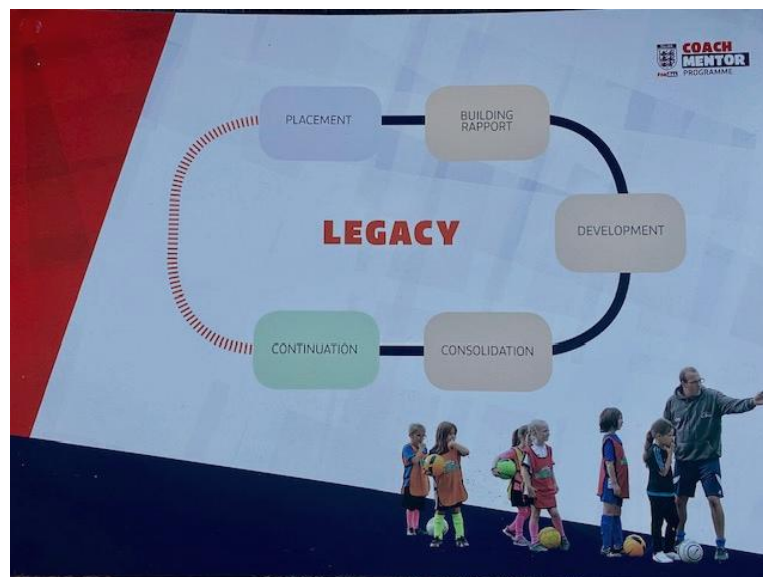


**Figure 2 FA Coach Mentor Legacy Model (2016)**

Placement, Building Rapport, Development, Consolidation, Continuation, with Legacy as a central theme was highlighted as broad themes with the aim of leaving a legacy within clubs. However, what the legacy was, should be and is, was left largely to the mentors on the ground to guide with little research to capture the detail of what the legacy was.

Referring to Colley, (2003) any imbalance of power at this stage may impinge on any positive outcome. Many mentoring models speak of mutual respect, empathy and engagement as skills and attributes of mentoring, but the notion of mentees defining their own development needs does not transcend all

mentoring practice. Therefore, the research literature seems to largely mirror much of what is highlighted in mentoring within other fields that mentoring in each context needs to be more coherent and more defined. Why mentor? What is its purpose? Who is it for? (Mallett *et al.,* 2009) highlight that education and learning are often associated with formal or nonformal, while learning seems to be used only with informal situations. Formal learning situations are associated with institutionally sanctioned structures and (guided) delivery, whereas the informal situations may be assumed to provoke learning but are likely to be unguided and/or incidental. This aligns to some of the challenges highlighted by learners on FA courses where coach learners are having to transfer classroom knowledge into their own real-world contexts. Taking the learning into their own world and transferring good practice is a complex task within the multifaceted world of grassroots sport. Furthermore, we are aware that coaches encounter situations for learning in variable ways, with current thinking proposing learning to coach through practical experience, observations, and interactions with others is inevitable within sporting environments (Cushion, 2015; Stodter & Cushion, 2017), so this would support the 'why' as to NGB's blending the learning opportunities and experiences. Interestingly, (Griffiths, 2013), states that, mentoring can be conceptualised as either an informal or formal process. Informal or 'found' mentors are often unplanned and naturally formed relationships between individuals, with these on-going interactions becoming an evitable feature of the coaching environment. However, found mentors are more likely to support rather than challenge existing ideologies, potentially contributing to the reproduction of pre-existing coaching cultures and practices. If we build environments where mentoring is accepted as a developmental tool, and understood as such, do we create an environment for coaches to 'find' their own mentors, maybe even after receiving one in a more formal context initially?

Can introducing coaches to mentoring light the fire for more? Maybe a formalised programme within an NGB that's delivered well, and based on mentee experience, could be the pathway to enhancing the relationship via more 'found' and multiple mentors? Indeed, Sawiuk *et al.,* (2017) calls for increased scholarly attention on multiple-mentor and developmental networks mentorships. With regional Coach Developers now becoming the norm, with a variety of contacts demographically, this could see a shift towards more developmental networks

and more in situational less, formal classroom learning with mentoring being one of the vehicles.

In-situ visits within formal coach education environments often tends to use the coach educator to visit and 'extend' their contact to the club environment. This raises questions on both sides of the track, 1) does this mean that the rapport, understanding, and connection is extended, or 2) does this mean that the formal classroom approach and training is taken into the coaches' environment? How does this make the learner feel? (Cushion *et al.,* 2019), refer to this from the Coach educator's perspective; The coaches had to negotiate a clash between the universal and the local in respect of the logic of their work, and were arbitrating between the values and beliefs of stakeholders (clubs, Sports Governing Bodies (SGB), Leagues), viewing themselves as the embodiment of coach education's collective values as their own values which were consciously or sub-consciously lived out through their practice. Therefore, if we entertain the thought of opening the door to the potential of coaches seeking their own 'found' mentors, or wider resource networks, then surely this would then add layers to coaches developmental conversations. As Leeder and Sawuik, (2020) state, within sports coach mentoring the answers derived from questions such as Is this what I want? How do I attain necessary skills? Who can support me? remain vague. So, we need to support coaches in developing and widening, not narrowing their own networks.

In summary, a common thread to what good mentoring may look like across wider practice is in determining, supporting, and defining learners own needs and objectives (Klasen & Clutterbuck 2012; Pramila *et al.,* 2019; Leeder *et al.,* 2019), whilst also being cognitive of the need to understand and consider the mentees own perspective and goals (Cushion *et al.,* 2019; Griffiths 2013; Zehntner & McMahon 2018; Clutterbuck 2004; Harrison *et al.,* 2006) and by building relationships over time via trust, rapport and the understanding of the mentees own  needs. As highlighted earlier and specific to the FA Coach Mentoring Programme, the coach mentee experiences have never been researched, so understanding these experiences, what has worked and what needs improvement is important. Furthermore, we need to also link any mentee findings to what other wider stakeholders such as the programmes leadership perceive to help move this research forward.

***Reflexive contextual and supporting summary-Rapport.***

*Referencing Clutterbuck, (2014), rapport as a concept in the FA programme, was there from the outset. In 2005 I was working fulltime outside the FA; however, I was involved as a part time tutor. This included delivering the FA Mentoring Adults Course, a six-hour course delivered to club officials as to the importance of mentoring. Although this course was well received, the criteria meant that 'A' club official needed to attend to meet their club FA Charter Standard Criteria, which meant we rarely saw coaches, but predominately, the club secretaries or committee officials. One of the intentions for this initial mentoring course was building rapport, making coaches feel valued, and in transferring this to the players, observing practice, offering advice to support their own coach delivery and support a positive environment. However, as mentioned, at this time, the coaches rarely saw the course and attendance was low across the country. Usually, Club Secretary attended; box ticked for their club's accreditation. In late 2012, I was approached by the then FA Workforce Development Manager to work alongside four other external consultants, and a UK Coaching Body consultant to help design a resource, based on the mentoring course but for a planned, new FA Mentoring Programme, this work would help to support coaches directly, and disseminate the messages to the grass, **music to my ears!** Using the course and our experiences, the resource was to house support documents aligned to 'Mentor-Mentee Agreements', reflective practice, and parameters of the relationship, and mentoring in our context. All the consultants were working coaches across many aspects of the game, and we were asked to draw on our experiences as FA mentor tutors, to define and build the resource towards supporting the programme, and ultimately, the grassroots game. We spent a year looking at the resource, planning, critiquing, and developing. Stripping back the initial FA Coach Mentor Course. Clutterbuck & Lane (2004), Five Phases of the Mentoring Relationship was cited, and although not very visible to the outfacing course delivery, the five phases within the framework: Phase one: Building Rapport, Phase two: Setting Direction, Phase three: Progression, Phase four: Winding Up and Phase five: Moving On. Were clearly the underpinning for a lot of the surface work. **Rapport, observing coaches, connecting, communicating and legacy.** Importantly, this work was further informed by our experiences as coaches, for all of us, building rapport was*

*paramount. In short, up to this point, many coaches on FA courses experienced hierarchical environments where criteria needed to be met, and standards needed to be attained. We saw this as an opportunity to champion development, hear the coaches voice, and change the game. Building rapport, empathetic, well intentioned, and supportive practice.*

*However, from my experience, and with the programme eventually growing to arguably the country's largest formalised coach mentoring programme which cited 10,000 coaches supported by some 327 coach mentors, the tactics, tangibles and logistics of building rapport and contextual relationship setting were never embedded enough, or more importantly, no formal structured insight into how this important aspect happened on the ground or otherwise was ever undertaken.*

## 2.6 FA Education mentoring working group – Towards the next phase.

Through the Covid Lockdown from mid-2020 through to early 2021, a mentoring working Group was formed within FA Education. The group comprised of the National Lead for Mentoring, members of the Girls and Women Coach Development Team, the Professional Game Team, The PE Team, and the Grassroots Coach Development Team. I was also part of the group as a past Regional Lead within the mentoring programme and having started on the doctoral journey and having finished an MSc with the University of Worcester in 2018 which investigated the FA Coach Mentees experiences and perceptions. The questions we posed were: If we are to re-grow the FA mentoring provision:

1) What is our (FA) definition of mentoring?
2) What does it mean to us (FA) as a wider department?
3) What would be our (FA) framework for effective mentoring across our work?

If we agree that developing coaches is fundamental to a mentor's role, and if any formalised mentoring would take place on a national scale, then answering these questions is of importance. Stodter and Cushion, (2017) state, we are aware that coaches encounter situations for learning in variable ways, with current thinking proposing learning to coach through practical experience,

observations, and interactions with others is inevitable within sporting environments. Although much overlap occurs between the terms in a sporting context, mentoring is generally viewed as a process of supportive guidance and facilitation, whereas coaching can be seen as a more performance orientated action to enhance a specified skill area (Jenkins, 2013). Therefore, if we accept the fact that coaches encounter situations for learning in variable ways, and there may be an overlap in the terms in a sporting context, then it would seem important for FA Education to define what mentoring may be in their specific context to support the development of coaches and therefore, the consistency of any mentoring practice. The working group reflected on mentoring practice in their own context. e.g., the professional game, women's performance pathway and wider grassroots coach development. The commonalities were listed as:

a) Making connections, (Building Rapport) forging relationships, b) Observation skills, communication in terms of variety, clarity, and consistency, c) giving and receiving of feedback linked to the individual needs of the mentee and their environment and d) reflective and reflexive practice. Also raised, to bring the mentoring reflections in line with the FA Fit for The Future 2020-2024 strategy, the definition would be underpinned by delivering a 'Bespoke, connected and personal learning experience' for the coaches.

Therefore, the Definition for Coach Mentoring within FA Education from 2021 was clarified by the group as:

***Mentoring is to support, encourage and challenge coaches to manage their own learning within their own specific context, helping them maximise their potential, develop their skills, recognise their attributes; and all towards them becoming the coach and person they want to be.***

Also, part of the wider thinking around departmental coach development is to construct, develop and nurture a regional network of support via mentors, community champions, coach developers, county FA's and clubs. Therefore, aligning the definition to this is important to help mentees recognise and develop their attributes and reach their own potential. This definition aligns to the rationale for my research. The statement is positive, mentee focused, and development focused. However, there is a difference in merely understanding learners needs and helping learners understanding their needs. Also, to actively help mentee

coaches achieve their goals and develop their practice aligned to their needs and environment. Furthermore, within a national formalised programme. Therefore, developing a national framework which aligns to the definition to not only support the mentors practice, but to also help the mentees learning should help us; understand our mentoring practice better, give greater consistency to help measure, and highlight what is working well, and what needs to be improved.

However, to conceptualise a coherent and tangible framework which is flexible, workable, we must ask the learners themselves, those that have been within or are in process and not rely on the mentor workforce's perspective in isolation. This would then inform and compliment mentor research to define a clearer and more cohesive approach to a formalised model to support practice and also mentor training. Chapter three will look to understand some of these experiences from FA Coach Mentoring Practice pre COVID-19 to give us a wider understanding of coach mentees experiences.

**Existing mentoring models to consider. 2.7.**

Meggison and Clutterbuck, (2004), argue that definitional confusion arises because mentoring and coaching skills can overlap, it would therefore seem important to give mentors more clarity and support on what their role is or could be. Especially when considering the differences between mentoring and a more coach education-based perspective, as this may well create a more defined and less blurred mechanism for coaching 'support'. For example, Leeder and Cushion, (2020), have argued that sport coach mentors purposely model 'best practice' coaching sessions in an effort to showcase their coaching expertise and secure credibility and mentee buy-in. Therefore, whilst mentoring is frequently conceptualised as either a formal or informal "learning situation" for coaches, as highlighted by Lyons and Pastore, (2016), the wider nuances of mentorship (e.g., mentor behaviours, development of rapport) within the coach learning process, are often overlooked. How the mentee coach would "filter" information from say, a 'showcased' session from their mentor and then choose to either adopt, adapt, or reject new knowledge within mentorship is generally unknown (Stodter & Cushion, 2017). Therefore, to support the mentee and the process further, towards a more defined and less blurred mechanism for coaching support, we need to first consider and evaluate the existing models highlighted further. Nash, (2014) highlights a number of existing mentor models which include, the apprenticeship model, the competence model and the reflective practitioner model, and these are used as development tools across teaching, medicine and business. These models are framed around different outcome requirements based on the environment each model is utilised in, for example, in teaching they may reflect around the 'end product' of any mentoring arrangement. For further clarification, maybe using mentoring to support new teacher practice that could be limited to school policies and procedures rather than the development of teaching practice (Gordon & Brobeck, 2010). The following section will describe and discuss various approaches to the process of mentoring.

**The apprenticeship model: (Butler, 2005).**

As already highlighted, this model has its origins based within education and has been mainly based around the setting of standards and values. However, its basis has also been used within sports coaching environments to support

new/novice coaches who have been 'apprenticed' to more experienced, master coaches. Therefore, this approach may tend to align more towards what Leeder and Cushion, (2020), highlight as showcasing expertise rather than focusing on a more relational and developmental approach to coach mentoring. Although the mentor may well be more experienced and knowledgeable, as highlighted earlier, the FA Coach Mentor Programme within the new FA strategy aims to move away from the 'train and certify' approach and focus more on rapport, engagement and connection between mentor and mentee.

### The competence model: (Santos *et al.,* 2010).

Although this model has its basis within sports coaching, it outlines specific skills and techniques to be learned especially where proficiency needs to be demonstrated. This particular model therefore closely aligns to coach education, and experienced coaches, it also has the mentor set in context as the 'trainer'. FA Coach mentors are not primarily, coach educators and are in-situ to support the mentors own environmental coaching needs, and not train the mentee in specific techniques, or proficiencies. Therefore, once again, we need to consider the move to a more personalised and connected approach away from merely, training and certification and mentoring outcomes that align better to the Barnham Raynor, (2020) research outcomes for FA coach development.

### The reflective model: (Vella *et al.,* 2013).

Although used extensively within teaching, the reflective approach has become much more widespread and common within sports coaching. Its purpose is to help the learner be more self-critical and encourages reflection on practice. However, although reflection may be a powerful tool to call on, when working with neophyte grassroots coaches with the vast majority being parent volunteers, self-reflection as a skill itself can be a daunting prospect when new to coaching whilst also learning to manage the basics of a safe and positive environment. Furthermore, being able to facilitate such a skill as reflection, also needs further consideration from a mentor training perspective.

### The network model: (Occhino *et al.,* 2013).

The network model offers mentors supporting mentee coaches a real opportunity to form wider connections and potential networks to support the flow

of information, and therefore, knowledge. However, as with the other models highlighted, and considering the specific Barnham Raynor, (2020) research, grassroots coaches need to feel engaged and supported within their coaching environment first and foremost, especially with a large number of coaches at risk of leaving the sport. Once established, networks would be a key vehicle once a coach feels engaged, more confident in their practice.

All of the above models and other wider models such as educator model (Nash & Sproule, 2011), and the role model-model (Norman, 2012), offer some value in parts in supporting mentee coaches. However, considering the FA Coach Mentor Programme specifically, and its move towards a more personalised and connected approach, none of the models in isolation fit perfectly with the multifaceted nuances and potential complexities within the programme itself, especially when considering a personalised and connected approach. The more involvement mentees have with the mentor during the relationship phase, the better the benefits the mentee may receive (Scandura & Williams, 2001), therefore, we need to consider a far more relational approach and move away from models that relate to a more train and certify approach to mentoring and that were in the main, constructed for other uses.

It would be interesting however, to use the existing models as a lens to help better determine previous mentoring delivery and their relevance to the coaches in context. This research will help us consider a more specific and impactful model or framework for FA Coach Mentor Programme delivery.

**The impact of mentoring. 2.8.**

The impact of mentoring has come under scrutiny recently with the concept being espoused as a valuable tool within coach development. Recent research (Sawiuk *et al.,* 2016; Zehntner & McMahon, 2018; Leeder & Sawiuk, 2021), has begun to add an enhanced level of criticality to sports coach mentoring and has challenged the prevailing "distorted and utopian view", whilst revealing the "essential social and relational complexities" inherent within the practice (Potrac, 2016). Mentoring has now been heavily advocated within sport coaching as a means to harness the influential power of experience through guidance, observation, and support, empowering coaches to become better equipped to deal with the ambiguous and complex nature of their work (Cushion, 2015;

Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Nash & McQuade, 2015). Furthermore, coaches who have access to a mentor or critical friend are said to receive sport-specific knowledge, alongside increased professional growth and self-confidence (Griffiths, 2015; Purdy, 2018).

Sport coach mentoring has recently been positioned as a pedagogical approach, which may overcome criticisms of formal coach education, due to its ability to support the experiential learning of coaches in a contextualised, bespoke, and meaningful manner (Cushion 2015, Leeder & Sawiuk, 2021). Therefore, considering this research further, if mentoring can support learning, away from more formalised settings, how mentoring is interpreted and understood by the mentor is important, and will subsequently influence a mentees practice and behaviours. To support this further, sport coach mentorship is a social process involving interactions, interdependence, and the interests of multiple stakeholders, which does not operate in a social, political, or technological vacuum (Cushion 2015, Leeder & Sawiuk 2021, Potrac, 2016). Reflecting on this contemporary research and the recent increased scrutiny into coach mentoring more widely, it is important to ensure any framework or model employed can help support the process it is employed in. Although there is a marked upturn in mentoring research and critique, research has not yet systematically explored the roles of these interpersonal variables in mentoring relationships, there is much more to be discovered, (Nash, 2014).
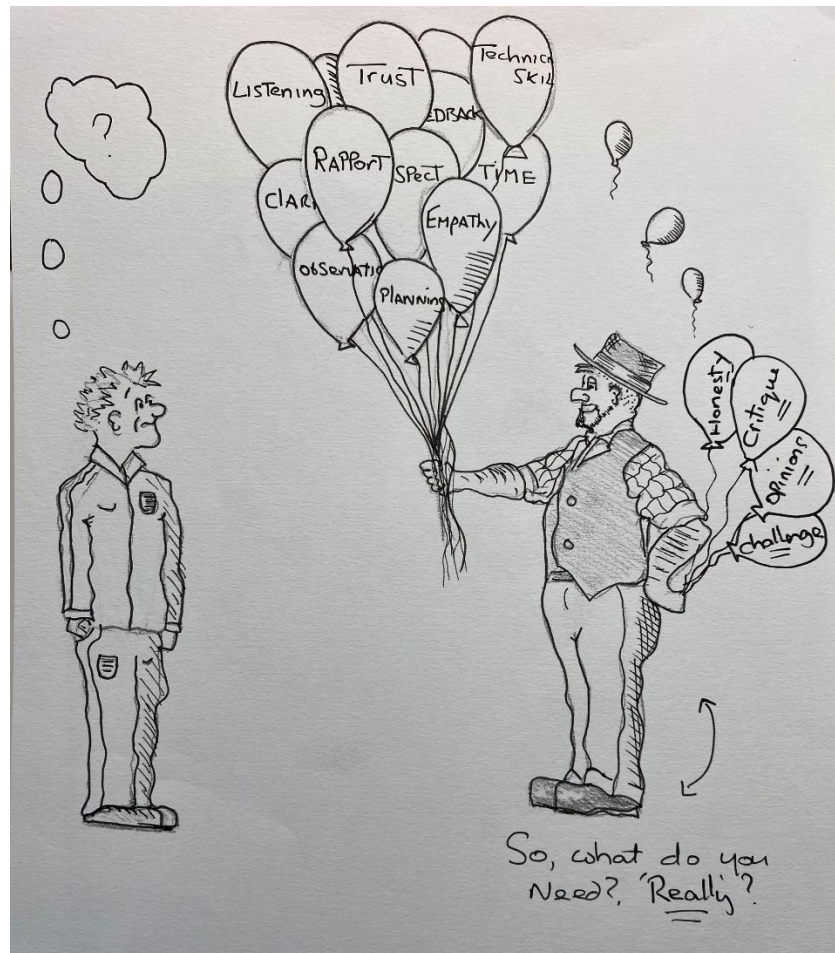
**Sketch Note 3. Reflections on Models, Mentoring and Choices.**

As highlighted within this chapter there is a potential lack of clarity and the potential for definitional confusion around mentoring. Sketch note three was created following numerous mentoring visits to support a number of different mentors as regional lead, I was particularly conscious of the varied environmental contexts, and 'the-what' of 'the-what' that was needed or required in each individual context. Especially, when there was a need to be clear to support the mentor – to then, support the mentee. (Also) around the time of this sketch note, I had taken one of my grandchildren to a fun fair and the amount of 'choice' of things to do and the host of subsequent questions, prompted this linked reflection. *So, what do you need really?*

# Chapter 3. Empirical Study 1.

## An investigation into FA mentee perceptions pre-Covid 19 and the Education Department restructure 2020.

**Empirical Study Overview.**

The purpose of this first empirical study was to better understand some of the subjective experiences of the coach mentees who participated within the FA Coach Mentoring Programme prior to the Covid-19 pandemic; namely between the seasons September 2017 and March 2020 and therefore, also before the subsequent restructure of the FA Education Department which directly impacted wider mentoring delivery. Any previous but insightful research into this programme (Potrac 2014; Leeder *et al.,* 2019; FA Mentor Report, 2017) tend to focus predominately on the mentors' practice although, all refer to the need of understanding the mentees experiences in more detail to help inform future delivery. With the FA Mentoring programme returning (albeit in a reduced format) post restructure in 2021, understanding what mentees experienced previously will help support any future mentoring practice in this context. Conducted during Covid-19, a virtual questionnaire via MS Forms with questions constructed via a lens on the work of Nash, (2014) around existing models of mentoring was circulated to 100 coach mentees across the country to help ascertain what the mentees had experienced. With no prior formal research being conducted into the mentee's experiences other than my own MSc studies, it was important to identify some of the facts around what type of mentoring practice may have taken place during this time. What were the frequency of the mentor visits? Where did these take place? This study will not only help inform the rest of the research but also help identify areas to support future mentor practice and delivery from an FA perspective.

## 3.1 Introduction.

Understanding coach development has been the focus of many Sports' National Governing Bodies, (NGB's) and academic study for many years. How coaches learn, where coaches learn best, and how coaches best engage in learning have all been of particular interest., (Lemyre & Trudel 2007; Werthner & Trudel 2006; Nash 2014).

Currently, we are aware that coaches experience learning in various ways. Recent research suggests that learning to coach through practical experience, observations, and interactions with other coaches within sporting environments provides much valued opportunity to develop their coaching practice (Cushion, 2015; Stodter & Cushion, 2017). Regarding expertise in coaching, Nash, Martindale, Collins, and Martindale, (2012) state that whilst much of the research until 1993 was behaviourally orientated, the complexity of expertise in coaching and some of the cognitive demands of it were starting to be recognised. To support this further, Cote' and Gilbert, (2009) state that, to be successful, coaches have to interact regularly with their athletes, and assistant coaches, parents, and other professionals, none of which aligns with a purely classroom-based approach. In short, research suggests that coaches may prefer to learn via more informal processes, for example, working with peer coaches, in context as opposed to formal courses which are often decontextualised and removed from the complexity of real coaching practice (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003). Taking all this into consideration, attempting to facilitate experiential learning opportunities through appropriate pedagogical mechanisms would appear logical, to develop coaches in a relevant and consistent manner in situ (Cushion, 2015). According to classical definitions, formal learning is given in such settings as classrooms, colleges, and other institutions where, as non-formal or 'informal learning can be associated with more experiential opportunities to learn via community or society groups, and informal interactions with peers and fellow learners. (Nelson & Cushion 2006; Mallett, Trudel & Lyle, 2009).

In alignment with this research, many NGB's are developing their delivery to support coaches out in the field. Consequently, the concept of 'In-Situ' learning has developed where there is less emphasis upon formal tutor - centred approaches in order to create learning environments where students are agents of their own learning and are motivated to learn in rich, relevant, and real-world contexts (Herrington & Herrington, 2006). This approach is supported by Crisp, (2018) who points out that there is now much more emphasis on self-directed learning, non-formal coach learning, which incorporates a variety of methods such as workshops, courses, and general continuous professional development (CPD) with many NGB's developing their delivery to support coaches out in the field. Furthermore, much of the research undertaken into formal coach education

highlights that whilst the attendance of courses is high, the impact of formal coach education may be somewhat limited, (Abraham & Collins 2011; Abraham, Collins, & Martindale 2006; Chesterfield Potrac & Jones 2010; Lemyre, Trudel & Durrand-Bush, 2007). Furthermore, Stodter and Cushion, (2017) highlight the fact that coaching in the past has tended to recycle learning theories from other domains and present idealistic representations and prescriptions for practice, for example situated learning, communities of practice, and problem-based learning. To support this further; research suggests that coaches learn more from practical experience and interaction with other coaches (Carter & Bloom, 2009), so there is a need to take formal coach education out of the classroom and onto the track, gym, pool, or court (Nash, 2014). Therefore, one of the main challenges for all sport NGB's is the transference of consistent, lucid messages and theories to support coaches throughout their coach education journey by stripping back some of the wood to help coaches determine who they are, what they need and also, the importance of understanding their own athletes' development within their chosen sport (Cushion & Nelson, 2013). Taking this into consideration, this wider research and thinking towards coach learning would seem to align with some of the concepts of sports coach mentoring. This may suggest that mentoring could be a bridge between the formal course experience and more experiential learning out on the field.

Within sports coach literature there is a consensus that there is a need for more empirical research into coach mentoring to gain a deeper understanding of mentoring as a viable concept and its impact on coaching practice (Bloom, 2012: Jones, Harris, & Miles 2009). This is supported by Jones *et al.,* (2009) and Leeder and Sawiuk, (2020) who refer to the lack of coach mentoring research within sport coaching specifically. Other contemporary research highlights the positive influence mentoring can have by arguing that; coaches who have access to a mentor or critical friend are said to receive sport-specific knowledge, alongside increased professional growth and self-confidence. Away from wider mentoring practice, and in more recent times, literature that explores sports coach mentorship is steadily increasing, (Bloom, 2013; Chambers, 2015, 2018, Leeder *et, al.,* 2019), and therefore, the impact of mentoring has come under deeper scrutiny. For example, whilst mentoring is frequently conceptualised as either a formal or informal "learning situation" for coaches, the wider nuances of

mentorship (e.g., mentor behaviours, development of rapport) within the coach learning process are often overlooked, and although this and more recent and contemporary research should be welcomed, there has been very limited research focusing on the relationship between mentor and mentee (Leeder & Sawuik, 2020).

A common thread to what good mentoring may look like across wider practice is in determining, supporting, and defining learners needs and objectives (Klasen & Clutterbuck 2012; Pramila *et al.,* 2019; Leeder *et al.,* 2019). Whilst being aware of the need to understand and consider the mentees perspective and goals, (Cushion *et al.,* 2019; Griffiths 2013; Zehntner & McMahon 2018; Clutterbuck 2004; Harrison *et al.,* 2006), these objectives can only be achieved by, building relationships over time through trust and rapport building and the mentor being responsive to the needs of the mentee. Clearly, if coach mentoring is being positioned as a valuable tool to support coach learning, then the role of the mentor will be instrumental in helping the mentee develop the necessary skills for both personal growth and professional development (Nash, 2014).

Post Covid-19, the FA Education Department have adopted a 'Coach Developer' style role, to try and attune to be more learner centred, and as stated in the FA fit for the future strategy, 2020-2024 a more personalised and connected learning experience for the coach. FA Education have adopted this viewpoint of connecting with coaches, to offer multiple opportunities to connect coaches with learning opportunities and in a more flexible way, utilising both digital and face to face opportunities. It is worth highlighting that prior to the 2020-2024 fit for the future strategy, and the focus area of this study, that the FA Mentoring programme did not align to any specific model relying only on the personal attributes of the mentor. Potrac's, (2014) paper into the pilot delivery of the FA Mentoring Programme, made recommendations for focus groups, in-depth interviews and surveys pertaining to amongst other areas, the mentees' perceptions of the expertise and persona of the mentor and how these influenced the trust and respect that the mentee afforded to the mentor. All this alludes to the multifaceted and potentially complex nature of coach learning within the mentor/mentee dyad. Therefore, this research also considers the work of Jones, Harris and Miles, (2009) who highlight the importance of generating empirical research to further explore current mentoring approaches in sport to best

understand what impact mentoring has as a support mechanism for the coaches on the ground.

With no specific mentoring model being employed, and consequently the programme relying on the personal attributes of the mentor, the context for this study is to understand the subjective experiences of the coach mentees who participated in the programme to help illuminate an under researched area: April 2014 until March 2020 and prior to the above strategy. If we are to align to a more personalised and connected learning experience for coaches then it is of value to understand the impact of the programme on the mentees, in order to inform future coach development strategy and specifically the role of mentoring in such a strategy.

## 3.2  Mentor programme context.

Within sports coaching, mentors rarely receive any form of professional development or training (Chambers, 2018), and at present, mentor training rarely extends beyond episodic workshops (Griffiths, 2015). The context of this study considers an NGB and its implementation of a formalised, nationally recognised mentoring programme. The aim of the programme was to support volunteer grassroots coaches (Mentees) via coach mentoring in-situ. The mentors who were paid on a part time basis and operated within eight regions across the country. Each Region had a full time Regional Officer who on average, supported over 30 mentors. The mentors were encouraged to support their mentees via session observations, individual feedback and through coaching demonstrations. Appointed mentors within this context, all held a minimum of a Level 2 UKCC qualification, and post initial interview, attended a day long induction held regionally, and then, a further two-day long training seminar was held during the year. This studies focus is on the delivery of the programme prior to Covid-19 and the subsequent restructure within the FA Education Department.

Taking all this into consideration, and particularly the potentially episodic nature of the mentors training in this context, we need to be mindful of the need to understand and consider the mentees perspective and goals to build a rounded and informed view by understanding the mentees experiences (Cushion et al., 2019; Griffiths 2013; Zehntner & McMahon, 2018).

Understanding what impact this national mentoring programme had on the hundreds of volunteer coach mentees is important to help support the FA's vision in offering a personalised and connected learning experience for coaches moving forward.

### 3.3    Methodology. research design.

To understand what impact mentoring has had as a support mechanism for mentee coaches specifically, this research is conducted initially through an interpretivist lens, to explore research questions with an emphasis on motives, and understandings of social life and the meanings they attach to their own and others' behaviours (Crotty, 1998). This study will evaluate the meanings and understandings attributed by the mentees. Applying an interpretivist paradigm and wishing to understand the subjective experiences of the mentees, a subjectivist epistemological approach is undertaken to help ascertain evidence into the potentially overlooked area of how coach mentors and mentees develop via their own multifaceted lived coaching experiences. Qualitative research investigates on the understanding and interpretation of individuals regarding their social world which leads to the epistemological position of interpretivism (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2018). Especially when considering the mentees perspective has never been researched in this context, what the mentees have experienced is important. Prior to this study, reviewing and reflecting on the previous evidence and feedback from the FA Coach Mentor Programme, and what interpretation mentors have attributed to the delivery has also been undertaken. Therefore, deductive reasoning has also been used and considered within this study to best determine what has been delivered from the mentee coach perspective, what they experienced, and what if any, model/models, or mechanisms may have framed those experiences.

We need to interpret what model/models or framework framed those experiences. and then, deductively; (Assuming what has been delivered is in a mentoring context) test, challenge and clarify the mechanism used within this context of mentoring to inform any future practice.

## 3.4    Sampling and participants.

To help understand the mentee experiences across the country, a wide demographic spread was utilised in recruiting the coach mentees for this study. Therefore, the FA Education teams existing data base from the programme was utilised in identifying and recruiting participants who were actively being mentored prior to Covid-19 lockdown. Hundreds of FA Coach Mentors over the seven years were asked to provide various sources of data around such areas as their hours, their practice, and the number of their mentees. This data was collated centrally to understand the numbers and impact on a national scale. The eight FA Regional Officers were each responsible for ensuring each regions data was forwarded quarterly for national collation.

This data was in the main quantitative, stating the hours on the ground, the cost, and the number of mentees within the programme, however, it was an essential piece of work in gauging the scale and reach of the programme. From this central data base which included the data pertaining to mentees across the country, purposive sampling methods were used in relation to the selection of emails and therefore, mentee participants for this study. Being purposively sampled, it was possible to ensure the mentees were from different regions, and that all mentees had different mentor to help ensure as wide a mentoring experience as possible was captured.

A spread of North, South, East, and West was therefore also assured. Although the emails and regions for the mentees were initially supplied by FA Coach Mentors directly and within their regions, the participants for this study were not drawn from a specific request from the mentor themselves to alleviate any specific recommendation or bias to the mentor. The emails were drawn directly from the main existing database. It is possible that mentees may have been initially added to the database following what may be viewed having a positive view of the programme, the contact, covering letter and questionnaire was delivered directly via the database itself. From the one hundred mentees sampled, twenty coach mentees were from a BAME background and twenty were female coach mentees. All mentees had been within the programme for at least twelve months between 2017-2020.None of the mentees were known to the researcher, and as stated. no coach mentors were involved in the selection, or

collation of data to further alleviate any chance of bias. Initially, this was broken down into (n=25) North, (n=25) South), (n=25) East, (n=25) West.

## 3.5    Data collection.

The first part of the data collection consisted of reviewing and reflecting on the previous research and anecdotal evidence and feedback from the FA Coach Mentor Programme. Also, the FA Coach Mentor Report, (2017), (Potrac, 2014) and FA Coach Mentor Feedback from seasons (2017-2020) were reviewed to try and gain an insight into any initial consistent themes and messages. These were noted to further review the anecdotal and previous feedback on self-confidence, reflection, and impact on mentee coaching practice.

Initially, the identified mentees were contacted regarding their participation in the study, informed of the purpose of the study on an email information sheet, and via a participation consent form due to Covid-19 Restrictions (See Appendix A2). A digital questionnaire was selected as the best method to ensure a wider reach of mentee participants. The questionnaire was produced using MS forms and shared with participants through a link sent via email (See Appendix A3). The information outlined the study, their potential involvement and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. All correspondence was password protected and university secure systems. Participants were given assurances that their involvement would be voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any time up and until three weeks after the questionnaire had been submitted at which point the data will be anonymized (therefore ensuring no coercion). By utilising MS forms, it guaranteed the anonymity of the participants with no respondent email, name or personal identification highlighted or recorded.

From the initial sample of 100 coach mentees, 75 responses were received and collated as part of the study.

The questionnaire was designed with both University and government Covid-19 protocols in mind. The eleven questions were also compiled with reference to Nash, (2014) as a lens to different models of mentoring to help support the analysis and build a clearer picture to what kind of support the coach mentees perceived they may have received within the programme.

The data was coded and supported in a theoretically deductive manner by considering the previous internal evidence, highlighted earlier in this research, wider case studies and findings and by identifying passages of interest to capture content and theoretical evidence, (Braun *et al.,* 2016). Wright, (2005) states that there may be issues raised about the validity of questionnaires as a method of research as with fixed questions respondents cannot speak their mind, and although open ended questions may give voice to their opinions, it still mainly only gives justification to limited choices and is thus not helpful in raising the functionality and usefulness of the method of conducting research. Taking this into consideration, and with no prior research into the mentees subjective experiences being undertaken previously, and alongside the restrictions placed via Covid-19, this method does at least open an initial door to the experiences and methods used from the coach's perception and within the context of the programme's parameters for the first time on this scale.

## 3.6   Questions.

Questions one to six were constructed to gain an understanding of mentee qualifications held, the frequency of the mentoring relationship, and for the programme, who had initiated the first contact. Whilst questions seven, eight and nine were constructed to align against the models highlighted by Nash (2014).

Finally, questions ten and eleven were posed to understand the mentees perceived benefit and expectations from the mentoring experience.

## 3.7   Data analysis.

The work from Nash, (2014), on mentoring models was used as a lens to support the analysis and provide further research insight as to what the mentoring programmes delivered from the mentee's perception. Nash, (2014) refers to mentoring as being a highly significant tool used across wider professions such as teaching, medicine, and business and goes on to highlight, Haggard *et al.,* (2011) who suggests that a mentoring relationship should consist of three dimensions:

1. The mentoring must be reciprocal.
2. There must be developmental benefits for both mentor and mentee.

3. There must be substantial and regular interactions over an extended period of time.

As laid out by Jones *et al.*, (2009), the most common models; the Apprentice model, the competence model and the reflective model have their origins within education. The FA Education Department have recently adopted a 'Coach Developer' style role to try and attune to be more learner centred, and as stated in the fit for the future strategy, 2020-2024 a personalised and connected learning experience for the coach. Taking this into consideration, and with Haggard *et al.,* (2011) being cited by Nash in this context, and that there must be developmental benefits for both mentor and mentee, utilising this work as a lens should at least give us the first indications as to what types of mentoring approach were utilised from a coach mentee perspective.

***Model Overviews for coded questions. Based on Nash (2014).***

- The Apprentice model Butler, (2005) with the mentor as 'master coach' setting standards and values to be copied.
- The Competency model Santos *et al.,* (2010) explicit set of skills and techniques to be learned; 'mentor as trainer'.
- The Reflective Practitioner model Vella *et al.*, (2013) Encourages learner as self-critical, 'mentor questions and does not offer right answer'.
- The Role Model 'model' Norman, (2012) Mentor as Inspiration as a consequence of previous results.
- The Network model Occhino *et al.,* (2013) Mentor acts as sponsor; introducing the coach to other coaches 'Mentor retains power'.
- The Educator model Nash and Sproule, (2009) Mentor listens and creates appropriate opportunities for mentee 'professional learning'.

Questions 1-6. These questions were constructed to help to underline the mentees experience and qualifications at the time they engaged with their mentor within the programme. Also, to ascertain how often they met and to who instigated the first contact.

| Questions | Answer Fields |
|---|---|
| How long had you been coaching when you first engaged with your mentor? | |
| 1-2 Years | 33% |
| 3-4 Years | 31% |
| 5-6 Years | 17% |
| 10+ Years | 19% |

| What qualification if any had you achieved when you first engaged with your mentor? | |
|---|---|
| Level 1 | 52% |
| Level 2 | 25% |
| Level 3 | 12% |
| Level 4 | 3% |
| None | 8% |

| What best describes how you first Heard about the programme? | |
|---|---|
| Club Meeting | 30% |
| Other Coach | 25% |
| Club Official | 24% |
| At Training | 21% |

| Who initiated the first contact? | |
|---|---|
| The Mentor initiated | 34% |
| Club Recommended | 32% |
| The Mentee initiated | 28% |
| Other (County FA) | 6% |

| On average, (what best describes) how frequent the contact was with your mentor? | |
|---|---|
| Once fortnight | 38% |
| Once Week | 24% |
| Twice Week | 1% |
| Other – Quarterly/Monthly | 36% |

| Where did you receive your most frequent support? | |
|---|---|
| Training Sessions | 80% |
| Online/Phone/Virtual | 16% |
| Match Day | 4% |

**Table 1 Mentee Questions 1-6**

### Question 7 – 9 Model Framed Questions.

These questions were constructed with reference to the models highlighted within the work of Nash, (2014), to help understand what type of mentoring mechanisms best aligned to the FA programmes delivery and could best describe the mentees experiences. Questions were framed around the models highlighted but also in line with the broader mechanisms of delivery within the remit of the programme.

**Question 7:** From your involvement with the mentoring programme can you please tell me which of the following best describes how the mentor supported your development?



**BEST DESCRIBES MENTOR SUPPORT**
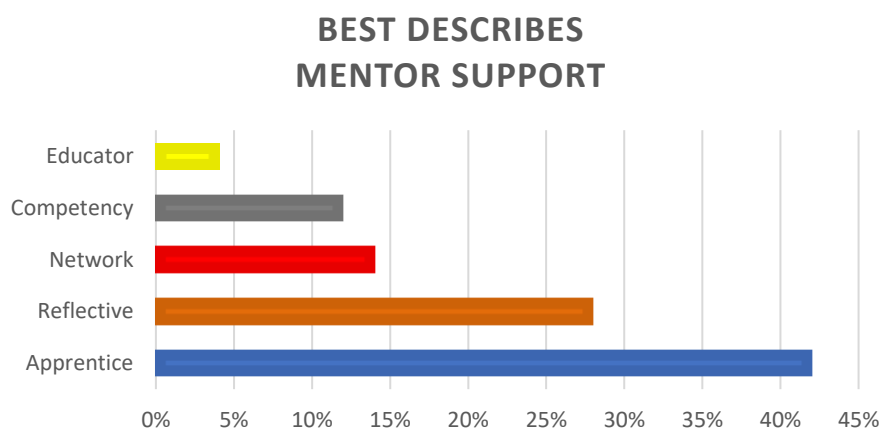
**Figure 3 Best Describes Mentor Support**

Mentor provided me with practices to use in my sessions **42%** reference to Apprentice Model Butler, (2005) - Mentor as 'Master Coach'.

Working with my mentor we discussed strengths and weaknesses of my coaching sessions and suggested areas of development: **28%** reference to Reflective Practitioner Model Vella *et al.*,(2013).

Mentor encourages self-reflection. Mentor Listened, observed, and responded to my needs as a coach by discussing and signposting me to further experience to enhance my coaching: **14%** reference to Network Model Occhino *et al..* (2013) - Mentor as sponsor.

Mentor outlined skills/techniques and practices for me to learn and develop, to then enhance my coaching sessions: **12%** reference to Competency Model Santos *et al.,* (2010) - Mentor as Trainer.

Mentor listened and signposted me to experiences to enhance my coaching **4%** reference to Educator Model Nash and Sproule, (2009) - Mentor as Educator.

**Question 8:** From the below statements, what do you feel best describes your relationship?
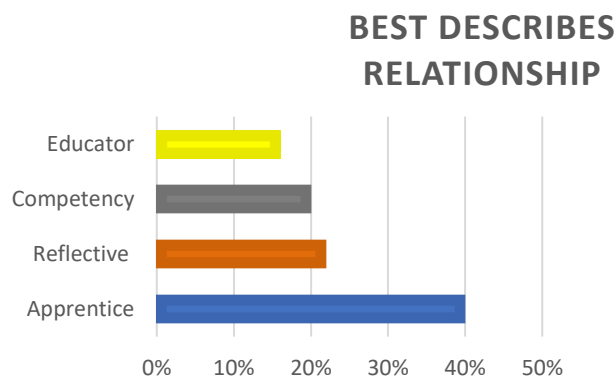


**Figure 4 Best Describes Relationship**

Mentor led my development **41%** reference to Apprentice Model Butler (2005) – Mentor as 'Master Coach'.

We discussed and questioned aspects of my coaching sessions **23%** reference to Reflective Practitioner Model Vella et al (2013) - Mentor encourages. self-reflection.

Mentor presented a range of ideas to help me develop **20%** reference to Competency Model Santos *et al.,* (2010) - Mentor as Trainer.

I told the mentor what I wanted to work on within my coaching sessions **16%** reference to Educator Model Nash and Sproule, (2009) - Mentor as Educator.

**Question 9:** From the list below, what mentor strategies did you find most helpful during the process to support your coaching?
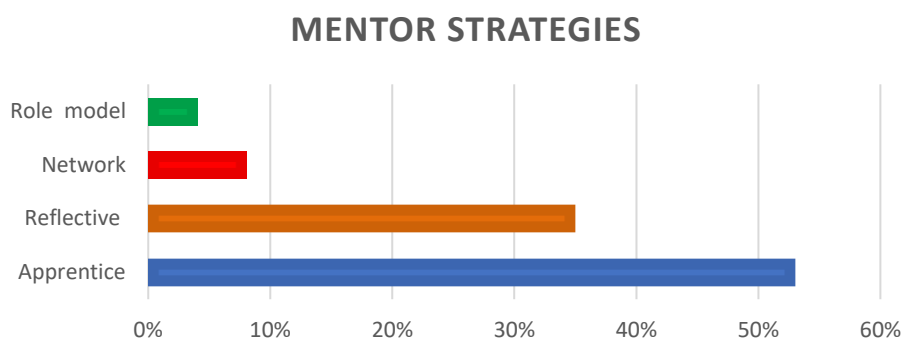
**MENTOR STRATEGIES**



**Figure 5 Mentor Strategies**

Mentor led coaching sessions/demonstrations with your group **53%** reference to Apprentice Model Butler, (2005) - Mentor as 'Master Coach'.

Mentor gave me individual feedback 1-2-1 **35%** reference to Reflective Practitioner Model Vella *et al.*, (2013) - Mentor encourages self-reflection.

Mentor signposted me to new resources (e.g., online practice ideas) practices **8%** reference to Network Model Occhino *et al.,* (2013) - Mentor as sponsor.

Mentor led group model coaching demonstrations (Club Coach Development Event) **4%** reference to 'Role Model' model Norman, (2012) - Mentor as Inspiration.

**Question 10 - 11:** Were to help ascertain the benefit of the programme and understand if the mentees expectations of the programme were met.

| Questions | Answer Fields |
|---|---|
| Could you please rate how beneficial the mentoring support has been for you as a coach? | |
| Lots of Benefit | 71% |
| Limited Benefit | 9% |
| Some Benefit | 19% |
| No Benefit | 1% |
| **Could you please rate how you feel your expectations of the programme were met?** | |
| Did not know what to Expect | 41% |
| More than Expected | 33% |
| Adequately Met | 17% |
| Slightly Met | 9% |

**Table 2 Mentee Questions 10-11**

## 3.8    Results and experiences.

The aim of this chapter was to best understand the subjective experiences of coach mentees within the FA Coach Mentor Programme pre the Covid-19 pandemic, and prior to the FA Education and subsequent wider Department re-structure of 2020. Looking at the data captured, there is evidence that the programme and process undertaken was in the main received well by the mentees within the programme (Table.2.). However, with the FA fit for the future strategy 2020-2024 citing a personalised and connected learning experience as important and moving towards a broader 'Coach Developer' role, it is important to understand the subjective experiences of past delivery, to help inform future practice. What was delivered in practice and what can we take from the mentees reported experiences to help shape any future coach development practice? One of the key drivers for the department is the transference of positive coaching

practice into developing more skilful players, cognitive players, via transformative coaching, and the wider coach development within the game.

It could be argued that for any neophyte coach to get the maximum benefit from any mentoring process, and for the mentee to also develop via the process, that understanding 'what' the mentoring programme can offer and what the expectations are for both mentee and mentor is of paramount importance. From a simple 'top and tail' of the initial data, received from the 75 respondents, 40% of the coaches had been coaching between one and two years, 8% had no formal qualifications and 52% had achieved FA Level 1 (Table.1.). However, of Interest, 41% of the mentee coaches selected 'did not know what to expect' when answering the question on if their expectations were met (Table.2.). According to Sawiuk, Taylor, and Groom, (2018), formal mentoring programmes are often controlled by Governing Bodies (GBs), where dyadic mentorships are structured and monitored through the obtainment of objectives. The FA Coach Mentoring figures at this time are impressive, citing some 10,000 coaches supported, and the benefit rating from this one study has the figure high at 33% above expectations (Table.2.). However, there is little evidence of the mentoring programme responding to the specific needs of the mentee. Leeder *et al.,* (2018) relates to formalised programmes having greater structure and control as potentially being deemed valuable but also highlights the formalisation process might introduce problematic elements relating to institutional agendas and financial constraints. Through this increased formalisation, employed coach mentors may begin to adopt normalising and disciplinary practices, to ensure mentee coaches are working towards prescribed coaching frameworks and objectives required by the administering organisation (Sawiuk, Taylor, & Groom, 2016; Zehntner & McMahon, 2018).

Indeed, in support of this, the model framed questions, 7-9; have a high return on the Apprentice based model, *Mentor as Master Coach*. The mentor leading sessions and demonstrations as well as providing practices for the mentee coaches. However, as highlighted in question six, only 4% of coaches highlighted match day as receiving frequent support (Table.1). The question therefore must be asked as to the transference of practice to the match day environment and the relevance of the interventions on practice to help support more skilful, cognitive players and developmental coaches.

## 3.9 Discussion and wider conceptual tensions towards future studies.

Within sport, mentoring is being positioned to support coach learning as a valuable tool for the coach to use. The mentor can be instrumental in helping to develop the necessary skills for both personal growth and professional development (Nash, 2014). If this is indeed true, we need to understand what has been impactful from the mentee's perspective. As seen in the FA Coach Mentor report (2017), mentors highlighted how they felt they have impacted positively on the mentee's development However, there is little evidence from the mentees perspective on what had impacted on their own development and what were the actual benefits from the process.

One of the most salient points to emerge from this initial study is in the answers to the last question, question 11.

**'Finally, could you please rate how you feel your expectations of the programme were met'?** 41% of the respondents some 30 coaches had no prior expectations and did not know what to expect from the process.
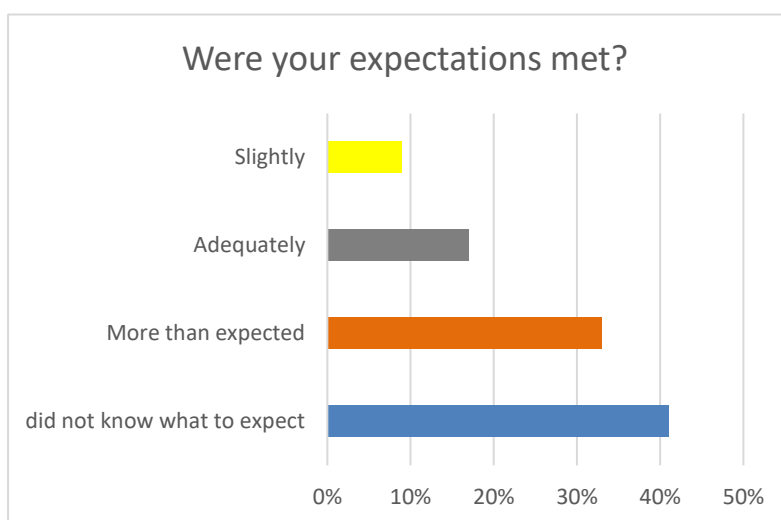


**Figure 6 Were your expectations Met?**

With further reference to mentoring, Nash, (2014) highlights coaches across all levels of the coaching qualification spectrum must want to improve their coaching practice, which assumes they must be open to change. This statement raises a few important questions as to what may have happened if the mentees understood the mentoring process they were entering better. Within the 41%, did the mentees have an opportunity to highlight areas of development, areas of trepidation, areas of strength? Match day environments? Or if they had been

given enough information initially, could this of helped them engage into a process that may have had far more beneficial outcomes for their coaching practice? Initial results from the research indicates that there is a real need for mentors to have their role clearly defined. To ensure maximum benefit is gained from the mentoring process, mentors are most effective when they understand the ramifications of the role they are being asked to fulfil. Perhaps more importantly, for this relationship to be effective the mentee has to understand and endorse this role (Nash 2003; Colley, 2003). Mentoring has been heavily advocated within coaching as a means to harness the influential power of experience through guidance, observation, and support, empowering coaches to become better equipped to deal with the ambiguous and complex nature of their work (Cushion, 2015; Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Nash & McQuade, 2015).

Taking this research into account, and to better understand how the relationships were started, Questions four to six were posed to understand better who initiated the first contact and, the frequency of the contact. (Table.1).

34% of mentees said that the mentor initiated the contact and another 32% said that the club recommended the mentee received mentoring. A further 6% spoke of the County FA instigating the contact. Therefore, some 70% of respondents indicated that the first contact, first meeting or first initial conversation was not instigated by them personally. One of the questions this raises is how much time it took to build the initial rapport, initial understanding, or identification of needs? Interestingly, 100% of the Level 4 coaches identified, and 42% of the Level 3 identified coaches stated that they instigated the first meeting with their mentor. These figures seem to highlight what may be termed a more intentional thought process to engage cognitively from more experienced coaches in the survey. However, focusing on the 41% of respondents who didn't know what to expect, it must be considered how a broader understanding of 'what' the expectations of the programme may be could have significant impact on the findings. This would seem an area for further investigation.

Following on from this, another significant finding from this research is that 80% of mentees met their mentor at training sessions. Only 4% highlighted match day as a venue for frequent meetings. This is significant if we reflect on the mentoring programmes impact on practice transferring to match day. Taking into

consideration the significant shortfall in match day mentoring, and the importance placed on match day behaviours across the game, this area warrants further investigation.

## 3.10  Limitations and next steps.

It must be acknowledged that there are some significant methodological and research-based limitations to this study; not least, in conducting the study during Covid-19, which significantly limited the options for the collection of any data. Furthermore, and methodologically, although the sample size of 75 mentees may seem fairly robust, it is accepted a far larger demographic of mentees was not included within the findings which could have supported the results.  Also, acknowledged is understanding that with an historic paucity of specific research into the programme,  the study also leaves a lack of reliable pre-data and a largely subjective lens for the research. Among qualitative researchers, the interview is often preferred above the questionnaire for its potential to provide rich ideographic data, the characteristics of which are in keeping with the interpretive framework, (Rasavi, 2001). It is acknowledged therefore, that such methods as focus group interviews may have captured much richer data. Furthermore, with this study being undertaken during the height of Covid-19, in 2020, research into online platforms and the facilitation of group interviews online, were not as robust as today. The limitations of being able to collect data on a wide demographic scale during Covid-19 was also exacerbated with myself being the sole researcher which can lead to potential researcher bias. One way to help protect against the effects of researcher bias is to pre-submit any research plans. This can be achieved by pre-specifying the rationale, hypotheses, methods, and analysis plans, and submitting these to a third-party, (Wagenmakers *et al.,* 2012). For this study, and considering this further, the pre-plans, and research questions were submitted, discussed, and critiqued with my university supervisor. As the research plans, and questions were specified before the results are known, this helped reduce the potential for cognitive biases and selective reporting, (Nosek *et al.,* 2019). The subsequent data checking was also submitted and discussed with the same supervisor.

Whilst considering the limitations, and potential for bias within this study, by using established models as a lens for the questions within this research, namely the work of Nash, (2014), and taking into consideration the initial recommendations of Potrac, (2014), has at least offered a broader insight into the experiences of the mentee's perspective. Largely, from the data collected, the mentor visited once a fortnight, at training and provided practices, and led sessions. In general, the visits and sessions seem to be well received and of perceived benefit by the mentee; however, a large proportion of the mentees didn't know what to expect from a mentor relationship that was again, in the main, instigated by others rather than themselves. It is also acknowledged that there are nuanced outcomes to the data, with reflective practice also being highlighted by several mentees 28% Q7, 22% Q8 as an example, however, there are indications that the programme in the early stages and in this format predominately, happened to the mentee, rather than with the mentee.

Further insight, research and understanding is needed, but within this interesting initial study, there are some early indications that there may have been a lack of clarity as to how mentoring was delivered nationally, and how it was therefore perceived by the mentee coaches in this context. If we are to move to a more personalised and connected approach, a more coach centred approach as highlighted in the new FA Fit for the Future strategy, then it is important for us to better understand how mentoring is defined and what is expected from an FA leadership perspective.

***Reflexive Thread:*** *I was extremely mindful that this initial empirical study was not only for the thesis and to set an important foundation stone for the following chapters, but also, that as this was the first detailed study into the mentees in such a wide programme nationally, that the findings may indeed also support the Football Association in capturing some interesting wider related mentoring data. Some of the most salient points to come out for this thesis research included the large percentage of mentees around the lack of expectations, and having a mentor led experience, and this will help inform research areas moving forward. However other wider, and extremely interesting outcomes such as the huge disparity in the number of mentors attending match day to training, will help the broader impact within the recruitment and planning*

*of the programme. All, however, with the purpose of impacting positively directly, or indirectly on coach mentoring practice.*

## 3.11  Another shift in the day job, June 2021.

**'FA National coach development lead Diversity and Inclusion, strategic lead South Region' and leading mentoring for the mentee development programme.**

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the Prof. Doc journey has had its challenges and barriers in terms of Covid-19, and the department undertaking a significant restructure in which I was made redundant and had to re-apply for a role in August-September 2020 with my current team and role being placed under risk. Less traumatic, but none the less distracting, was the fact that following the resignation of the FA National Coach Development Lead (Diversity and Inclusion) in June 2021, and via a three- stage interview process, On August 17th, 2021, I was appointed the FA National Coach Development Lead as well as becoming the Strategic Coach Development Lead for the South Region.

As National Coach Development Lead (D&I) and Strategic Lead for the South Region, mentoring remains an important focus and an enabler to our work on the ground as D&I Lead the D&I Coach Developers will all have mentors working in the inclusion space, but some of the Regional staff in the South Region I will line manage in this role, will have mentors working in the Girls and Women's space, and PE staff working in education. Following the re-introduction of the mentoring pilot project in early 2021, consisting of thirty-four mentors the recruitment of forty-eight mentors to support D&I twenty-four, Girls and Women's twenty-four, took place in August 2021. There are also plans to recruit mentors to support goalkeeping, futsal, and regional mentors to help regional staff in supporting this work on the ground (February 2022). The roles are all paid, part time. The eight regional coach development officers for Diversity and Inclusion and coach developers for Girls and Women will line manage the mentors to help extend our reach and support across the game. I will oversee the delivery of this important work from a D&I team perspective whilst ensuring consistency from my teams work with mentoring across other business areas.

The main KPI (Key Point Indicator) for the D&I team is to support coaches with Black and Asian heritage on the ground. The four-year fit for the future

strategy highlights the absolute need for a more diverse coaching workforce. The narrative from contemporary research is that from the coaches' experiences, we need to emphasise the need for key stakeholders in sport to recognise the relational experiences that facilitate, as well as constrain, progression of Black and Asian Coaches in order to challenge all racialised and gendered inequalities. (Rankin-Wright, Hylton & Norman, 2019). To this end, Face to Face contact, and using mentoring in this context will be a powerful tool to help remove barriers and break down stubborn inequalities across the game.

Cultural difference has been a central theme within much of the academic debate regarding British Asians in football. Kilvington, (2019), notes that British Asians encounter additional and heightened barriers in comparison to black players and coaches. Newburn and Shiner, (2006) suggest that the reality of mentoring cannot be conveyed adequately through a 'mentoring works' or, 'mentoring does not work' formula but states that mentoring shows real potential as a means of working with disaffected groups. The importance of mentors being visible role models across all historically underrepresented groups, and therefore mentees having someone to aspire too cannot be underestimated.

The implementation of coach mentors to support on the ground gives us a great opportunity to turn the dial in respect of breaking down the historic underrepresentation of Black and Asian coaches by offering direct and tangible support at the front end of the game. Referring to the wider research, the importance of rapport, connection trust and mentoring being reciprocal leaps to the fore when mentoring for inclusion. Clutterbuck, (1998) states that difference should be excepted within the relationship as a resource of learning, the mutuality of the learning exchange is then fundamental to the process in the appreciation, understanding and inclusion of people.

With a view to making FA Education 'Personalised and Connected' and with a significant resource being attributed to supporting Coaches of Black and Asian heritage, an area in which I now lead strategically, as highlighted throughout this research journey, understanding the landscape, what the coaches want, what the coaches have experienced historically is of paramount importance. Mentoring for inclusion, for Diversity and Inclusion, should be a golden thread through the FA's coach development framework. To be truly

inclusive and to be personalised and connected should mean being consistent in its approach to mentoring as a tool for coach development whilst being cognitive, understanding, and supportive of each mentee's individual needs.

## 3.12  Leading mentoring for the FA mentee development Programme. 2021-2022.

**Supporting FA Diversity and Inclusion via a mentoring lens. (Overview).**

The Mentee Development Programme (MDP) sits within the remit of the FA Coach Diversity and Inclusion Manager within FA Education and has been in place for some five years. The programme, now sponsored by the Chelsea FC Foundation, provides a season-long placement for 10 aspirational, intentional coaches, and aims to accelerate their development and help them break into the professional game, with each coach receiving a bespoke and agile programme. Coach applicants for the programme are widely from historically underrepresented groups within society, such as coaches who are female and coaches of Black and Asian heritage.

The selected mentees will receive:

- An opportunity to observe England national team development camps.
- Bespoke individualized development action plan based around the coaches needs and wants.
- A blended learning approach with a comprehensive webinar series around player development coupled with face-to-face opportunities to observe this in action with club visits.
- Study visits to professional clubs to observe the boys' and girls' academies.
- Season-long 1-1 mentoring
- Presentation and communication skills workshops developing employability skills.
- A CV Day run by the LMA. (League Managers Association)
- Reflection skill workshops
- Developing a series of communities of practice to share experiences and network.
- A series of tactical and analysis workshops.

- Opportunity to complete Talent ID Level 2 qualification.

The qualifying criteria for those wishing to apply is UEFA B for male applicants, and Level 2/UEFA C Licence working towards UEFA B or above for female applicants.

I was approached by the FA Coach Diversity and Inclusion Manager during July 2021 to ask if I could support the programme for the season by leading the mentoring process for the mentees. This would include designing a mentoring framework for the season, recruiting, and assigning mentors, delivering four F2F visits with the mentees, act as liaison for the mentors, and mentor one of the mentees myself. Reflecting on my studies research topic and my professional practice, it was an ideal opportunity to permeate through another layer of mentoring practice, align the findings to my research and support mentees from historically underrepresented groups.

Aligning the Mentoring definition to the Mentee Development Programme was helpful in giving the mentees an understanding of the ethos and purpose of the programme. To not only support the cohort as mentees, but to equip them to be future mentors for new intake of mentees in the future.

**Framework set based on this research and (Mentee development context).**

Firstly, considering the context of the Mentoring Development Programme (MDP), in networking, promoting visibility and employability we selected a bank of Mentors who had the relevant skills; Working in or experience of coach development, experience of being a mentor, learner focused and agile and flexible. We also recruited a diverse group of mentors to reflect the mentee demographic. The importance of female coaches, mentors or developers as visible and accessible role models cannot be underestimated as an imperative aspect of female coach development (Sawiuk & Groom, 2019). As an example, mentors who were female and actively working in the game were recruited as mentors, furthermore, mentors of Black and Asian heritage were also involved within the process. Diversity within the mentor workforce will enhance a mentee's ability to "imagine themselves there" through bespoke, sensitive, and inspirational mentoring practice (O'Callaghan, 2014; Sawiuk & Groom, 2019).

Part of the FA Diversity and Inclusion teams Development Strategy states that visibility of diverse role models is of paramount importance to the D&I Coach Development Pathways. It is also important to offer the coach mentees who were female, the opportunity to be supported by female mentors who could model, advise, and demonstrate their own pathways and any barriers navigate on their journey. As Sawiuk and Groom, (2019), suggest, to support where, perhaps mentorships can support women in climbing these "greasy poles", with female mentees tending to prefer female mentors who can help them to make sense of "what works for me?"

Mentors were asked to provide a biography, highlighting their experiences, attributes as well as the area of the country they lived and worked. For context, mentors included: An ex-England International Head Coach of Black Heritage, an Ex, Professional player and coach developer, a senior coach who was female and of Black Heritage, two female FA Regional Members of Staff and a Professional Academy Coach of Asian Heritage. For further context, as mentoring lead I was also a mentor across the programme delivery. Mentees were also asked to provide a bio and with consent, these were shared with mentors. Currently, the recruitment of sports coach mentors is haphazard, with coaching experience and qualifications often valorised and uncritically assumed to be the necessary pre-requisites for effective mentoring provision (Cushion, 2015; Nash & Mallett, 2018). In this instance however, coaching experience, mentoring experience, and also lived experience within historically underrepresented groups was widely considered to offer a balanced, sensitive and supportive mechanism for the mentee's development. Mentors' bios were shared with the mentees who were asked to select their top three mentors. With each mentee guaranteed to have a mentor from within this selection. Also, the opportunity for multiple mentors was open should this be acceptable within time constraints. Although not perfect, taking into consideration the context of the programme, with minimum application criteria, and intentional in their applications it was opportunity towards selecting the mentor to support the journey. Over the ten-month period of the programme the mentees were to receive from a mentoring perspective: Four face to face workshops as a group where the principles of the FA Developing Coaches Through Mentoring Course were delivered which also included post-delivery reflective tasks around this

experience. This was to support the legacy of the mentees transitioning into future mentors to support the next cohort 2022/2023 as support.

Building Rapport, Understanding Self, Observing, Giving/Receiving Feedback, Reflective Practice, and Identifying Learning Needs were explored in two sessions at St Georges Park, one at Loughborough University, and one based at Bedfordshire County FA. Alongside this and aligned to the mentees own individual Development Action Plan, (DAP) individual support from their mentor was offered across the 10-month duration of the programme. The DAP was already an integral part of the programme prior to my involvement in leading the mentoring and was utilised accordingly.

| Development Action Plan DAP - Your DAP is your MAP "Stubborn with your goals but flexible with your methods" | |
|---|---|
| **Vision** | Long term aspiration - what you want to become (require a statement) |
| **Aim** | Ultimate goal long term |
| **Objectives** | What you are going to do to achieve the goals |
| **Tactics** | How you are going to achieve the objectives |
| **SMARTER** | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time related, evaluated, Recorded, short term, medium term, and long-term goals) |

**Table 3 FA Mentee Development Programme DAP.**

Formalised mentoring programmes are often designed and implemented by an organisation i.e., a sport governing body (SGB). Having greater structure and control is deemed valuable, yet the formalisation process might introduce problematic elements relating to institutional agendas and financial constraints. Through this increased formalisation, employed coach mentors may begin to adopt normalising and disciplinary practices, to ensure mentee coaches are working towards prescribed coaching frameworks and objectives required by the administering organisation (Sawiuk, Taylor, & Groom, 2016; Zehntner & McMahon, 2018). Taking this into consideration, and whilst the programme was administered, delivered, and formalised from an NGB perspective, the mentors and via the mentees DAP were asked to ensure any support was based around the mentees own individual needs and development and not specifically conform

or align to specific FA Coach Development practices. Whilst mentoring can be conceptualised as either an informal or formal process. Informal or 'found' mentors are often unplanned and naturally formed relationships between individuals, with these on-going interactions becoming an evitable feature of the coaching environment. However, found mentors are more likely to support rather than challenge existing ideologies, potentially contributing to the reproduction of pre-existing coaching cultures and practices (Griffiths, 2013). Furthermore, Mentees were encouraged to seek other mentors, within their DAP to help support their wider development with the appointed mentor as an important connection to the ongoing programme. Indeed, away from the mentoring specifics, a University Lecturer, independent business consultant and technical analyst were constant across the programme delivery, also there was evidence of mentees selecting staff members and other mentees for guidance and support.

In summary, a successful, inclusive, and widely acclaimed programme of support via mentoring, networking, observational and developmental opportunities.

***Reflexive Thread:*** *Leading on the mentoring aspect was enjoyable, and as an outcome, I wanted to open the mentees to the concept of mentoring and challenge the concept that formalised mentoring can mainly lead to institutionalised and constrained practice. Indeed, by formalising a programme based on its required outcomes, we can also demonstrate that to maximise opportunities, we also need utilise frameworks to help us develop an understanding that we may well need to go beyond our current networks and borders to help us truly challenge our potential horizons. It also helped me understand how a relational approach may benefit mentoring in a diversity and inclusion-based programme environment. Mentoring in this context has provided the mentees with bespoke and personalised support. It has been a powerful experience both witnessing and supporting how mentoring can help in not just creating one to one opportunities, but by supplying a learning platform for informal networking opportunities to further and help remove historic barriers.*

# Chapter 4. Empirical study 2. 4.0. FA senior managers and corporate view of mentoring.

**Empirical study 2 overview.**

The purpose of this study was to better understand what the perception of mentoring was from an FA Leadership Perspective. The only previous insight and research into the programme (Potrac 2014; Leeder *et al.,* 2019; FA Mentor Report, 2017) as previously mentioned, focused specifically on the mentors' practice, and pre Covid -19 and therefore, in a different format. With the implementation of the 2020-2024 FA Fit for the Future Strategy, and a strategic goal of developing a more 'Personalised and Connected' learning experience for coaches and coach development, and with the FA Mentoring programme now returning; understanding what the leadership responsible for the delivery of the programmes perception of mentoring is, will help support any future mentoring delivery within its specific context. To clarify, as with empirical study one, no formal research has ever been undertaken regarding the mentoring programmes leadership and therefore, this studies purpose was to help ascertain what the managers perception of mentoring is and to identify any potential alignment, or disparity to what the mentees have experienced on the ground. It is hoped that this study will help inform, develop, and enhance the mentor programme delivery and practice moving forward.

**Keywords: mentoring, coach development, expectations, connections**

## 4.1 An Introduction.

Whilst a number of sports organisations have embraced mentoring as a development tool to enhance and improve coaching practice, there appears limited evidence of how successful formal coach mentoring programmes are (Bailey *et al.,* 2019). However, what is clear is that formalised coach mentoring programmes are contextually bound and influenced by organisational factors, agendas and also that they can be a source of cultural reproduction (Griffiths 2015; Sawuik *et al.,* 2018). This is supported by Leeder and Cushion, (2019), who concluded that coaching culture was reproduced through formalised sports coach mentoring programme which highlighted wider NGB interests. Therefore,

understanding both the corporate and leaderships concept and view of mentoring within the context of the programme is significant and the focus for this study.

Formalised coach mentoring programmes have become far more prominent in recent years as a means of supporting coach education provision. This is often put in place by the NGB's themselves as seen within the FA Coach Mentor programme. This increased formalisation of employed coach mentors may begin to adopt normalising and disciplinary practices, to ensure mentee coaches are working towards prescribed coaching frameworks and objectives required by the administering organisation (Sawiuk, Taylor, & Groom, 2016; Zehntner & McMahon, 2018). However, in contrast, the findings from study three within this thesis suggest a potential lack of consistency towards any formalised expectations or set agenda that influenced coaches across a national programme, especially in the engagement phase. Although the mentors were working from a direct contractual relationship to support coach mentors on the ground, and in some cases, it would appear mentees adopted direct individual practice from the mentor, there is little evidence of a formalised 'framework' for coach mentors to follow on a wider national scale. Whilst mentoring has been heavily advocated within coaching as a means to harness the influential power of experience through guidance, observation, and support, empowering coaches to become better equipped to deal with the ambiguous and complex nature of their work (Cushion, 2015; Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Nash & McQuade, 2015), understanding, gauging, or recognising the direct impact of such guidance and support is lacking. There is limited literature to understand 'what' outcomes may be desired by NGB's via a formalised coach mentoring programme. It could be argued that by understanding what mentoring means to the relevant leadership within coach development departments, firmer comparisons could be made to understand the impact on the ground. It is easy to assume that prescribed practice is the desired outcome from the NGB itself, but without researching this further and analysing this against both mentee and mentor research, then it is difficult to draw further conclusions.

Returning to the concept of formalised mentoring programmes, Sawiuk *et al.,* (2018), highlights that, formalised mentoring is often situated within institutional frameworks, inclusive of narrow learning outcomes, with external interests influencing the process. Furthermore, more recent research (Sawiuk *et*

*al.,* 2016; Zehntner & McMahon, 2018; Leeder *et al.,* 2019) has begun to add an enhanced level of criticality to sports coach mentoring and has challenged the "distorted and utopian view", whilst revealing the "essential social and relational complexities" inherent within the practice (Potrac, 2016, p. 84). Griffiths, (2015) states that Mentoring is multifaceted and contextual, with organisational structures influencing how the process is perceived and enacted, alongside dictating the volume of training and support mentors receive (Griffiths, 2015). Furthermore, Griffiths, (2015) states that the preparation of sports coach mentors is at present an under researched area; however, we are aware that recruitment and training procedures are irregular and rarely extend beyond one-off introductory workshops. Mentoring is generally a secondary profession in addition to a coach's principal role of developing their athletes (Chambers, 2018) and considering that this specific programme large scale mentoring workforce is predominately part time, ensuring the necessary training, guidance, and support of any consistency of delivery could be problematic with regards to ensuring consistent national practice.

Considering this research further, and also the findings in chapter three that reported that many mentees thought that they had accrued some benefit from engaging in the mentoring programme, but concerningly,  also that there appeared to be only a limited understanding of what to expect from the taking part, we must question the consistency, of delivery across the programme from and especially at the commencement phase of the relationship. Furthermore, taking into consideration that the mentoring relationships were, in the main, instigated by someone other than the mentee themselves and where in many cases, the contact was also infrequent, raises some questions of the understanding the mentees may have had in regards to the mentoring relationship, and therefore, any opportunity they  had to shape or have more input pertaining to their own development and within the parameters of the dyad. Taking all this into consideration, it would be helpful to understand the perception of the mentoring programme as a developmental tool from some of the full time NGB staff who oversee, manage, or support the mentoring programme to help better understand the experiences at the coaching coalface, learn from past delivery and enhance future practice.

## 4.2    Study context.

This study will look to understand further the definition and perception of mentoring from the FA Coach Development department senior management overseeing the revised programme post Covid-19 and the return to the FA Coach Mentoring Programme in returning to practice.

As facilitators of coach learning, sports coach mentors should be trained and provided with ongoing support. Although mentor training alone does not guarantee successful mentorships (Chambers, 2015), it is important to set clear objectives and enhance role clarity (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). Therefore, understanding what the overarching definition of mentoring is directly from the leadership in the department delivering the formalised mentoring programme is, and where it sits across delivery is of importance if it is to disseminate through practice. As already cited within this research, the FA Fit for the Future Strategy 2020-2024 highlights the importance of a 'Personalised and Connected' approach to learning and coach development. It is therefore important to understand how this is perceived by full time management staff supporting mentors, and how this is then transferred to both mentors and mentees alike.  It is also important to recognise that the majority of mentoring post Covid-19 currently takes place across FA Educations targeted and inclusive work; the Girls and Women's game, the Diversity and Inclusion team and its work supporting historically underrepresented groups such as coaches of Black and Asian Heritage, and the Disability pathway. The narrative from contemporary research is that from the coaches experiences we need to emphasize the need for stakeholders in sport to recognize the relational experiences that facilitate as well as constrain, the progression of Black and Asian Coaches in order to challenge all racialized and gendered inequalities (Rankin-Wright *et al.,* 2019). Therefore, it is important that the nuance of these important areas of work and connections with communities are considered in this study.

## 4.3    Methodology. Research design.

Considering and reflecting on the aims of this study, and in trying to maximise the insights into FA educations leadership's view of mentoring within their delivery context, the managers for this study were purposively selected for their direct involvement within the recruitment, management, training, and the strategic leadership of the mentoring programme. Considering the explorative nature of the research and the need to probe the participants views and perception of mentoring practice within the FA Mentoring Programme context, a qualitative methodology was adopted via (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

Qualitative inquiry aims to generate new understandings of the meaning people give to their lives and their worlds. This means qualitative researchers are typically focused on the participants' own descriptions of social and material circumstances, their lived experiences and histories, perspectives, and insights. Based in commitment to these broad goals, qualitative researchers operate from the assumption that people construct their own realities and interpret the world in unique ways, (Salmons, 2021). Therefore, understanding what the reality of mentoring in this context is, and how this is received via mentees could help support future delivery and alignment.

Placed within the interpretivist paradigm, this research adopted a relativist ontology with the view that social reality is constructed and multifaceted, along with a subjectivist epistemology, assuming the knower and the known are merged (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Based upon these factors, a qualitatively orientated case study approach was undertaken to understand the previously under researched area of an NGB's leadership perception of mentoring within its own coaching workplace (Hodge & Sharp, 2016; Stake,1995, 2006). Within such case studies, the case itself is of secondary interest but it helps to support the understanding of a far broader issue. Therefore, although this research focuses on a select case and the experience of each of the four FA Managers, a greater emphasis is placed on understanding the object of study, i.e., there interpretation and view of mentoring within the programme's delivery context, (Leeder, Russell & Beaumont, 2019).

To clarify further, understanding the managers interpretation of mentoring based on their own subjective case experiences from the development and

deployment of the programme was of paramount importance, therefore an interpretivist lens was adopted to best understand the subject's relationship and history with both mentoring and the programme itself.

## 4.4    Participants

In selecting each case, a homogenous purposive sampling technique was adopted, as managers employed by the NGB were all chosen to provide information and understanding on the process and understanding of mentoring (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This approach was also helpful in the rationale' to ensure all relevant areas of the mentoring programme were covered, recruitment, deployment, support and development (See Appendix B3).  Three of the four managers have also been active coach developers and coach educators within FA Education pre Covid-19, with one of the three being the overall strategic and financial lead for the mentoring programme itself, and they also held this position prior to Covid-19 and the subsequent FA departmental restructure. Two of the participants also line manage regions where mentors are currently deployed and utilised. One of the participants is the workforce lead responsible for all affiliated staff such as mentors, and coach developers, with another being the department head for the programme and therefore the overarching strategic and operational lead for grassroots coach development which includes all mentoring and coach development delivery. The managers had accumulated on average 9 years working for the English FA and 6.5 years' experience of working directly within coach development and mentoring in a departmental context, all participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation, guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, and all signed consent forms sanctioned by the researchers' university ethics committee. (See Appendix B1).

## 4.5    Rigour and trust worthiness

Considering more widely this branch of interpretivist epistemology, it is important to recognise the researcher's emergence within the department, management, and structure for this study, and the potential for bias and corporate adherence with the researcher being part of the senior management team, having led the Diversity and Inclusion Team, and currently leading as national coach development lead (Disability).  However, it is also important to recognise that this emergence also supports the essence and values of a professional doctorate in

championing change within an area intrinsically linked to professional practice and tangible knowledge. In this instance, where the senior management's view and interpretation has never been researched to help support the delivery and understanding on the ground to help impact directly on FA coaching and mentoring practice.

To support the data collection further and adherence to rigorous research practice, and prior to any management interviews taking place, a pilot interview was held with a separate, full time Regional Member of FA staff to ascertain the balance, fluidity and understanding of the questions. The pilot interview was conducted via Microsoft Teams, and was therefore recorded, and transcribed verbatim via the platform. Also, the pre-questions were completed within this pilot interview to gain an insight into how they may be interpreted. For clarity, the full-time member of staff was a regional FA coach mentor within the structure pre Covid-19 managing a team of fifty mentors, and post Covid-19, now holds the position of a FA Regional Coach Developer with direct responsibility for FA coach mentors within their region. Post Pilot interview, the recording and transcription were shared with the interviewee to check, challenge, and critique the questions. Consequently, minor adjustments to question five, and to the general ease of phrasing were considered to support the framing of the questions. Furthermore, as trust and rapport shape the process and outcomes of interviews (Sparkes & Smith, 2009), these important components were enhanced by (a) Having a professional understanding of all participants' roles and responsibilities to demonstrate an understanding of their history, role, and parameters and (b) the awareness of the challenges and constraints in delivering the programme on a national level. To support this further, member checking was an important element to ensure participants perceived their quotes and the verbatim scripts were, accurate, balanced, fair, and respectful, (Sparkes & Smith, 2009).

Dialogue between researcher and participant centred on the fairness, appropriateness, and believability of the researchers' interpretations of the data and analysis as a form of member checking took place (Maxwell, 2012). Participants were provided with their transcript verbatim, and a copy of the preliminary analysis. They were asked if the themes and categories made sense to them, and whether overall, it was a realistic and fair reflection of their experiences.

## 4.6    Data Collection.

As previously stated, qualitative research methods were selected for this study based on the subject context and to fairly consider and reflect on the insights of four managers within FA educations leadership structure with regards to mentoring. Pre- Questions linking empirical study one (Mentees Perceptions of the Programme) were employed to add depth and richness to the process. Semi-Structured interviews were then employed to best understand the context, experience, and delivery of the programme and to give freedom for the participants to elaborate on any areas deemed important. The first part of the data collection consisted of reviewing previous research within this study but also evidence and feedback from across the FA Coach Mentor Programme. These were noted to further review the evidence as well as any anecdotal feedback. Prior to any research being undertaken, and as per empirical study one, ethical approval was obtained via University of Central Lancashire and all protocols adhered too. All participants within the research completed informed consent forms. All details were fully explained prior to interview, and all participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The data collected within this study is not of a sensitive nature. However, all data both recorded and written was stored securely within University and FA guidelines. To ensure the confidentiality of the participant's pseudonyms will be used to ensure identities are not revealed (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). Only the researcher has access to the identities of the individuals within the study. The interview question transcripts were followed clearly and concisely and in line with procedure. Adapted interview scripts which had been created with initial reference to interview guidance from Robson and McCartan, (2016).

As previously highlighted, with the implementation of the new 2020-2024 FA Fit for the Future Strategy, the strategic goal of developing a more 'Personalised and Connected' learning experience for coaches and coach development has become a priority for FA England Learning. Furthermore, with the FA Mentoring programme now returning post Covid-19, understanding what the leadership responsible for the delivery of the programmes perception of mentoring is, will help support any future mentoring delivery within its specific context. Semi structured interviews are the preferred data collection method when the researcher's goal is to better understand the participant's unique perspective rather than a generalized understanding of a phenomenon, (McGrath *et al.,* 2019). Although there is often an appropriate place in qualitative research for alternative data collection methods, a primary benefit of the semi-structured interview is that it permits interviews to be focused while still giving the investigator the autonomy to explore pertinent ideas that may come up in the course of the interview, which can further enhance understanding, (Adeoye *et al.,* 2021). This is important when we consider that no research into what the FA Leaderships perception of mentoring is or may be, has previously taken place. Therefore, exploring the leaderships perceptions, ideas and thoughts via contextual semi structured interviews was determined to be the preferred option to engage the participants in a structured manner, whilst also giving the interviewee the autonomy to elaborate their thoughts further. Finally, with regards to interviewing expert practitioners, Ahlin, (2019) states, there is a need to balance real-world experience with sound research methods. Firsthand knowledge and experience are invaluable to describe how a program operates and what management techniques may be used to produce desirable outcomes.

## 4.7   Pre-questions.

Four pre-questions were sent to each of the four managers prior to the interviews taking place. The questions were selected to help the interviewee preview the nature of the subject and tone of the interview, and also to arouse a sense of curiosity and engagement (Watson & Busch, 2019). (See Appendix B4). The questions were also used to gain further insight into some of the main findings from study one pertaining to the perceptions of the coach mentee within the programme.

These Pre-Questions were sent to also support the analysis from the subsequent virtual interviews conducted with the four FA Managers.

Question one of the pre-Questions sent to the four managers was to help, a) Understanding better the participants thoughts around 'The Personalised and Connected' Learning experiences as cited in the FA Fit for The Future Strategy and b) to also ensure the outcomes from empirical study one (Mentee Perceptions) were the catalyst for this study. Also considering that question six which asked about where mentees mostly received their mentoring support cited that 80% of mentees had their mentoring visit at training with only 4% highlighting a significant presence on Match Day.

Pre-Question two was to again ensure linkage to the findings from empirical study one and to align to the managers thoughts. Specifically, findings from question four in the study which asked the mentees who instigated the first meeting in their relationship and in which 70% of mentees said their mentoring relationships were instigated by others (Club/Mentor/County FA).

Pre-Question three was constructed to probe the managers thoughts based on the outcome from empirical study one, question eleven, where mentees were asked to rate how their expectations of the mentoring programme were met and where a significant number of 41% said they did not know what to expect from the programme.

Finally, Pre-Question four also aligned to 70% of the mentees saying that the initial meeting was instigated by another person rather than by themselves. Question four was also aligned to question eleven with regards to supporting mentees at the beginning of the programme. (See Appendix B4).

## 4.8    Interview questions.

The nine questions for the subsequent virtual interviews were reflexive in nature, and the managers were asked to explore particular topics such as their current roles before moving on to more open questions exploring the managers experiences and perceptions around their involvement within the programme. The interviews were semi structured in nature as topics for discussions were prepared in advance; however, any new topics were explored in context to the

discussions. This approach allowed for a greater freedom in terms of the sequencing of the questions and the amount of time given to each topic (Chesterfield, Potrac, & Jones, 2010). All interviews produced real time electronic transcriptions and were therefore, verbatim. An Inductive thematic analysis of the findings was utilised with a manual approach to interpret the data and any reoccurring themes that may increase transferability and credibility (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016; Guest *et al.,* 2012). Sedgwick and Spiers, (2009) recommended that video conferencing is the most viable and cost-effective alternative to face-to-face in-depth interviewing to overcome geographical barriers and time constraints. Also considering all four managers are home based and with a geographical spread from the English south coast to Northwest England, virtual interviews via Microsoft Teams was used. Also, knowing that this would give the capacity to both record and transcribe the interview via the platform. Also considering the impact of Covid -19 throughout this thesis and day to day ways of working, and that the use of virtual communication tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts, Facebook, and WhatsApp have provided good alternatives for researchers to advance and progress with the data collection process to support their fieldwork during this time (Sah LK, Singh DR & Sah RK, 2020).

More specifically, virtual interview questions 1-2 were to ascertain name, job role and time in post with regards to rapport building and trust. (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). Questions 3-4 were to ascertain the interviewees perception on wider mentoring, skills, and attributes with questions 5-8 focusing on the specifics on the perceived impact, challenges of the programme and future delivery. Question 9 gave the interviewee the opportunity to elaborate of discuss any other aspects around the programme that had not been discussed.

## 4.9   Data analysis.

Initially, the author familiarised himself with the interview transcriptions via thorough reading and re-reading of all data items, therefore, becoming immersed with the data's content.  Data was then coded in both a data driven (inductive) and theoretically driven (deductive) manner, with the aim of identifying passages of interest which capture both content and theoretical relevance (Braun et al., 2016). (See Appendix B5-B6). Recorded codes were then collated and organised

into candidate themes which highlighted higher level patterns and captured significant aspects of the data set (Braun et al., 2016). Themes were then reviewed, refined, and named to develop a rich analytical narrative, before integrating both data extracts and analytic commentary during the write up phase (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure the confidentiality of the participant's they will be simply named as manager one, two, three and four to ensure identities are not revealed (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Only the main researcher has access to the identities of the individuals within the study and no reference to their identity will be made.

## 4.10 Themes.

Research which simply presents sports coach mentorship as straightforward, benign, and always beneficial for sports coaches should be challenged, as it fails to capture the true complexities and realities of practice (Cushion, 2015). Therefore, the aim of this research was to understand the managers view of mentoring within this context. Understanding what the overarching definition of mentoring is directly from the leadership in the department delivering the formalised mentoring programme is, and where it sits across delivery is of importance if it is to disseminate through practice. Furthermore, Sawiuk and Groom's, (2019) work pertaining to mentoring in coach education, highlights that mentor's observations are likely to be informed by institutional agendas, potentially associated with perceived coaching workforce demographic needs, qualification targets, and prescriptive coaching models. Furthermore, a GB (Governing body) may adopt a structured approach to mentoring by establishing objectives, highlighting key practices, matching mentors, and mentees, and delivering training (Cushion, 2015; Sawiuk *et al.,* 2018). Therefore, questioning the effectiveness of formalised sports coach mentoring appears rational (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006).

Reflecting on the research to date, chapters one to three of this thesis, and also having been inextricably linked to the mentoring work across FA Education for some nine years, as a researcher, I can fully understand both the perception and the outcomes for this research and the challenge for NGB's in trying to establish pathways for coaches that are both impactful and bespoke. However,

to satisfy funding partners, attain wider and important political and business targets, the measuring outcomes and numbers is hard to ignore.

However, post Covid-19 with the implementation of the FA Fit for the Future Strategy, the deployment of a team of Coach Developers as opposed to Coach Educators, and a clear objective of a more 'personalised and Connected approach, there is a tangible recognition of a more mentee focused approach to mentoring, challenging as this may be.

Analysing and aligning the codes thematically from both the pre-questions and virtual interviews resulted in three main themes.

1) Commencement, engagement, expectations - mentee perspective
2) The Importance of rapport, relationships, and connections
3) The development of the Mentee / person (Skills) not just qualification attainment

## 4.11 Results and discussion.

**Commencement, engagement, expectations - mentee perspective.**

There was a theme across the responses from both the pre-questions and interview questions of the need to outline the programme better from the mentee's perspective, and to help them define any potential need or, delivery expectations at the commencement of the mentoring relationship. For example, Manager 2 stated,

*'I think mentors being clear in the initial process when they meet them (Mentee) face to face would be the most powerful'.*

Manager 3 had the experience of having an FA Coach Mentor within the programme prior to Covid-19:

*' I was actually a recipient as a grassroots coach. I had a couple of coach mentors that supported me in my grassroots setting. I definitely took something from both of them and it was worthwhile. But I felt almost a little bit like the process was done to us if that makes sense. And you know, we were volunteered as a club because we were we were Charter Standard club by the county FA, and we were told we got the opportunity to get a mentor. And here's*

*your mentor. You get them for these many hours. And then it was just about building that connection with them, the individuals were great, but when I think about the process of deployment, the process of matching connecting, it was probably a bit clunky. A little bit hit a miss'.*

Furthermore, manager 3 stated; '*I think it's really important that the mentee has a clear idea of why they want a mentor. Where are they trying to get to?*

Whilst mentoring is frequently conceptualised as either a formal or informal "learning situation" for coaches, the wider nuances of mentorship (e.g., mentor behaviours, development of rapport) within the coach learning process are often overlooked, (Leeder & Sawiuk 2020). Rapport featured heavily in the Managers responses especially relating to the initial stages of the process, Manager 2 explained:

*'For me that Rapport is massive. But I think it's that connection that people have with you and they see something in, in you that can potentially help them'.*

It is interesting that all the interviewees highlight the importance and the concept of rapport. As mentioned earlier in the thesis when reviewing previous formal coach education and specific FA coach education, there appears to be a significant step away from the historic certify approach aligning to the concept of personalised and connected learning. However, also reflecting on the interviewee's experiences, there does seem to be a real shift towards developing connection with coaches.

With many of the relationships pre-COVID-19 from a mentee perspective being defined as them 'having no prior expectations', (41%) in Chapter 3, and furthermore, that in the main, the initial instigation of the relationship was then non - mentee led, (70%), then the initial brokerage, or outlining of the benefits, or expectations for the coach mentee would seem worthy of further reflection. Manager 4 also highlighted the importance of the first engagement, potential mentee perceptions, as the relationship commences:

*'The immediate thing that jumps out at me, is that the human (Mentoring) social interaction is huge. How do you go into that initial conversation and quite quickly be able to remove the walls of someone's' coming and they're coming from an organisation with a Stigma or a reputation behind it, I think that's*

*a huge relationship skill that is massively undervalued. The stigma around the three lions and 'someone from the FA is coming to see me', and it's actually 'oh' someone from the FA is coming to see me'.* **language clarification from interview**: (**oh no**, *someone from the FA is coming to see me; to,* **oh yes,** *someone from the FA is coming to see me*).

Finally, Manager 1 was critical of how the initial brokerage of mentor/mentee connections were initially made within the programme,

*This is a challenge that currently sits on the first engagement of the mentor and mentee. It's Identified a gap in our ability to understand the learner to provide them with' just for you' support.* However, they further clarify,

'*We need a Clearer sign-up process, with the Mentor providing this detail to clearly articulate and sell the benefits of mentoring'.*

Helping the mentee coach understand what the mentoring journey entails, what they may expect at the commencement of any mentoring interaction was deemed important and aligned to a coach development standpoint and to the journey being personalised and connected. There was also a recognition, that in previous FA Coach Mentoring Practice, there may not have been a consistent approach.

## 4.12  The Importance of rapport, relationships, and connections.

Rapport is based upon mutual confidence, trust, and acceptance. Rapport is referred to as the capability to relate to others in a manner that generates a level of belief and understanding (Kapur 2021). Rapport is the ability to relate to others in such a way that it creates a strong level of trust and understanding. Trust and trustworthiness are considered essential features of successful sport coach mentoring pedagogy (Alexander & Bloom, 2023; Chambers, 2015). Furthermore, Kerry and Mayes, (2013), argue that trusting relationships enable learning to occur more effectively and collaboratively. Considering that in this context the FA are building a mentoring relationships that are a more personalised experience for the mentee, then trust would seem an important component. If NGBs and other [non] sporting bodies are to equip sport coach mentors, they must provide dedicated training and ongoing support that reinforces the pivotal role of interpersonal trust and supports the development of

context-specific strategies that foster trustworthy impressions (Leeder, Russell, & Beaumont, 2019, Leeder & Sawiuk, 2021, Potrac, 2016). Further, sport coach mentors receive limited professional development, training, and ongoing support opportunities for navigating trust relations in their work (Leeder & Sawiuk, 2021). As previously highlighted, managers within this study recognised the importance of rapport and especially the potential stigma of the three lions and potential nervousness and therefore the need to build of trust. Therefore, it is important to build rapport with your mentee or mentor to begin the process positively, goal set, and offer support. Rapport is very often the first step on the road to development, (Clutterbuck, 2015). When the FA Coach Mentoring Programme emerged from the COVID -19 led suspension and the subsequent re-structure into 2021, there was a strong willingness to learn and implement a more person focused approach alongside the personalised and connected approach highlighted within the FA's fit for the future strategy. The FA Mentoring programme developed a mentoring working group to define mentoring in its own context:

*'Mentoring is to support, encourage and challenge coaches to manage their own learning within their own specific context, helping them to maximise their potential, develop their skills, recognise their attributes; and all towards them becoming the coach and person they want to be'.*

This relational theme permeated the interviews, Manager one,

*'I mean, for me, there is a big debate on how much technical knowledge is needed but fundamentally building a relationship and rapport where a coach can have some true reflection based on the relationship is key for me'.*

With Manager 2 saying:

*'I think they've (Mentor) gotta be able to build relationships, to be able to get on with people. They've then gotta be able to use that as a vehicle to help coaches get better now'. Manager 3, 'They (Mentors) need to, you know, build that relationship which is face to face. You can't replace that'.*

Rapport is often referred to as the connection, which is particularly harmonious and sympathetic in nature. The imperative area that is essential for rapport building is effective communication between the individuals. The main aspects that lead to effective communication are, active listening, using

appropriate non-verbal communication, using appropriate voice and tone, giving factual information, using reinforcement, and summarizing important points from the conversation (Kapur 2021). Furthermore, according to Clutterbuck and Hussain (2010), 'Rapport is the core of the coaching relationship'. Without rapport, there can be no genuine coaching relationship, making it difficult for clients to reach their full potential. Manager 4, elaborated on why rapport is important in the FA Coach Mentoring context,

*'And actually, without that (Rapport), you're never going to get to a conversation that allows somebody to be, completely vulnerable with you around. ''These are the challenges I have; this is what I think I'm really good at, and if we don't do that, the relationship will never progress to actually make impact on an individual and what they're trying to do and, and the wider ripple impact of that'.*

According to Ghods (2009), coaching should acknowledge the coaches' supportive skills – such as warmth, compassion, patience, and empathy – as vital in building a strong coaching relationship. As already highlighted, formalised NGB programmes may be perceived as hierarchical, and using institutionalised agendas, so the importance of rapport and building rapport and trust was deemed to be of significance. Manager 3 stated,

*'Rapport is important I suppose, it's about unlocking. It's about, you know, if we can do that, unlock, it can really help from a learning perspective'.*

As Fisher *et al.,* (2011) highlight, rapport is an interpersonal behaviour comprising numerous techniques for developing and maintaining a comfortable social environment and enhancing communication.

## 4.13  The development of the mentee / person (Skills).

Potrac, (2016) explains that the adoption of a relational perspective also allows us to examine the connections between the sporting, working and home lives of grass-roots football coaches. To date, little, if any, attention has been afforded to the interconnections between the multiple social networks in which these coaches are embedded. This is also important when recognising the FA Fit for the Future Strategies wider aim on adopting a personalised and connected approach to coach development to better support and understand the mentee coaches.

Therefore, arguably, if we are to take a more, person centred, stance to coach development, consequently supporting the mentee to better understand wider relationships and connections is important. This is supported by Bailey, Jones and Allison, (2019) who calls for mentors to support their mentees in apprehending the social structures which influence wider coaching practice. Dubois *et al.,* (2002) further argue, that focusing on more social mentoring-related improvements may have far-reaching effects on environments. Developing social skills, for example, is one of the main goals of mentoring. Therefore, how we help the coach develop and recognise the importance of these wider relational skills is significant. Whilst recognising that formal mentoring programmes are often controlled by Governing Bodies (GBs), where dyadic mentorships are structured and monitored through the obtainment of objectives (Sawiuk, Taylor, & Groom, 2018), it is also worth taking note when an NGB's corporate view demonstrates a shift to a more relational and developmental standpoint.

Aligning to historic Coach Education delivery, Manager 1,

*'Whenever anyone has traditionally worked with the FA, it's always probably been in an assessment format to get a qualification or to to, get something, and we are seen as like the ones you can say yes or no to that, so I think that has been a real challenge'.*

Aligning to the fit for the future strategy, and a personalised and connected approach,

Manager 3, *'If you want to really jump to development, I think it takes some fundamental changes in what we do, and I'm not sure either us or the game is ready to be brave enough to do that completely. I would build things that could be delivered much more flexibly that would incorporate mentoring into that piece, whether we call them mentors, or they're just coach developers with a really high mentoring skill set. I don't know. However, we have moved that way, towards people skills'.*

Manager 4, *'And that might be something for the next strategy cycle in the next 18 months, two years that we just look at our workforce as coach developers and really shine a light on the mentoring skills of that. And how we develop those mentoring skills. And that wouldn't just be in in the grassroots space that would*

*be across the game. Arguably in our professional game will also be using mentoring skills to support'.*

Manager 3, *'If it was in my gift, I think we would have more mentors. We would have better mentors. We would have a better training programme for mentors, build things that could be delivered more flexibly. That doesn't always mean like they have to get better at their delivery with the footballer but it can be with other stuff as well'*

## 4.14 Concluding thoughts, limitations and next steps.

This aim of this study was to understand the perception of mentoring from the FA Coach Development department senior management team that oversee the revised programme post Covid-19 and the return to the FA Coach Mentoring Programmes return to practice. Whilst recognising the significant change within the FA Coach Mentoring programme with regards to numbers and demographics pre Covid-19 (Targeted work) and reduction of mentor numbers, the managers within this study clearly recognised the historical, perceptual, and operational challenges across the programme's delivery. Namely, defining, outlining what the mentee should expect and experience from the outset, as well as the 'why' they should be involved as well as be more coach development focused.

Leeder and Cushion, (2020), suggest that some sport coach mentors purposefully choose to wear the [NGB] badge and branded clothing as a form of objectified cultural capital and to provide a sense of legitimacy. The need to 'remove these perceptual barriers', the three lions' badge, the historic NGB stigma was clearly recognised as highlighted by Manager 4, and therefore, the importance of the initial structuring, brokering, engagement of what the programme is for the mentee was also significant. The need to consider the mentee within the context of more targeted areas of work and the importance of a relational standpoint was also noteworthy. Therefore, with a significant change in target audience, and a concerted effort towards a more personalised and connected approach aligned to more relational standpoint, the interviews highlighted the FA's need to ensure the process of mentoring is understood by the mentee. Building rapport is a behaviour set, which has been relatively well researched. It includes the skills of active listening, empathizing, and giving positive regard; of offering openness and trust to elicit reciprocal behaviour; and

of identifying and valuing both common ground and differences (Clutterbuck, 2005), this would seem important when supporting coaches from historically underrepresented groups, being empathetic and informed.

Leeder *et al.,* (2019) whose work aligns to NGB Mentoring delivery pre-Covid-19, highlighted; 1) the need for an adapted and critically transformative approach towards mentor education, 2) mentors showing a desire for specific support mechanisms to be implemented, due to acknowledging the idiosyncrasies of mentors' dispositions, positions, and prior experiences within their workplace. Whilst reflecting on the balance of delivering heavily formalised mentoring agendas and thus potentially narrowing the learning outcomes, as referenced by Sawiuk *et al.,* (2018); Zehntner and McMahon, (2018).  It is also worth recognising that as highlighted in the interviews, mentors within a sports coaching context need ongoing training and support, and also that guidance, clear objectives, and role clarity may also be important aspects for delivery (Chambers, 2015; Lyle & Cushion, 2017). Furthermore, that mentors within this specific NGB context have also shown a desire for more specific support mechanisms to be implemented (Leeder *et., al* 2019; Potrac, 2016).

The entry on bias in the Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods suggests that in qualitative inquiry, the key "imperative is for researchers to be aware of their values and predispositions and to acknowledge them as inseparable from the research process," noting that "social scientists should acknowledge their own subjectivity in the research process" (Ogden, 2008; Roulston & Shelton, 2015). Therefore, with all things considered, there are limitations to acknowledge within this study.  The development of a strong research framework facilitates selection of appropriate study methods to minimize the bias inherent in qualitative studies and help readers to trust the research and the researcher, (Johnson *et al.,* 2020). Whilst every effort was made to minimize the potential bias, with the researcher being an integral member of the FA Management team interviewed, the potential for researcher bias is fully acknowledged. A research framework defines and justifies the research question, the methodology selected to answer the question, and the perspectives from which interpretation of results and conclusions are made, (Morse, 2002). Therefore, although the potential for bias in present, the need to hear the voices of the FA management team with regards to their perception of what mentoring

is within this context is of paramount importance, especially if we are to gain a perspective that has not been researched before.

It is also acknowledged that face to face interviews may be considered the best option for conducting interviews. Traditionalists favour face-to-face research interviews for two main reasons, namely that it allows researchers to build and maintain rapport with interviewees and the visual cues allow for improved communication, (De Villiers *et al.,* 2022). Again, accepting the potential for bias, with firm rapport already established, virtual interviews were considered a stronger option due to logistics, time and travel. However, it is particularly important to also consider confidentiality when considering video interviews within a corporate environment. There is a potential risk that another uninvited person is present in the room (not visible) and could potentially be an influencing factor, (Saarijärvi *et al.,* 2021).

In summary, and accepting the limitations within this particular study, the FA, as a National Governing Body, has implemented and  promoted mentoring as an important coach development tool for over eight years. Significantly, this work has shifted from more generic coach mentee support 2014 – 2020 to a more nuanced and targeted relational approach aligned to the FA Fit for The Future 2020-2024 Strategy. Therefore, taking all this wider research into consideration, and reflecting on the managers, mentors, and mentees voices within this study and wider thesis, considering a relational framework to support wider expectations and outcomes may be of substantial benefit. Once such a framework has been developed and constructed, it would be important to consider how the framework is to be evaluated. Once again, considering the potential for bias within the first two studies, it would be significant to utilise or consider external and wider expertise to critique and further develop the work.

***Reflexive Thread:***

*This has been an enjoyable study. I have particularly enjoyed the participants passion and fervour. The managers play a vital and pivotal role in defining what the programme is and could be. It was important to interview them for the first time ever to understand their thoughts and experiences. The outstanding and most salient point for me is, now acting. Taking into consideration all the things learned, experiences shared, especially from pre-*

*Covid-19 and that now, we ensure a more cohesive approach to mentor training, recruitment, induction that could offer a much more tangible and cohesive approach to ensuring mentees understand the context (Empirical Study 1).*

*This is an opportunity to support joint expectations and ensure a more robust programme moving forward. It is exciting to think this research could inform real practical change.*

### Reflexive contextual and supporting summary. - Building relationships.

*During the writing of Chapter 3 and planning for Chapter 4, I was commissioned to design and deliver seven workshops for the International Governing body for football, FIFA. FIFA's Technical Leadership Department supports an official mentoring and training programme for National Federation Heads of Coaching and Technical Directors, including UEFA, (Europe), CONCACAF, (North, Central America, and the Caribbean), CAF (Confederation of Africa), and OCEANIA (Asia, Australia and New Zealand). FIFA's Technical Leadership Department, wanted to deliver virtual workshops on: Emotional Intelligence, Effective Communication and Building Relationships. I was approached to design and deliver seven workshops at varying times of the day (and night) to some 130 delegates around how they build relationships in their environments across the world. Each workshop required a team of interpreters and translated slides. Daunting, challenging, and inciteful! With my research in mind, what do National Federation heads of coaching, think building relationships consists of in a mentoring and coaching context? This was a fantastic opportunity to promote discussion around an important area for mentoring and coaching on a global platform, gain insight but also, challenge my thinking. From the discussions and submission of pre-tasks, the slide below is an overview from the delegates summarising their relationship context and what they thought they should expect from mentoring/coaching. From a building relationships perspective, it would be interesting to see how these transfered into practice!*
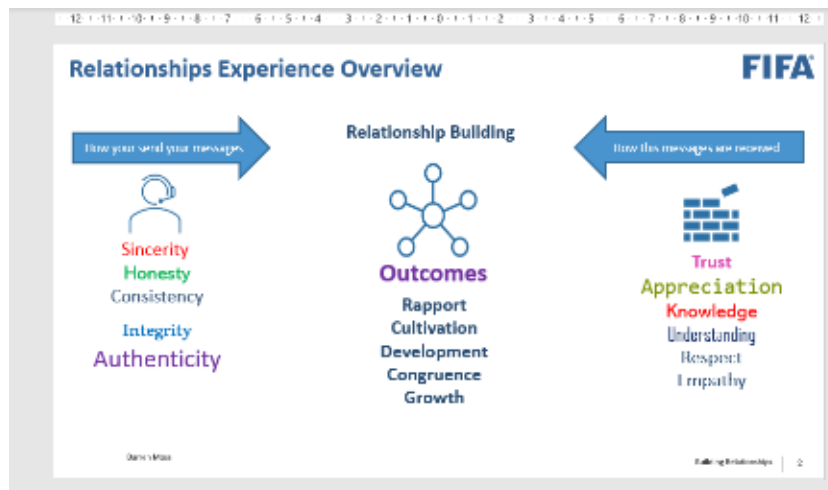
**Figure 7 FIFA Delegate Summary**

## Chapter 5.  An emerging relational framework for FA coach mentoring context. 5.0. Introduction.

As highlighted throughout this work, mentoring's implementation across an array of social contexts has indicated that much around the practice of mentoring remains contested or, ill-defined, (Colley; 2003; Jones, Harris & Miles 2009; Sawiuk, Taylor & Groom 2017),  furthermore, wider research highlights the lack of definition and conceptual clarity across an array of social contexts with regards to mentoring;  (Dawson, 2014; Lefebvre, Bloom, & Loughead, 2020). Whereas Jones *et al.,* (2016) found mentoring relationships hindered by an inadequate understanding of scope and role by both mentors and mentees, thus severely hampering their effectiveness. With regards, to formalised mentoring programmes, Sawiuk, Taylor and Groom, (2018) state that, problematically, formalised mentoring is often situated within institutional frameworks, inclusive of narrow learning outcomes, with external interests influencing the process. Consequently, this could lead to mentoring programmes that either lack clarity or are too narrow in their remit to serve the needs of coaches.

Reflecting on all this research, it may well be that defining some of the key findings from this research may be beneficial in offering some guidance, clarity and scope for the FA Coach Mentoring Programme but also accepting that formalisation of the mentoring process may introduce some criticisms relating to any perceived institutional agendas. As a consequence of an increased formalisation, employed coach mentors may begin to adopt normalising and disciplinary practices, to ensure mentee coaches are working towards prescribed coaching frameworks and objectives required by the administering organisation (Sawiuk, Taylor, & Groom, 2016; Zehntner & McMahon, 2018). Taking this into account, mentoring has also been advocated as a method of harnessing the influential power of experience through guidance, observation, and reflective practice, allowing coaches to become better equipped to deal with the uncertain nature of coaching (Cushion, 2015; Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003). The term developmental mentoring has been used widely to denote a beneficial form of mentoring characterised by support, reflection in conversation, and contributions to extend the newcomers horizons and openness to different professional approaches (Clutterbuck 2004; Harrison *et al.,* 2006). Therefore, if we align to the

theory that mentoring can develop the positive skills needed to equip us in the nuanced world of coaching, including those listed, reflective practice, observation, openness, and guidance rather than prescribed coaching practice, could this be a good starting point for a more relational and mentee focused framework and based on what wider stakeholders including coach mentees have said?

As identified earlier in this study, and in alignment with some of the wider mentoring research, and although many mentees found the experience rewarding (FA Context), there was still little conceptual clarity for many, as to the purpose, and expectations of the mentoring relationship and the aims of the programme. Bailey, Jones and Allison, (2019), suggest mentoring frameworks, identified "the potential for problems [in the mentoring relationship] where the nature and purpose of the activity are not wholly clear to all participants". Bailey *et., al,* (2019), also highlight that the challenge for mentors and those constructing mentoring programmes, is to develop role clarity and confidence within the relationship, and this would include the mentor's ability to facilitate the mentees emergent and developing understanding of ways that are contextually relevant. My experiences align well with this research. As a regional lead pre- Covid-19, and with some 52 mentors to support across a wide demographic, building rapport, ensuring regular contact and with many logistical, and time constraints, without a set framework, consistency and clarity were always a real challenge. Mentoring remains an increasingly important focus for both academic research and sports coaching practice. Indeed, for over 20 years, the coach learning literature has depicted mentorship as one of the most meaningful formal or informal "learning situations" coaches engage with, (Leeder & Sawiuk, 2020). Mentoring is a pedagogical approach which supports experiential learning of sports coaches (Nash & McQuade, 2015), with learning from "experience" playing a significant role in coach development (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Groom & Sawiuk, 2018; Lyle & Cushion, 2017).

As highlighted in Chapter 4, there is currently a desire from the FA management within the FA Coach Mentor context for a more relational, mentee driven developmental approach and away from the historical course, qualification led pathway. Therefore, supporting mentors and subsequently mentees to map, contextualise and make sense of their thinking is important. No doubt then, both

mentor and mentee require the time, space, and intellectual attributes to develop a (somewhat) shared, conceptual understanding of the mentoring process with which they are engaged in (Armour, 2015). Finally, the idea of a supportive, safe, confidence enhancing framework in this context should be used to provide beneficial mentoring support which has clarity and guidance for the coach mentee at the core and not be aligned with prescribed technical agendas. The relational framework would be to help the coaches' metacognition in becoming more self-aware in the development of their own practice.

## 5.1 Capturing the 'what' for FA coach mentor practice. Sociocultural and relational considerations.

Having tried to problematize the FA Coach Mentoring Programme through this research study, and drawing on wider Mentee, Mentor and managements experiences, a framework is suggested to help, navigate, support, and add clarity to the mentoring process from a relational standpoint. To do this, it is appropriate to refer to wider sociocultural mentoring research which also includes some important contemporary articles that aligns directly to this study area. For clarity, the suggested framework is not an attempt to provide an all-encompassing and 'fit all' model for the wider and nuanced world of mentoring, but to suggest a framework based on the evidence, research and themes that have emerged throughout this specific study to help support the FA Coach Mentoring Relationship which in the past has been haphazard, ad hoc and at times for many, without contextual clarity. However, it is hoped that the framework may inform future and more varied studies into case relevant, related topics and mentoring research areas.

Armour, (2015) identified mentoring as definitively linked to the social conditions in which it occurs. Whereas Lyle and Cushion, (2017) state; Sports coaching is frequently understood as a social process, where an interaction of macro and micro elements influences how the practice is perceived and enacted. Furthermore, the same authors highlight that several empirical studies informed by sociological theory, specifically Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, have critically analysed formalised sports coach mentoring. These studies have attempted to outline the inherent nuances and tensions, to help deconstruct mentoring practice and problematise taken-for-granted assumptions (Lyle &

Cushion, 2017). As already stated, more contemporary studies such as (Leeder *et al.* 2019; Sawiuk & Leeder, 2020) have critically analysed formalised mentoring programmes, and predominately, the influence of social structures, political agendas, and power that can be evidenced through the formalisation of sports coach mentoring (Sawiuk *et al.,* 2018). Within elite coaching contexts, Sawiuk *et., al.,* (2018) Bourdieusian analysis argued that formalised sports coach mentoring programmes could be conceptualised as a form of social control, where organisational agendas override meaningful coach learning, and this aligns to some limited findings within FA Coach Mentor Programme where the mentees voice were sometimes muted by the assumptions and perceptions of the FA Coach Mentor themselves.

Amongst more contemporary and related research, Leeder, and Cushion, (2019) explored the extent to which an NGB's coaching culture was reproduced through a formalised sports coach mentoring programme and evidenced potential issues that aligned with NGB interests. Specifically, the coaching culture was embodied by mentors during their training and reproduced during their mentoring practice. In summary, it is important to be aware of the potential for NGB formalised mentoring programmes to be used as a source of social reproduction and or, control. (Sawiuk 2018, Sawiuk & Leeder 2020, Leeder *et al.* 2019; Griffiths & Armour, 2012), all relate to the use of Pierre Bourdieu's praxeology to further understand mentoring as an embodied and social (re)productive practice within various coaching domains.

To explain further, Bourdieu, (1990), states, mentoring practice was outlined as a complex, ambiguous, and a developmentally staged learning process, underpinned by volunteerism. It is proposed that meaningful interactions within mentoring are mediated by context (fields), where the habitus of volunteer coaches is shaped and re-shaped, with their learning impacted by dispositions, actions, and interpretations (Griffiths & Armour, 2012). These findings suggest that formalised sports coach mentoring is contextually bound and influenced by organisational factors (Griffiths, 2015). Leeder *et al.,* (2019) highlights Bourdieu's concept of (Habitus)*;* An individual's habitus is the product of past experiences, which over time produces classification schemes and dispositions, orientating a person's perceptions and beliefs (Bourdieu, 1990, 1998). Also, (Dispositions)*,* which can be perceived as an attitude or preference towards practice, which will

influence how people act and carry themselves in a given cultural setting. Thus, supporting the critical analysis of formalised mentoring programmes where there may be the potential to normalize agenda based coaching practices. A range of theoretical lenses have been adopted in the coaching literature over recent years; theories that have enabled both academics and practitioners to make-sense of the activity (Cassidy *et al.,* 2015). Amongst these theories, and specifically aligned to sports coach mentoring, the work of Michel Foucault, (1979), has been utilised as a lens to analyse mentoring and its social constructs as with the Bourdieusian studies mentioned above.

Mentors have the capacity to define what counts as legitimate knowledge, whilst potentially reproducing organisational norms uncritically (Cushion, 2015; Leeder & Cushion, 2019; Sawiuk *et al.,* 2018). Consequently, issues surrounding power-knowledge within the mentor– mentee dyad has led to a body of research informed by the work of Michel Foucault adding further critique to the Bourdieusian literature cited above. As Cushion, (2015) states, mentoring is assumed to be positive, yet the practice is a social construction, operating within distinct cultures involving power relations. Aligning further to this Foucauldian stance, it would seem NGBs may adopt formalised sports coach mentoring provision to maintain their own interests, seeking to reproduce uncritically accepted coaching ideologies (Leeder, 2019a; Zehntner & McMahon, 2014, 2019). As discussed by Zehntner and McMahon, (2014) highlight the disciplinary mechanism of surveillance and power at work within swimming mentorship culture, which aligns to the concept of mentors facilitating concepts of conformity and normalising sets of behaviours. This work highlights again why overly formalised mentoring programmes should be viewed with a critical lens and any highly risk-averse culture will inevitably influence both mentors' and mentees' understandings of acceptable levels of challenge in a mentoring relationship (Armour, 2015). However, mentors should, systematically challenge coaches with the intention of forcing them to constantly evaluate their whole understanding of the coaching role and their position within it (Cushion, 2015). Such engagement with uncertainty must occur within a supportive framework, where the mentee feels a level of security with the mentor, understanding and accepting that the mentor's actions are undertaken in their best interests, (Cushion, 2015).

This supportive framework could well be enhanced by the concept of rapport building and connection from the outset.

Bailey *et al.,* (2019) closing remarks of their article; the relational nature of the mentoring process has been positioned centrally, where mentors must both support and challenge mentees to see their practice anew and engage in creative future actions. All the while, coaches must be encouraged to know and respect the social landscape in which they operate without foregoing their agency to shape it in desired ways. To indulge in some forward thinking of our own, one way which these ideas could be further developed is through an examination of the mentoring relationship in terms of trust. Furthermore, the authors refer to Meyer and Ward's, (2009) definition where trust is described as "the optimistic acceptance of a vulnerable situation which is based on positive expectations of the intentions of the trusted individual or institution".

## 5.2   Further considerations. A relational framework to support FA coach mentor development and practice.

Research on mentor education is sparse; thus little is known about the importance of mentor training in relation to individual learning and development (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). Furthermore, although mentor training alone does not guarantee successful mentorships (Chambers, 2015), it is important to set clear objectives and enhance role clarity (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). Added to this, mentor learning and development is a vital component of any effective mentoring programme. The lack of support available to sports coach mentors may relate to how the practice is perceived, alongside assumptions about what a good sports coach mentor constitutes. (Nash & McQuade, 2015). Individual's, such as a mentor's, developed dispositions, will influence how they interpret, engage with, and what they acquire from formal learning opportunities such as structured training events, (Leeder *et al.,* 2019).  As Leeder, (2019) argues mentors are positioned as "educators" rather than "learners", which often justifies the limited support they receive and reinforces the importance of experiential learning as a process to develop mentoring skills. This point resonates and aligns to thoughts from FA Managers within Chapter 4 who collectively spoke of the need to develop mentoring skills aligned to 'knowing the mentee' and being able to support and develop personal skills rather than pure coaching practice. FA Manager:

*For me, I mean there is a big debate on how much technical knowledge is needed but fundamentally building a relationship where a coach can have some true reflection based on the relationship is key for me.*

To date, this study reports that the current FA mentoring programme requires more 'clarity' and therefore having less assumptions on 'what' is needed to support coach mentees. Focusing upon mentor training in supporting the coaches in developing core skills and helping facilitate the journey of the coach mentee to develop the skills and confidence to be an effective coach practitioner is important. If we accept that trust and rapport are enablers to optimistic acceptance of vulnerable situations for the mentee, we start to see an alignment of 'thought and themes' towards the engagement of a supportive framework as suggested by Cushion, (2015) where the mentee feels a level of security with the mentor and where they are able to indulge in some forward thinking of their own. By focusing on a pedagogical approach to what the mentee says, understanding their wants and needs day to day; not only personalises things from the mentee's perspective, but also helps develop trust in the relationship. As a further example, trust and trustworthiness are considered essential features of successful sport coach mentoring pedagogy (Alexander & Bloom 2023, Chambers 2015, Jones, Harris, & Miles, 2009). Therefore, by prioritising what is 'needed' to support the coaches practice; building trust, may well led to more epistemological forward thinking in developing new knowledge and approaches to learning within mentees. However, despite trust being recognised as a critical facet of mentor-mentee relationships in other fields, there is a need to further develop our empirical, theoretical, and applied knowledge of this topic in sport, exercise, and health mentoring contexts (Ives *et al.,* 2023). Knowing how rapport and trust building is important within the FA Coach Mentoring Programme, it is hoped that this research will add to the empirical and applied research evidence within sports coach mentoring contexts.

Capturing the 'what' in the context of FA Coach Mentoring Programme, based on the historical literature, what the mentees themselves have said, as well as staff and the wider corporate view has been the main driver for this thesis. Building relationships and rapport, observing the mentor in their own environment to offer support, and employing feedback to develop practice based on their individual needs are key elements towards realizing the FA's view of a

personalised and connected learning offer. However, ensuring the mentee has clarity and understanding of the process has not happened consistently or historically. Whilst we understand, recognise, and acknowledge that there are many definitions of mentoring, understanding the nuances in this specific context. is key to the outcomes of this work. Having myself been involved as a tutor, mentor and manager within FA Coach Development for approximately 25 years, and during this time, having also completed a Post Graduate Certificate and an MSc into the relational impact FA Mentors may have on coach mentees, and more currently, within this doctoral journey, I have been able via the use of research studies alongside day-to-day management of FA projects and programmes to identify constantly visited 'Shoreline's' as themes that have resonated through FA the Coach Mentoring programme. I use the term shorelines as quite frequently, it seems specific FA mentoring and literature has been trying with the best of intentions, to navigate well-travelled waters but without a map or compass. However, by understanding the shorelines frequently visited by mentors, mentioned by mentees, staff and wider literature, we may be able to help navigate the waters for a more supportive framework for FA Coach Mentoring Practice.

(Note see Appendices P. 245-249): Attached sketch notes are from the coding, labelling and characterising themes across all chapters, data, and findings. It is an example of various informal sketches, notes and drawings that compliment more formal processes of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2014). A circuit of codes and themes that have emerged from mentors, managers, but more importantly, coach mentee feedback that supports another layer beneath which may align to areas to support a relational based framework for the FA Coach Mentor Programme. It also aligns to potential areas of focus for mentor training and development purposes.

## 5.3    Framework Elements: Rapport: Relate - Listen - Empathise – Share.

Whilst mentoring is frequently conceptualised as either a formal or informal "learning situation", for coaches, the wider nuances of mentorship (e.g., mentor behaviours, development of rapport) within the coach learning process are often overlooked, (Leeder *et al.* 2019; Sawiuk & Leeder, 2020). Within the FA Coach

Mentor reports, (2017) and wider FA Mentoring case studies, the perception of a mentee meeting a 'tutor' and wearing the 'three lions' can be an intimidating experience for a neophyte, grassroots volunteer and add to a lack of self-confidence. Quite often the perception was that the mentor would be there to critique, or criticise the coaches practice, rather than help the coach develop their practice. Add the complexities of players, parents, officials and the multifaceted nature of the coaching environment, the mentoring process can become an uncomfortable process for the mentee. As highlighted earlier in this thesis via Sketch Note 2. Hierarchical Mentoring, I have personally witnessed supposedly 'more experienced' coaches, enjoying the perception of being more experienced, projecting potentially intimidating behaviours, and also often inadvertently, making the mentee feel uneasy and even nervous, making it even more problematic in developing a rich and learning based relationship.

As Potrac, (2016) highlights, the mentoring process entails various stakeholders, including mentors, mentees, NGBs (if formalised), clubs, athletes, and parents. Thus, mentoring practice does not operate in a social, political, or technological vacuum, making the subject of mentoring complex, nuanced, and potentially confusing for the coach mentee. Adding to this, as highlighted in Chapter three, often the mentee was not the instigator or the initial contact, for the relationship, or, had their role outlined or clarified. Therefore, in such a nuanced environment, this could well indeed, start mentoring off with unnecessary confusion. Rapport is based upon mutual confidence, trust, and acceptance (Kapur, 2021). Kapur also states, Rapport is referred to the capability to relate to others in a manner that generates a level of belief and understanding and is very often the first step on the road to development. Rapport is the ability to relate to others in such a way that it creates a strong level of trust and understanding. It is important to build rapport between mentor and mentee to begin the process positively, to set goals and offer bespoke support. Buist, (2007) speaks of the main principles of rapport building as - confidence, leadership, kindness, courtesy, decency, desire, humility, modesty, emotional control, and sense of purpose. These traits enable these individuals to become achievement oriented in their lives and they are then able to attain success and form variety of linkages. As explained here, rapport can very often link to the mentee becoming achievement oriented. This needs to be managed, supported, and based around

the needs and realities of the mentee's environment.   When considering 'Personalised and Connected Learning', the element of trust and understanding for a neophyte or, part time grassroots coach cannot be underestimated. My own MSc research in 2018 highlighted the potential lack of confidence of volunteer, part time parent coaches and the anxiety they felt during a number of focus group interviews. I learned over a number of months, the thoughts some had of being 'unworthy' and many had feelings that they may have to quit, such was the strength of their anxiousness. Getting them to understand the skills they had as a parent for example and the transferability, was really important. Furthermore, of fifteen coach mentees interviewed in one study, 50% highlighted a lack of confidence in their own ability at the start of the mentoring relationship. Therefore, the initial contact, first impression and 'cup of coffee' cannot be underestimated in helping the mentee gain trust and confidence in the mentoring process. Defining what the initial process is, has historically, and in general, lacked clarity. Considering this further, sport coach mentors receive limited professional development, training, and ongoing support opportunities for navigating trust relations in their work (Leeder & Sawiuk, 2021).

Coaches who have access to a mentor or critical friend are said to receive sport-specific knowledge, alongside increased professional growth and self-confidence (Griffiths, 2015; Purdy, 2018), if we espouse the need for coaches to really get to know the individuals they coach, help them grow and develop, then surely the mentee and mentor should at least have a professional, and mutually trust filled relationship to move things forward.   Rapport is the ability to relate to others in such a way that it creates a strong level of trust and understanding. It is important to build rapport with your mentee or mentor to begin the process positively, goal set, and offer support.  This mutuality can be enhanced by a truly dialogical approach, a positive two-way interaction as an activity that's directed toward discovery and new understanding, in dialogical mentoring relationships, the partners both give something valuable and receive something valuable as well (Jones et al., 2021; Perunka & Erkkilä, 2012). At the same time the partners construct new understanding of reality. Rapport is very often the first step on the road to development, Clutterbuck, (2015) so a dialogical approach can be mutually beneficial across all the stages of rapport building.

Finally, it is important to note that with the mentee as the focus, rapport in this context is not to 'soften the blow' of ensuring coach mentees follow a NGB prescribed agenda but to ensure the mentee feels safe enough and confident enough to start to challenge their own practice with their own players and for the development of their own environment.

## 5.4    Observation. Witness - experience - be curious.

Another well referenced shoreline regarding FA Coach Mentoring context is observation. Referencing Foucault's, (1979) concepts of hierarchical observation, normalising judgement, surveillance, and the examination, aligns to references of the mentees and mentors being acutely aware of observing and being observed within coaching practice. Being a grassroots mentee volunteer being observed by an FA coach developer can add pressure based on the perceived notion of assessment-based practice. Rapport, expectations, and previous history will all play their part. For clarity, reference here to observation is not made purely to systematic observational methods, tools, or reviews such as (Bloom *et al.* 1999; Cope *et al.* 2017; Lia 2016), but reference is made to highlight the wider relational concept of actually *'Being Observed'* especially in a volunteer coaching context and specifically, an FA/NGB context. Potrac, Nelson and O'Gorman, (2016), relates specifically to the FA Coach Mentor Programme pre-Covid-19 where many of their relational lens findings correlate with the critique aligned to formalised programmes of both of Bourdieusian and Foucauldian lenses for mentoring research, reference (Leeder *et al.* 2019; Sawiuk & Leeder 2020).  Potrac *et al.,* (2016) relates directly to a grassroots coach mentee who described his feelings of being observed by an FA Mentor and 'what individuals thought about him, what he experienced such as a variety of physical sensations, which included an increased heart rate, sweaty palms, a gloomy mood and 'butterflies' in his stomach'. And furthermore, where the authors conclude, 'Indeed, we hope that the argument presented herein acts as a stimulus for the development of critical and rich (embodied) accounts of grass-roots football coaching that allow us to better consider the issues of identity, emotion, power, interaction, structure, and agency within this setting than has been achieved thus far. Listening to the mentees, what they experienced is of paramount importance'.

This was one of the personal drivers for this research. I experienced so much as a grassroots coach, from anxiety to joy and therefore, felt so much empathy for the coaches the FA now support via mentoring. Having transferred through the ranks myself, understanding the stories, the emotions, is really, really important to me; the feelings of being observed particularly. Now as an influencer, and coach developer, I feel duty bound to widen the debate and research across this important area. To support this further, Within Chapter four of this thesis, Manager 4 whilst reflecting on mentoring practice stated:

*'I think being skilled and being unobtrusive when observing a coach during training or matchday is an important, one we take for granted and don't pay enough attention too'.* Manager 2 highlighted, *'When we visit coaches and when we turn up say, on a Tuesday night to observe them, we need them to feel more at ease, feel a bit more confident'.*

Being observed has manifold consequences on peoples' behaviour, the presence of observers can influence how well people perform (Steinmetz, J. *et al.,* 2016). These effects emerge because the presence of observers increases the psychological and even physiological arousal the actor experiences (Mullen, Bryant, & Driskell, 1997; Zajonc, 1965), Interestingly, the mere presence of others (even when they are not active spectators) seems to be enough to threaten people, thus producing effects of social facilitation and inhibition (Platania & Moran, 2001). Taking this into consideration, more formative approaches, that enhance the experience conversations and being relationship focused may seem a good fit. However, the presence of others is not always threatening for people. By contrast, the presence of others (even strangers) can at times provide social support (Steinmetz *et al.,* 2016; Schachter, 1959) therefore, without understanding the person being observed well, it may be difficult to offer observationally appropriate support. Martin, (2017), discusses peer observation techniques for coaching and mentoring within education, highlighting formative models that tend to focus on nurturing pedagogic knowledge and skills and/or curriculum development, rather than making evaluative judgements on the professional competence of those being observed.

Whilst fully embracing and reflecting on the sociocultural and coach behavioural research drawing on the historic and specific FA Coach Mentoring

research by Potrac (2014, 2016), FA Coach Mentor Reports (2017), the feedback from the empirical studies within this thesis, the concept of observation is an important and inherent feature. Furthermore, if we are to align a supportive framework, where the mentee feels a level of security with the mentor, understanding and accepting that the mentor's actions are undertaken in their best interests, (Cushion, 2015), then observation (Witnessing Practice, Match Day, Coaching Environment, person), in essence, how we observe is an important element to address in mentor training, and development as well as in supporting mentee acceptance in this context.

## 5.5    Feedback. Clear - relevant - well Intentioned.

Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement, and its impact can be either positive or negative its power is frequently mentioned in articles about learning and teaching, but surprisingly few recent studies have systematically investigated its meaning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Whilst feedback is widely regarded as a frequently used and high-impact strategy to progress a learner from current to goal performance (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Hattie, 2009). With regards to sports coaching, there is a major gap in literature regarding coach knowledge and the use of pedagogical techniques such as feedback in coach practice (Mason, Farrow & Hattie, 2020). Furthermore, a potential challenge in this area of research is evidence to suggest that coaches can be inaccurate when reflecting on their use of feedback. (Mason *et al.,* 2020).

Aligning to the research within this thesis, which has a lens on the coach mentees voice, Potrac, (2014), Anderson, (2010), highlights that an area not commonly considered in feedback research is the reception of feedback. Much time and effort has been spent on determining the quality and quantity of feedback provided, without considering its reception and subsequent action by a receiver, in this research, the mentee. Significantly, within chapter three of this research, feedback was reported as being the most important aspect of the mentor relationship with 35% of mentees citing this aspect as most helpful. Furthermore, feedback in FA Coach Mentoring context, is often highlighted as important with regards to mentee and mentor engagement. However, with 53% also citing the mentor leading coaching sessions as the most helpful, more research is needed to understand how and why this feedback was helpful. Also,

with 41% of mentees in this study citing they did not know what to expect when asked how their expectations were met within the programme, further clarity is needed to evaluate more. Reflecting on the importance of feedback and its links to rapport; positive mentor-mentee partnerships are built upon respect and trust with the mentor being supportive, sharing practices and resources, and facilitating collaborative problem solving. The respect and trust allow the mentor to provide open and diplomatically honest feedback to the mentee who trusts the mentor's contextual knowledge and respects the mentor's rationale and intentions that underpin the feedback. Within Chapter four of this thesis, Manager 2 highlights; *'Sometimes mentors have caused a power dynamic that isn't conducive to mentoring, not setting the scene so the coach automatically goes, why? What have I done wrong?* Whereas, Manager 1 states, *'Mentors need to communicate with empathy, be personable and listen properly and with intent, it's another skill we need to work on'.*

Leeder *et al.,* (2019) research into the FA Mentoring Programme highlighted, the need for an adapted and critically transformative approach towards mentor education was recognised within this research, with mentors showing a desire for specific support mechanisms to be implemented, due to acknowledging the idiosyncrasies of mentors' dispositions, positions, and prior experiences within their workplace, and this includes education regarding feedback. The preparation of sports coach mentors is at present an under researched area; however, we are aware that recruitment and training procedures are irregular and rarely extend beyond one-off introductory workshops (Griffiths, 2015). With episodic training currently taking place, and in considering the importance of both the giving and receiving of feedback in this specific mentoring context, a more structured approach should be considered.

Feedback is intended for the mentee to reflect upon practices for future improvements (Hudson 2016; Schön, 1987). Within internal and specific case studies regarding the mentoring programme, mentee coaches responded better to feedback that was well intentioned, and appropriate to them and pertinent to their environment. It is important to ensure that feedback is targeted at the appropriate level, because some feedback is effective in reducing the discrepancy between current understandings and what is desired, and some is ineffective. (Hattie & Timperley 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, A. 1996). Historically

within FA Education, and specifically the FA Coach Mentor Programme, Q&A is mentioned as one of the preferred methods of giving and receiving feedback. Also, within sport and football specific research, the Q&A approach or questioning (divergent or convergent in nature) appears to be another suitable method of verbal feedback for reflection and self-learning (Vincent et al. 2016; Williams & Hodges 2005; Partington *et al.,* 2014). Referring to educational feedback, Hattie and Timperley, (2007) suggest that effective feedback must answer three major questions asked:

Where am I going? (What are the goals?), How am I going? (What progress is being made toward the goal?), and where to next? (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?) The coach-to-mentor transition is portrayed as natural and somewhat inevitable within sports coaching, with individuals finding themselves in mentoring positions without realising, and more importantly, without training (Cushion, 2015). If we equip mentors to understand the importance of their role, and how the use of credible feedback can support the mentees development, as well as mentor understanding, then this approach at dyadic level has merit.

**Where am I going?**
Building Rapport, Then, via the setting of clarity, of purpose, aligned to mentee expectations and needs. Building confidence.

**How am I going?**
Via supportive mentee observation and individual and well-intentioned feedback aligned to expectations and needs. Building Trust.

**Where to Next?**
Via reflection, experiencing, feedback and practice application. (Signposting).

## 5.6   Reflection. Relating - conceptualising - applying.

A reflective approach to practice is consistently espoused as a key tool for understanding and enhancing coach learning and raising the vocational standards of coaches. As such, there is a clear need for practical tools and processes that might facilitate the development and measurement of "appropriate" reflective skills. (Stoszkowski & Collins 2014; Lyle & Cushion, 2010). Being a 'reflective' coach is seen as an essential part of coach learning

(Cassidy et al., 2009; Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Gallimore, Gilbert, & Nater, 2014; Gilbert & Trudel, 2006), Furthermore, few would question that coaches should practice without questioning their values, beliefs, and ideas, and engage with a process to develop their knowledge and make sense of their experiences (Cushion, 2018).   Many terms are employed to represent the practice (e.g., reflection, reflective practice, reflective practitioner, and critical reflection), but their meaning differs depending on the underlying assumptions and the context that they are used, with much variance in the definition of any single term (Hébert, 2015; Schon, 1983).

Within the context of FA Coach Mentoring Programme, the term reflective practice, or reflexive practice as largely aligned to the 'Plan, do and Review ' method, referenced within FA Coach Education courses, Plan, practice, review – '*What went well, What would be better for next time*'., Introducing neophyte coaches, or less experienced coaches to the concept of reflecting and aligning their delivery to their environment, and needs of the player should be seen as a meaningful and positive one. However, it should be recognised that many new coaches may show a clear preference for practical knowledge application and self-referenced judgements of 'what works' in these environments, which mirrors previous research of coach' learning (e.g., Nelson et al. 2012; Stodter & Cushion, 2017). However, wider generic models of reflection developed for use in education i.e., Kolb's Learning Cycle, (1984), Gibbs' Reflective Model, (1998) are often borrowed to guide reflective practice in sport coaching, yet it is unclear whether this is relevant or helpful in supporting learning within this context, and thus, giving the suggested importance of  reflection to coaching and its establishment in the vocabulary of coach learning (Stodter *et al.,* 2021; Cushion, 2016). Therefore, it may wrongly be assumed that full time NGB coach developers will have a practical understanding as to the mechanisms of reflection in practical terms, but as highlighted earlier, generally, mentoring is often treated as a secondary role for sports coaches, a sometimes unwanted "add on" to their primary profession of enhancing athlete development (Chambers, 2018). With the majority of FA Coach Mentors being part time, ensuring coaches/mentees/mentors, have the knowledge and skills to engage in the processes of deliberate reflective practice is a key vehicle for encouraging, rather than suppressing, individual subjectivities and addressing issues pertinent to

learners' realities and practical needs (Piggott, 2012). In short, away from the 'plan do review' cycle, ensuring that the depth of critical and reflective practice is aligned to the individual coaches' experience and understanding is vital to help them both conceptualise and apply what has been learned.

Within this research, coach mentees selected '*receiving individual feedback*' as beneficial when asked about the strategies employed by their mentor, but the results are only superficial without further analysis and detail. However, as mentioned, encouraging reflective practice is positive, and should be aligned to the individual coaches' experiences, environment, and not just regarding the pure technical aspects of the game such as passing etc. Coaching practices originally learned as part of a conscious process, become remembered as a habitual response forgotten in any conscious sense (Cushion & Jones, 2014; Cushion & Partington, 2014) As a result, it would be a mistake to see coaching practice as entirely conscious. Indeed, Schön argued that knowledge in action (i.e., practice) cannot be articulated, is intuitive and implicit, existing in a tacit realm (Hébert, 2015; Schon, 1983). Therefore, whilst considering the role and input of a mentor or coach developer and where the roles are currently receiving more attention, there are questions remaining on the concepts and tools they draw upon to inform their development of coaches' learning, thinking and practice (Stodter & Cushion, 2019). As facilitators of coach learning, sports coach mentors should be trained and provided with ongoing support. Although mentor training alone does not guarantee successful mentorships (Chambers, 2015), developing a deeper awareness and the practicalities of supporting reflective practice would seem logical. As Stodter *et al.,* (2021) expressed from their study around reflective conversations as a basis for sports coach learning, engaging with the coach developer appeared to be of importance in supporting some participants in reflecting more deeply and in developing metacognition, yet this has not been well considered in the reflective practice literature. The main driver for this thesis is to help the FA Coach Mentors within a non-linear framework that supports the inception of the mentoring process to aid the development of coach mentees metacognition and practice based on their individual circumstances. Aided by trust, positive experience, and well intentioned, relevant support, as the fundamental basis to gain both further clarity and context in the relationship.

## 5.7    Summary.

To clarify, the purpose of this relational framework is not to replace any existing and currently utilised models or, documents to help the coach's set direction, or end the relationship. Existing tools such as SWOT analysis, Humphreys (2005), and the GROW Model, Whitmore (2010), are in wide circulation and current FA Coach Developers, Mentors and PE Officers have the autonomy to use bespoke models and documents to support their work which is relevant to their specific mentor and mentee relationship. However, based on the specific research into this formalised programme, the studies within this thesis, and the wider research into the FA Coach Mentoring Programme; (Rapport, Observation, Feedback and Reflection) are highlighted as important areas for future focus for training and implementation within this specific context; Rapport is vital based on the historic perception, and past practice of a large NGB, namely the English Football Association and the need to build trust. Observation is cited as an area for mentor development and often, mentee anxiety (Being Observed In-Situ) and an initial base for this thesis. Feedback needs to be encouraging and should not be seen as a complex barrier, or an area of anxiety for grassroots coaches to receive feedback, and to reflect on the skill of offering feedback from the mentor perspective. Here again, the importance of trust and rapport play their part. Following this, coaches should then feel more willing to reflect on their own practice in their own context to support their practice, players, and delivery. Historically and through my experience as an FA coach, education tutor I have witnessed where many courses have tried to 'shoehorn' reflection into the last ten minutes of a course experience without considering where the learner is at, how they reflect, when they reflect. This all relates to the need for ongoing training, and a more contextual approach to reflective practice to support both the learner and the tutor.

There is overlap on all aspects of the framework and this helps the relational aspect of the delivery. Rapport is a constant, and its tactics will support observation and feedback. As an example, being well intentioned and unobtrusive whilst observing will support the aspect of giving feedback whist being reflexive throughout the journey. In this context, it is not linear but stresses the importance of each of the components in this context. The proposed use of this relational framework to support FA Coach Mentoring Practice is twofold:

1) **To support Mentor Practice**, training, and development. To help mentors focus on Mentees needs and on the relational importance and impact of their roles. By building trust, being conscious of observing, feeding back and supporting a level of reflective practice, will help develop a supportive framework as suggested by Cushion, (2015), where the mentee feels a level of security with the mentor and where they are able to indulge in some forward thinking of their own. This may then lead to an environment where coaching practice, related specifically to the mentee needs can be challenged and developed appropriately rather than mirroring and cloned practice from the mentor, or towards a prescribed NGB narrow agenda.

2) **To Support Mentee Development**, by adding relevant and needed clarity to the process as espoused by (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). However, not by merely replicating mentors practice, but by the scaffolding mentees own personal 'coaching armaments' related to their own coaching needs and environments. It is envisaged that the Relational Framework and Tactics will form the central part of recruitment, induction and expectation setting as well as workshops/training based around: Rapport, Observation, Feedback and Reflection. The detail will also be included into a Mentor Handbook with other useful documents to directly support the programmes practice.

**Where am I going?** Building Rapport, Then, via the setting of clarity, of purpose, aligned to mentee expectations and needs. Building confidence.

**How am I going?** Via supportive mentee observation and individual and well-intentioned feedback aligned to expectations and needs. Building Trust.

**Where to Next?** Via reflection, experiencing, feedback and practice application. (Signposting).
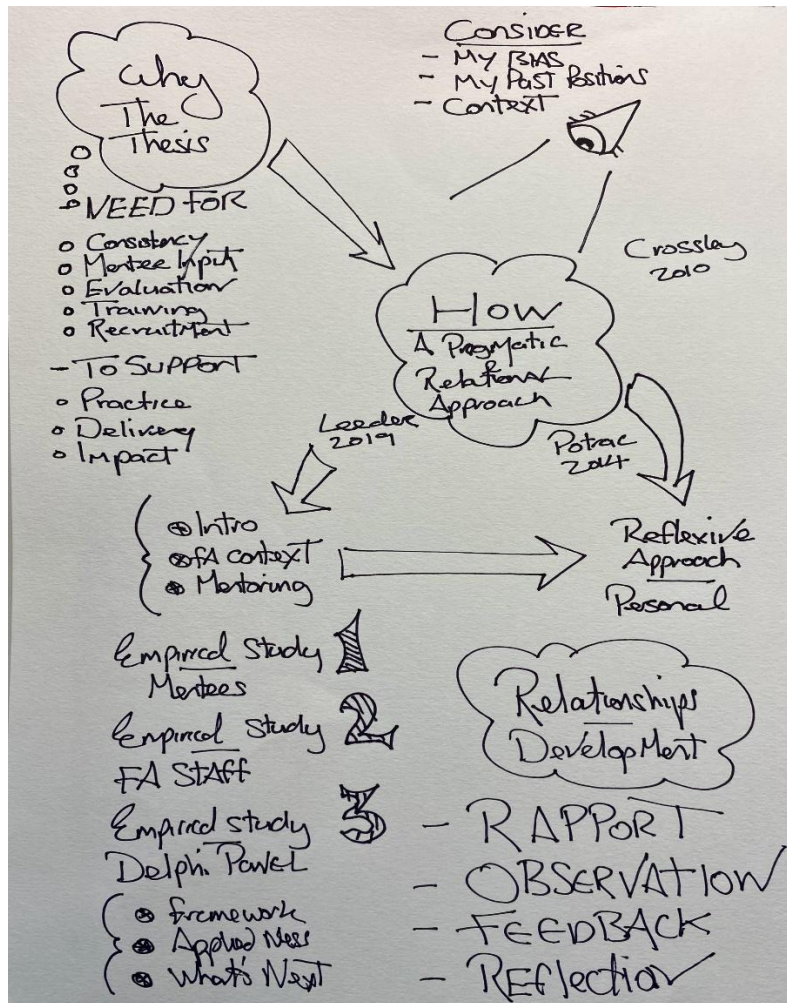
**Sketch Note 4. Reflecting on the Framework.**

This sketch was made during a particularly busy time within my 'day job', and at a time within the research journey where I was particularly conscious of the 'Applied ness', and the importance of challenging the work so far. It was important to me to be as robust as possible whilst also reflecting on the underpinning work thus far, the experiences so far and this sketch represents a myriad of mind maps and sketches I made to try and visualise my thinking as I developed empirical study three. Having heard from FA staff at varying levels in other chapters, going outside to a group of mentoring experts, embracing my vulnerability around the work seemed an exciting, if daunting place to go.

## 5.8 Utilising an adapted Delphi method via an expert panel. Empirical study three overview.

The Delphi Method is a pragmatic approach grounded in the philosophical assumptions of philosopher and educator John Dewey, who believed that social science research should directly relate to and inform real-world practice (Kirk & Reid, 2002). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to challenge the emerging framework in a strong, pragmatic, and robust way. Considering the wider thesis, and findings from empirical studies one and two, it was deemed appropriate at this time to challenge the findings from a wide-ranging group of experts all with wide mentoring experience and from outside of the FA staffing umbrella. The Delphi Method was selected to receive anonymous feedback to attempt to converge towards a consensus on the feasibility of the mentoring components in this context.

## 5.9 Introduction.

The Delphi method is a formal, in-depth systematic qualitative methodology which was first developed by a team at the RAND Corporation (Research and Development Think Tank) in 1950, who made multiple practical applications of the method (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963). The goal of the method is to both embrace the diversity of opinions in the assembled group but also, to then reduce these and converge towards a consensus of common opinions the method applies various stages of questions, answers, analysis which are then returned to the experts in the subject. Often in response to research or a professional issue, seeking the opinion of experts is a common approach employed by researchers. Attempting to identify a consensus position, researchers can report findings on a particular issue that are based on the knowledge and experience of experts in their field (Barrett & Heale, 2020). Using a modified Delphi methodology including an exploration and an evaluation phase, the goal of the present study was to obtain expert consensus about useful, appropriate, and feasible mentoring components within a relational framework (Adler & Ziglio, 1996). More importantly for this study, a deciding factor to adapt the Delphi Method was that the Delphi Method was designed for more applied research and therefore, could be utilised to support direct practice. With the components and structure of the mentoring framework coming together, seeking

consultation with wider experts and practitioners to critique, question and inform the framework was considered both a logical and ethical process at this stage of the study.

Within this thesis, wider chapters and earlier empirical studies, evidence and experiences have been drawn upon from the coaches, mentees, and mentors within the FA mentoring programme. Also, from senior managers and leaders within the programme context itself. Whilst chapter one and two covered the aims and objectives and a desk top study of wider mentoring and research, with the components and structure of the mentoring framework coming together, seeking consultation with wider experts and practitioners to critique, question and inform the framework was considered both a logical and ethical process at this stage of the study.

## 5.10 Why Delphi?

The Delphi Method was chosen as an appropriately robust and pragmatic approach for this study for the reasons above. However, also for transparency, with the author holding a senior leadership role within the organisation with strategic responsibility, this also brings both time and contractual constraints to the research methods. These were exacerbated at time of writing as the organisation was approaching the end of the current four-year strategy cited in this thesis. Therefore, the Delphi Method engaging with professional mentoring experts across a wide range of experiences, but with an attempt to maximize the human interaction a smaller but eclectic panel of experts was selected to help both challenge the framework and gauge a wider consensus.

As already highlighted, Delphi studies allow for participants to contribute without knowledge of who else is participating, which helps to minimize power dynamics, while promoting participation (Fletcher & Childon, 2014). It was important for the first time in this study to consider a more anonymous and individually creative approach to both challenge and develop the thinking around the framework. Therefore, utilising other similar concepts such as Brainstorming (BS) (Osborn, 1953), which traditionally utilises members to meet and discuss and debate a particular problem or question was not deemed the most appropriate method. Brainstorming offers techniques for fostering group creativity by which ideas and thoughts are shared among members spontaneously to reach

solutions to practical problems (Gogus, 2012). Considering the power dynamics and the constraints on time, travel, and cost; all strengthened and supported the methodological case for an adapted Delphi Method. Although (EBS), Electronic Brainstorming could also be a consideration, a platform where group members facilitate idea generation simultaneously and involves the use of online resources and tools and systems, such as chat, and discussion forums to support the discussion process (Baruah & Paulus, 2016), similar constraints on this format (BS) for cost and time and attendance still apply.

Another potential process and methodological avenue that was explored was Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) (Saaty, 2008). AHP has been implemented in almost all applications related to decision-making and is currently predominantly used in the theme of selection and evaluation especially in the area of engineering, personal and social categories (Vaidya & Kumar, 2006). The analytic hierarchy process (AHP) is a rational decision-making technique. The process integrates quantitative data, calculation, qualitative data, and human psychology (Kulakowski, K., 2020). This method accounts for all possible alternatives to derive the best possible solution and to utilise AHP most successfully, complex calculation processes and software are advised. Therefore, in this context, the Delphi method offered the author a simpler method to support mentor practice theory over other qualitative methods and traditions because of several criteria including low cost, ease of use, access to a sample of experts, all which provided for a pragmatic way to develop beginning-level theory that could be testable quantitatively (Doyle *et. al.,* 2009). Other simpler and useable methods for consensus-based outcomes were also considered such as the 'Bootlegging' - Brainstorming Method (Holmquist, 2008). In this method, the concept applies to cut-up brainstorming groups in workshops by mixing familiar concepts, it creates juxtapositions that stimulate creativity to generate ideas. But once again, this method requires the groups to converse, meet, and discuss concepts and ideas either face to face or electronically and was therefore rejected as a methodology. Furthermore, all these methods have weaknesses; as in some form they all have to involve open face to face dialogue, meetings, or discussions and by which the presence or absence of consensus is rarely clarified, (Mead & Mosely, 2001).

Whilst all the methods discussed have merit and offer various outcomes, following close and deep consideration the Delphi Method helps emphasize points of agreement held by expert practitioners about how to do practice in addition the Delphi method allows for testable theoretical tenets to be formulated, while also identifying potential gaps of difference (Brady, 2015). Finally, the Delphi method is well suited for building practice theory in community based and organizational settings due to its emphasis on questionnaires and online data collection, which helps keep the study costs low (Skulmoski *et al.,* 2007).

## 5.11  Research philosophy.

Qualitative research utilises different methodological tools for understanding deeper meanings associated with complex phenomena and processes in social practice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In addition to well-known methods of qualitative research, such as grounded theory or constructivism, the Delphi method is an approach that is discussed less within the research literature (Brady, 2015). The Delphi method is a pragmatic approach grounded in the philosophical assumptions of philosopher and educator John Dewey, who believed that social science research should directly relate to and inform real-world practice (Kirk & Reid, 2002). Dewey's Pragmatism is evident in the qualitative Delphi method in the following ways: (a) The Delphi method is flexible and can be used with qualitative data to inform real time practice (b) The Delphi method is flexible as it enables anonymity with more open-ended questions and structures that can be easily disseminated to participants utilizing either traditional or electronic delivery, thus also potentially alleviating the cost and time for groups to meet. (c) The Delphi method is not concerned with having a generalizable sample but instead seeks input from a purposive sample of individuals with specific expertise on a topic. (Brady, 2015). Therefore, referring directly to the pragmatic method above, and considering the real time logistics and timescales for this study, this approach was adopted to support the overall aim of this Professional Doctorate and thesis in impacting directly on mentoring practice within the FA Mentoring context.

Furthermore, the pragmatic approach pursues an understanding how "real world" processes operate as opposed to a definitive representation of "reality". Therefore, the aim was not to develop generalizable "truths" but rather to provide

practically meaningful and context specific insights that could "make a difference" within the FA Mentoring context (Giacobbi *et al.,* 2005).

## 5.12  Participants.

Rowe and Wright, (2001) recommend utilising between 5-20 experts within a Delphi study when there are time and administrative constraints, and recommend that to maximize the human resource, it may be beneficial to limit the panel size. Furthermore Schaap *et al.,* (2019) considered 5 panel experts appropriate to support consensus and clarity within a Delphi study for specific subject areas. Also, across wider research, the optimal number of panellists in the Delphi method does not reach any consensus across the literature (Taylor, 2020). According to Dalkey *et al.,* (1969), reliability has been shown to increase linearly with a panel of between 3 and 11 participants, while accuracy continues to improve up to the maximum group size tested of 29. Therefore, with constraints on time and logistics, the method of assembling a smaller but contextually sampled group of experts, all with a broad and expansive background in mentoring were identified and approached to take part in the study.

Content Experts were selected across wide ranging field of mentoring expertise and included:

**Panel Member one:** An interdisciplinary artist, academic and mentor, whose work looks to support social change. As well as many years of experience working within academia and with world leading organisations to help them visualise social change, panellist one has also worked for eight years as a freelancer using their interdisciplinary work including imagery, mentoring and storytelling to support individuals and organisations visualise change. **Panel Member two:** An Executive coach, consultant and PhD researcher who has held senior leadership roles within National Sport National Governing Bodies. Panellist two has also been a mentor and coach developer across both sporting and business environments for over ten years. **Panel Member three:** A university examiner and physical education teacher with elite coach mentoring experience. Panellist three has supported elite coaches as a mentor within sport and disability sport, attending both world and European championships as a coach mentor. They have also published articles on the power of mentoring and have over thirty years' experience in the field. **Panel Member four:** A Business Mentor, Solicitor

and MSc holder is a mentoring consultant within the business field and has practices in both the North, and the East of England. They have fifteen years' experience of working within consultancy work and cite mentoring as a powerful tool to support both individuals and businesses. **Panel Member five:** A registered practicing counsellor and NHS (National Health Service) consultant and European mentoring practitioner. Panellist five has extensive experience both in the UK and abroad and has been a coach mentor for twenty years. Within their tenure, they have been the chair of a globally renowned mentoring business which also delivers mentoring qualifications. **Panel Member six:** A certified business psychologist and therapist. Panellist six has experience in sports coach mentoring as well as mentoring individuals with mental ill-health and other life challenges within the charity sector. They have mentored across a variety of environments for fifteen years.

Whilst traditional Delphi Studies vary in panel size, it was important in this research to consider a panel who 1) As a professional have a particular view on what is important from a relational perspective, 2) Considering the relational aspect, have a view on how mentoring relationships should be conducted 3) Bring ideas that may challenge and inform the framework based on their own opinions and experience in mentoring practice. Therefore, six specific experts were selected. Small panels consisting of less than ten individuals representing a variety of experiences appear sufficient for developing information about conceptual or philosophical issues around specific human resource when there may be administrative constraints (Richey *et al.,* 1985; Shaap *et al.,* 2019; Rowe & Wright, 2001).

Although several qualitative methods were considered for the research study and size of panel selection, including traditional theory, interpretive, grounded and constructivist inquiry, the Delphi method was chosen based on the fact all the participants involved in the study were professional experts who needed flexibility in when they participated. In addition, traditional academic research can make demands on their time without offering any tangible output useful to their own work (Brady, 2015). Furthermore, the panels geography and demographics were also a major consideration and constraint for other methods considered. The panels' location stretched from the Southwest to the Northeast of England and included a panel member whose residency was in a European

country. Therefore, a Delphi Method that incorporated the traditional rounds of questions and analysis which will be more labour intensive for the researcher, and simpler for the panel was considered the best option.

## 5.13  Research methods and procedure.

Prior to any research being undertaken, and as per empirical study one and two within this thesis, ethical approval was obtained via University of Central Lancashire and all protocols adhered too. All participants within the research completed informed consent forms. Each panel member was sent a synopsis of the research to date and a voice over power point slide with a schematic (Fig 1), (See Appendix C1 - C4), outlining the proposed frameworks components: Rapport, Observation, Feedback, Reflection, to ensure panel members had context to the questions. All details were fully explained at the start of the process, and all participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The data collected within this study is not of a sensitive nature. However, all data both recorded and written was stored securely within University and FA guidelines. To ensure the anonymity of the participant's pseudonyms or letters will be used to ensure identities are not revealed (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022).
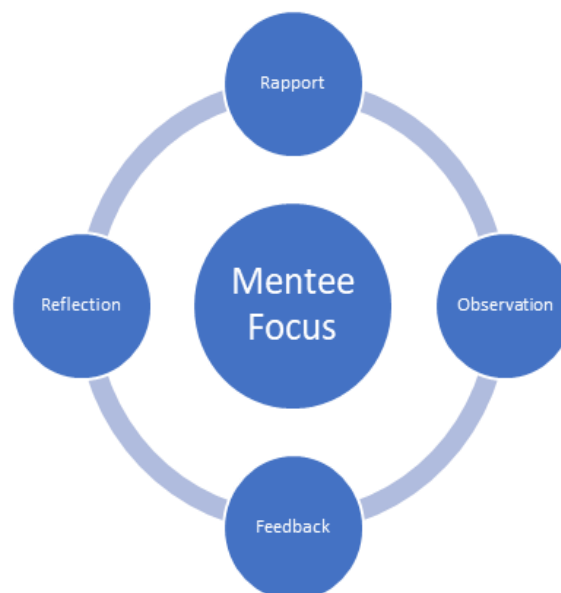


**Figure 8 Framework Schematic**

Only the researcher has access to the identities of the individuals within the study. The panel question transcripts were followed clearly and concisely and in line with procedure.

The Delphi Method offers a way of handling the opinions of individual experts in a collaborative and not combative way. The essence of the Delphi approach is that there should be no discussion or collusion between experts and that no expert should know who else is involved. (Mead & Moseley, 2001). The overarching approach for Delphi is based on a series of question 'rounds', where a set of experts are asked their opinions on a particular issue. The questions for each round are based in part of the findings of the previous one, allowing the study to evolve over time in response to earlier findings. (Barrett & Heale, 2021). Traditional Delphi Method questions often utilise three rounds of where an analysis of each round supports the next round with a summary being circulated to each panel member independently. Three rounds within Delphi can achieve group consensus on the issue or problem which are under consideration (Latif *et al.,* 2016). A Delphi method would usually consist of at least a three-iteration questionnaire survey. The purpose of the initial iteration is to identify broad issues and a questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions is usually circulated to a panel of experts The responses to the open-ended questions are analysed qualitatively by sorting, categorising, and searching for common themes. (Brady, 2015: Thangaratinam & Redman, 2005).

**Round One:** Considering that Delphi Method approaches that bypassed the conventional use of an open-ended questionnaire in round one has often been questioned on both theoretical and methodological grounds (Rowe, Wright, & Bolger, 1991), and with a view of both challenging and strengthening the framework, it was deemed important that open-ended questions were utilised to gauge panel members wider thoughts and opinions. Alongside the synopsis and voice over power point slide, the initial four open questions were sent to panel members. All panel members were asked to add any further thoughts or list further aspects they felt important to ensure a rich and open response to the first round of questions. The panel members were offered no specific timeframe to respond by, acknowledging the busy schedules each member may have, but they were encouraged to respond as soon as they were practically able to do so. All panel members were asked to respond via email to keep the communication consistent. In question one, the panel was asked to list any aspects they felt were important, or significant as part of the proposed relational framework. In question two, panel members were asked to list any aspects or components they felt may

be missing from the proposed relational framework. In question three panel members were asked to list any aspects or components they felt were not relevant to the proposed framework. Finally, in question four, panel members were asked to list or add anything not mentioned they felt may be important based on their experience. It was deemed important to ask frank but open questions to illicit clear answers.

**Round Two:** Round two questions focused specifically on the themes/descriptors collectively indicated by the panel and that directly related to the context and relevance to each of the components within the framework. Therefore, the questions for round two were narrowed from the emerging themes from round one and based around, Rapport, Observation, Feedback and Reflection.

**Round Three:** Following the completed analysis of questions in round one and round two, the final round of questions was in the form of a Likert scale. (See Appendix C7). The original Likert scale is a set of statements (items) offered for a real or hypothetical situation under study. Participants are asked to show their level of agreement (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) with the given statement (items) on a metric scale. (Singh, 2006). Likert scales provide a range of responses to a statement or series of statements. often, there are 5 categories of response ranging from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree with a 3 = neutral type of response, (Jamieson, 2004). However, there is a debate among researchers concerning the optimum number of choices in a Likert-type scale (Joshi *et al.,* 2015). Considering the strong themes emerging within the study, a five-point scale comprising of fifteen question statements was deemed sufficient to gauge towards a final consensus. Following each round of questions, a summary report giving an overview of the analysis, findings and themes was sent individually to each panel member prior to the next round of questions. Finally, a final report and overview on the findings was sent to each panel member, also thanking them for their participation and time.

## 5.14  Data analysis.

Whilst the selected panel for this study are all experts within the field of mentoring, their specific fields vary. For example, the work of a registered psychologist will differ to a practicing physical education teacher. Therefore,

Braun *et al.,* (2016) methodology to code the panels answers in both a data driven (inductive) and theoretically driven (deductive) manner, with the aim of identifying passages of interest which capture both content and theoretical relevance was selected. To develop further rigour by identifying deeper concepts and meaning, to support the analysis and findings, Bazeley, (2009) three-step formula, namely: Describe- Compare- Relate was adopted. (See Appendix C5). Describe- Compare- Relate is a simple three-step formula to use when starting to work through and record results of an analysis. Bazeley, (2009) viewed the process of rigorous qualitative data analysis as involving the identification of concepts and categories to move from specific ideas found in participant responses, to less specific but more explanatory ideas found in themes. Whilst concepts are the closest unit of analysis to the original raw data, categories are more abstract; however, they provide a greater level of explanation than concepts alone (Brady, 2015). Therefore, following the identification of themes that were identified by the frequency they were discussed in panel members initial inductive responses, Describe, Compare-Relate was used as a framework to help identify a more deductive led depth to the analysis.

- Describing is an important starting point outline the context for the study and provide details about sources of data, such as the demographic features of the sample and the interrelationships between these features. These give necessary background against which further analyses will be read, as well as providing a basis for comparative analysis. Then move to the first major category or 'theme'. Describe (and record) its characteristics and boundaries. How did people talk about this aspect, and how many talked about it? What's not included?

- Compare differences in the characteristics and boundaries for just that category or theme across contrasting demographic groups or across variations in context Do themes occur more or less frequently for different groups? Are they expressed differently by different groups? Ask questions of your data about this category or theme—who, why, what, when? Record meaningful associations—doing so will prompt further questions in your mind. Record, also, an absence of association—not only is it important to know if there is no variation

across groups or contexts, recording these means you won't need to waste time later re-checking.

- Relate this category or theme to others already written about Ask more questions—does it make a difference if…? Under what conditions does this category or theme arise? What actions/interactions/strategies are involved? What are the consequences and do these vary depending on the circumstances or the form in which it is expressed? This Process was adopted to improve the rigorous nature of the qualitative data by identifying more specific ideas and concepts found in the participant responses. Table 1: gives an example of how the process was used to further identify concepts and compare to better relate the meaning to the study purpose and FA Mentoring context. (Bazeley, 2009: Brady 2015). Recorded codes were collated and organised into candidate themes which highlighted higher level patterns and captured significant aspects of the data set (Braun *et al.,* 2016). Bazeley, (2009) formula was also engaged to help develop a more contextual foundation relatable to the context of the intended framework. This helped the researcher to better understand any emerging consensus relating to themes.

As you describe, compare, and relate for each element with an enquiring mind and an eye for evidence, your picture will become increasingly complex and your theory or thesis will develop, building on the foundation you have laid (Bazeley, 2009).

## 5.15 Rigour and trustworthiness.

Once again it is important to recognise the researcher's position within the FA structure and the practice in context and within this professional Doctorate. Ethically, quality research must hold sufficient academic rigour to be accepted valid and trustworthy while also appealing to practitioners' needs for incorporation into practice (Eastabrook & Collins, 2022). In many studies, improving trustworthiness can be as simple as making adequate time to secure the integrity of the data collected, similarly, attention should be paid to providing enough detail for the readers to fully understand the data's analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), However, care should be taken to match any study aims with the appropriate

methodology (Braun *et al.,* 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Eastabrook & Collins, 2022), and this really resonates with my thinking for this study. An opportunity to engage with wider and expert opinion on a subject I care passionately about but by also ensuring the subject matter experts selected add value, significant challenge, and needed critique to the research.

Regarding the Expert Panel, **Panellist one** came from a recommendation within the university. The panellist was completely unknown to me, worked in a completely different field but with the relevant context of mentoring experience. They were recommended to me for their varied work and expertise across a variety of disciplines and also their professional biography highlights 'challenge and change' which was deemed relevant to the panel's objectives. **Panellists two and three** are known to me, but not personally, or in direct working practice (Different Organisations). We have never met in person and have only been involved within a few multi-persons online meetings. However, for transparency, rigour, and trustworthiness I was aware of their positions in their chosen fields and this in turn helped me understand the participants roles and relevance to the panel. This relevance came from both panellists being well known for challenging practice and their evidence-based approaches. This again, demonstrated relevance for panel selection. **Panellist four** is someone I do not know, and from a completely unrelated field, but with a relevance to high level mentoring practice. I am aware of this person via social platforms and via publications. With their legal practice background, and with also utilising mentoring within this practice, I felt that their portfolio would add valued critical opinion to the panel. **Panellist five** is known to me, and the only person on the panel I have met in a business context albeit in a different field. In declaring this I accept and acknowledge the potential for selection bias within the context of the study. However, knowing of the panellist's work, I knew they would bring sound critique, question and broad experience to the panel selected. Finally, **panellist six** is not known to me and came from a recommendation from panellist three. Once again having a panellist who I do not know, but who has a wide and extensive experience within mentoring practice, and with a lens of supporting across many complex issues, they were deemed to be a positive addition to the panel and to the critique.

In the interests of rigour and trustworthiness, and in accordance with the Delphi Methodology, all panellists will remain anonymous to each other and from

each other. Only the analysed collective findings via summary and questions will be shared individually.

Qualitative researchers must demonstrate rigour, associated with openness, relevance to practice and congruence of the methodological approach. Although other researchers may interpret the data differently, appreciating and understanding how any themes were developed is an essential part of demonstrating the robustness of the findings, (Smith & Noble, 2014).

## 5.16  Results and discussion.

As previously highlighted, it was deemed important that open-ended questions were utilised initially to both gauge panel members wider thoughts and opinions, but also with view of both challenging the framework early in the process. Whilst open questions can give a broad consensus, it was important to give participants the opportunity to offer their own personal interpretation especially from round one, rather than to simply further rank questions, or rate items selected by the researchers to follow-up, (Fletcher & Childon, 2014). Therefore, by asking candidates what they felt was important within the framework presented, what they felt may be missing or not relevant helped identify early challenges, potential gaps, or even consensus to not only on the existing components but also the actual thinking around the entire framework. Because a Delphi study solicits information from experts who have a wide range of experience, their experiences and opinions significantly extend the empirical observations upon which their initial theory is based—thus strengthening the grounding of the theory and increasing the likelihood that the resulting theory will hold across multiple contexts and settings, (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004). Asking open questions initially and receiving a rich bed of data, also helped in the construction of later question rounds and formats.

From the initial analysis across round one of the questions four themes emerged:  1) Contracting/Agreement – Support expectations. 2). Developing tactics based on the components: (To support the process of Learning). 3) Skills and focus, the mentor's disposition to enable learning within the process. 4) Human aspect of a relational focus – Emotions, behaviours, reciprocity of learning.

**Theme one. Contracting/Agreement – support expectations.**

In round one, among other questions, the panel were asked to note or list aspects that thought were a) important and significant within the proposed framework, and b) anything they thought was missing from the proposed framework. Delphi studies allow for participants to contribute without knowledge of who else is participating, which helps to minimize power dynamics, and bias while promoting participation (Fletcher & Childon, 2014; Holmes, 2005). Based on this anonymity, interestingly all panel members mentioned directly, or commented on the need for a contract or, agreement to be present or, explicit throughout the process. For context, the panel thought that the initial mentoring phase of dialogue, connection and understanding the boundaries of the relationship needed to be more explicit.

'Panel Member Y: *Regarding expectations, I feel that 'contracting' is an important component that was not clearly addressed in the framework and that could add significant value. In mentoring, 'contracting' takes place at the onset of the mentoring relationship (i.e., that between mentor and mentee) and it is where the parameters of the work to follow are set'.*

'Panel Member Z: *What I feel is missing is understanding how the mentor-mentee relationship has come about and then, subsequently the contracting phase of that relationship.*

'Panel Member R: *'It is important how confident someone may feel from outset. From the reading it appears (An Agreement) may be an area for clarity and maybe a window for a framework to be present to help set expectations?'.*

In relation to the theme, in the final round of the study where a Likert scale was used to gain further consensus, question two asked the Panel members to rate the following statement: 'The setting of initial expectations (Contracting) was not explicit in the framework, within this context and needs to be included'. The panel answers accrued a score of 4.5 with four experts choosing Strongly Agree'. Taking into consideration that in the first empirical study within the wider thesis, that 41% of mentees did not know what to expect and had no prior expectations from their time in the programme brings this theme into focus. Also, considering further that for empirical study two, the main theme emerging from senior FA Managers within the programme was: The importance of the commencement,

engagement, expectations – from the mentee perspective, further highlights the significance of the results and analysis from the expert panel in this study. Ensuring the panel had specific insight into the proposed framework, via a synopsis and a voice recorded power point slide of the framework proved useful in delivering context prior to questions summaries and analysis. Clarity at the outset of the relationship would help in being able to set expectations and therefore understanding across the components of the framework. As mentioned within this thesis previously, historically this agreement and initial phase of each individual relationship has been left for each mentor and mentee to broker individually. This research has highlighted the potential need to be more explicit in the initial phases.

**Theme two. Developing tactics based on the components.**

Question three in the first round of open questions asked the panel members the following question: Given the context, listed in this document and the PowerPoint, presentation, can you please list any aspects or components you feel may not be relevant within the proposed framework. Please feel free to add further context if you wish All six panel members thought the component elements were all 'relevant' to a framework in this context.

With Panellist T Stating: *'Nothing Listed is not relevant to the process', and Panellist W stating, 'I don't think there was any aspect that was not relevant to mentoring in this context'.*

However, with regards to observation as a component, panellist Z highlighted: *'I don't feel like I would take anything out, it is all relevant, and observation is a corner stone of coaching, but I do wonder if there is another way to capture the activity when it happens, that is what the mentoring is based around'.*

Once again understanding the tactics of how, what, or when to observe is key to mentoring in this context. Mentoring is a pedagogical approach which supports the experiential learning of sports coaches (Nash & McQuade, 2015). This framework has been constructed not only to support the mentor mentee dyad and mentoring process, but to help support the wider area of mentor education, delivery, and practice within the FA Coach Mentor Programme. The components Rapport, Observation, Feedback and Reflection have been

established based on the wider contextual needs reported within this research. For example, mentors and coach developers will observe mentees/coach learners, but the 'way' this has been carried out historically has often led to nervousness and trepidation with no training or, good practice examples shared widely. Moreover, research has tended to neglect mentor biographies, recruitment, and training, often assuming expert coaches naturally possess all the attributes of an effective mentor (e.g., Bloom *et al.,* 1998; Chambers, 2015). It is proposed that the components within this proposed framework will form part of a supporting resource with devised behaviours/tactics to support the programme from recruitment through to practice. In the final round of questions where a Likert scale was used to gain further consensus to the themes, question six asked the panel members to rate the following statement: The components (Rapport/Observation/Feedback/Reflection) are complex and need contextualising with more tactics/behaviour detail. The panel accrued a score of 5 with all six choosing strongly to agree.

**Theme three. The mentor's skills and disposition to enable learning within the process. Rapport, Observation, Feedback, Reflection.**

There was a consensus from the panels answers around the importance of the mentor's skill within the mentoring process. The panel gave insightful and contextual answers to their thoughts on each of the components listed above. Although as in the first round of questions, the panel found all the components listed as relevant to mentoring, in round two of the questions, the panel made frequent reference to the importance of the skills needed to undertake the role effectively around each of the components.

**Rapport.**

For Rapport - Panellist T answering the question for specific tactics: 'Rapport – common ground, walk and talk, environment where to meet, where not to meet, informal interaction to underpin formal contracting. Person skills first every time'. Bazeley (2009) was useful here in comparing and relating panel members context across themes. For example, in Table one below, rapport was deemed important in both a corporate and therapy setting, but there are subtle differences in the way it is portrayed. Panel member X relates rapport as being important to a perceived honesty and authenticity for business connection

whereas Panel member Y relates towards rapport being part of a wider trust-care and kindness-based relationship, either way, there is an element of skill involved, and each is nuanced to their own field of work. Either way, a relational connection, rapport, and trust is deemed important and could be related to the framework. To support this further, and aligning to the panel's comments, Alexander, and Bloom (2023), whilst examining coaches in a coach mentoring programme, reported the need to really get to know the person beyond the mentee to create a trusting environment.

| Panel response X: (Corporate Field). Describe | Panel Response Y: (Therapist). Describe: |
|---|---|
| 'I think rapport is important, often underplayed. skill. In a corporate more formal setting rapport is important towards perceived honesty - authenticity in participation'. | 'Should rapport be a core theme or, should rapport be part of a theme around establishing a wider trust-care and kindness-based relationship. It could be considered that rapport is a skill, building an element of trust rather than trust being an element of rapport'. |
| **Compare:** | **Compare:** |
| Genuineness, Validity, Important Business connections. | Wider trust, elements of care in relationship Kindness-based. |
| **Relatedness:** | |
| Contextual, trust, honesty, and authenticity of relationship building. Partnering/Skill. | |

**Table 4 Panel Member Response**

Panellist R referred to Rapport:

'*It's a real skill, Active listening. Empathy There is a personal connection being formed – between person A who is the mentor and person B who is the mentee'.*

As highlighted wider within this thesis, rapport has been an important thread highlighted by the FA Managers who oversee the programme and just as importantly, highlighted by the coach mentees who have participated within the programme. All the panel members felt rapport was relevant, but more

importantly, in line with the theme, the skill of building rapport was an important part of the mentor's disposition. As Panellist Y concluded:

*'Any formal mentor programme needs to have the flexibility to consider the needs of the mentee and the skills, attributes of the mentor, such as building rapport from the outset'.*

**Observation.**

Considering the wider research within this thesis which has already sought to explore the thoughts, feelings and emotions of coach mentees who may have been subject to a hierarchical mentor, or had trepidation based on their own perception of being mentored (Potrac *et al.,* 2016; Sawiuk & Leeder 2020), it was of interest to understand the independent panel's view around the component of observation within the framework and the skills needed in this context. As Steinmetz, (2016) states, Observation: The presence of observers fundamentally affects people's perceptions of their own behaviour, by experiencing a shared reality, which enhances one's experiences, people magnify their actions when observers are present. Thus, showing how the social context influences not only what people do, but also how people think about what they do. Regarding tactics around observation, panellist R stated:

*'A tactic is to Observe mentee's values. Observe, how do they define themselves? Identity the layers; background; influences; roles at work and in life; obligations and responsibilities'.*

Which once again, highlights the skills needed in observation. Whereas Panellist Z Observed:

*'I do feel like within football there is a discussion to be had about the extent to which observation is prioritised as the main thing. This is quite different to a lot of other sports and work environments. For example, some mentoring could also happen after a session which the mentor was not at and based on the descriptive narrative of the coach'.*

| Panel response S: (Teacher). Describe: | Panel response Y: (Therapist). Describe: |
|---|---|
| 'Need to be unobtrusive in approach be aware on visibility in Observation, how do we do this. It must be related in understanding the context of relationship. I am certain via experience that there will be some trepidation and nervousness. | 'Observation is quite a strong word and I know it is used a lot into football/ I understand    why it should be in, training to do this, it needs careful consideration. Feedback the same' |
| **Compare:** | **Compare:** |
| Aware of vulnerability of mentees trepidation/worry. | Reciprocal, how mentee feels? |
| **Relatedness:** | |
| Perceptual understanding of others. Mentor Training/Skills. | |

**Table 5 Panel Member Response**

**Feedback.**

With regards to Feedback, in round two of the questions the panellists were asked: To help support reciprocal learning within the process, and based on your own experience, what tactics do you feel could be beneficial to each of the mentoring components listed? (Feedback) Panellist T responded*:*

*'For me the most important part is bringing to life the words which are abstract e.g., "feedback", everyone thinks they understand what this means but actually in reality why, how, this could be a workshop on its own. Mentor to mentee – needs these certain skills:* Panellist W Stated: *Both mentor and mentee need to be open to (constructive) feedback and must agree about this in the contracting phase at the beginning of the mentoring process. It helps to discuss the nature of feedback, the value of feedback and how it can help'.*

An area not commonly considered in feedback research is the reception of feedback, much time and effort has been spent on determining the quality and quantity of feedback provided, without considering its reception and subsequent action by a receiver (Anderson 2010; Mason *et al.,* 2020). Evidence within this

wider thesis supports the fact that feedback within the wider programme itself needs to consider the concept of enhancing and developing the mentor's skill in the giving/receiving of feedback. Reflecting on empirical study one, where 41% of coach mentees when asked what their expectations were from the programme said they didn't know what to expect and were also unsure of the outcomes. This may also support the concept highlighted by the panel, of a need for the contracting phase to be more explicit. Panellists did not offer any specific tactics in providing or receiving feedback but were clear on the need for the mentor to be skilled and versed in its delivery. For example, Panellist E stated:

*'The mentor should be skilled enough to ask for feedback regarding the usefulness of a particular tool shared with the mentee; evaluation of goals achievement at especially at the end of the process'.*

**Reflection.**

With regards to Reflection, in round two of the questions the panellists were asked: To help support reciprocal learning within the process, and based on your own experience, what tactics do you feel could be beneficial to each of the mentoring components listed? (Reflection). Panellist E stated:

*'I think it's important that the mentor doesn't impose their way to reflect but simply encourage self-reflection, curiosity, and opportunities to signpost to other ways. Help the mentee assimilate by challenging current beliefs'.*

Whilst considering the role and input of a mentor or coach developer and where the roles are currently receiving more attention, there are questions remaining on the concepts and tools they draw upon to inform their development of coaches' reflection, learning, thinking and practice (Stodter & Cushion, 2019). Panellist Z:

*'Reflection is a wonderful tool that is very important in the mentoring process. Explain how self-reflection can be used for self-exploration'.*

The panellists did not Highlight specific tools or 'ways' to reflect as a tactic or approach, however, they did highlight their perception of its importance, and the skill in its application and conversations with coach mentees. The concept of dialogic practice seems to offer value for the ways in which coach developers could think about working with coaches to develop the depth of their reflective

practice (Driska, 2018). Furthermore, research on mentor education is sparse, thus little is known about the importance of mentor training events in relation to individual learning and development for those in attendance (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). This relational framework seeks to address the training and development needs within the FA Programme context.

**Theme four: Human aspect of a relational focus – emotions and behaviours.**

With this conceptual framework being relationally focused to help support the FA Coach Mentoring programme and based around the perception of mentees from empirical study one, and FA Managers in Empirical Study two, gaining unbiased feedback on the panels thought of what may be relevant within the framework, potentially missing, or beneficial was important.

Frequencies of codes and themes are sometimes reported, but there is rarely any attempt to explain these themes differently, or to express the theme at all. (Bazeley 2009). Being able to describe, compare and relate was particularly helpful here to support the emerging themes and further analyse what it may mean to each panel member e.g., a business consultant and a psychologist especially around the human interaction. It was pleasing that all panel members thought that the components were 'relevant' in the FA Coach Mentor Context given, and this again helped view each component, Rapport, Observation, Feedback and Reflection through a robust relational lens. With regards to the question asking what tactics, you feel could be beneficial to each of the components listed, Panellist K responded:

*'The emotional aspect of the mentoring experience I would see as a key influence. For example, emotions would underpin all four aspects (rapport, observation, feedback, and reflection), and play a large role in the formation and management of the relationship and exert influence, possibly training?'.*

The human, and relational aspect of the framework resonated strongly here, as well as the need for training and development in such an important aspect.

In the final round of questions where a Likert scale was used to gain further consensus, question three asked the panel members to rate the following statement: The framework schematic initially presented a hierarchical picture.

The panel accrued a score of five with all six choosing to strongly agree. This statement really resonated with me. With the relational framework essentially trying to achieve the opposite, and with rapport featuring so strongly, this study has been helpful in indicating that the initial schematic needed further consideration. Panellist S:

*'The framework schematic is presented as predominantly hierarchical, with the focus placed on what the mentor should do to support the mentee'.* Panellist Y:

*'Although I understand the concept of it being mentee focused, the drawing demonstrates a potential hierarchy for me. Is the mentoring done with or to the mentee?*

Based on this evidence, and feedback, a new schematic was constructed and shared with the panel individually as part of the summary review.
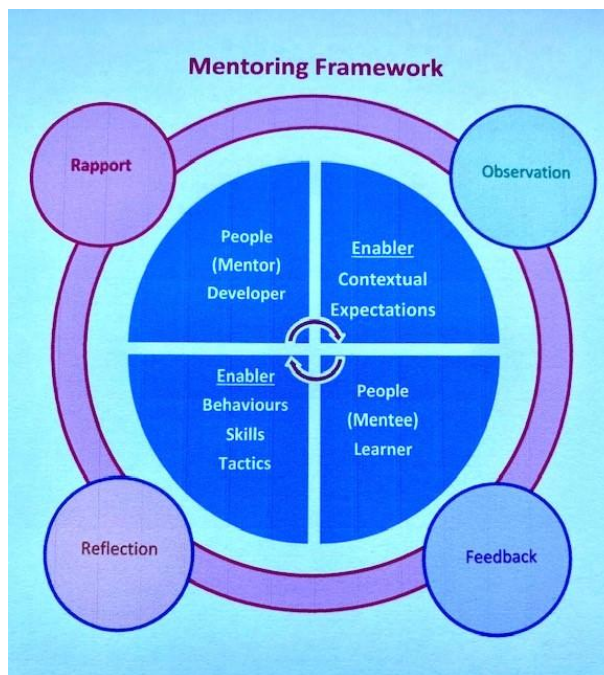


**Figure 9 Revised Framework Schematic**

The schematic now takes into consideration the feedback from the expert panel. It represents both mentor and mentee internally, as learner and developer and recognises the people element. Furthermore, the emergence of contracting and expectations and the development of skills, tactics and behaviours are enablers to the process. Rapport is also represented as a constant.

## 5.17 Conclusions, implementations, and next steps.

This Delphi inspired study has been insightful in both challenging and affirming detail within the conceptual framework. Furthermore, by attempting to deepen not just the rigour, but the process of thematic analysis has promoted a deeper layer of thought and refinement towards the meaning and relatedness of each panel members input to the framework. By seeking consensus from a small but expert panel across the subject of mentoring has helped align thoughts to other areas raised within the wider thesis and in conclusion:

The expectations and understanding of those in the process needs to be more explicit. By entering the contracting phase and defining both the needs and wants of the mentee will help in the delivery of each component – Rapport, Observation, Feedback and Reflective Practice.

By helping to determine what the expectations are for both the mentee and mentor will help enhance the rapport throughout the process, support a less hierarchical approach to observational practice, help determine the when and how of delivering constructive feedback and help in determining a path for reflection on practice. These expectations and needs should transfer into the tactics, behaviours, and continued learning within the mentoring programme.

The mentor's ability to understand, transfer and enhance the dyad via tactics, behaviours should be supported by further learning and development across the FA Coach Mentoring Programme. Potentially, around the component areas and on the contracting phase. The mentor and mentee dyad should be supported by a relational and connected learning focus.

The mentoring relationship needs to be both beneficial and supportive to both mentee and mentor. By placing both within the centre of the context and framework, we may be in a stronger position to alleviate any future hierarchical perceptions or practice.

**Note towards study six:**

Following this study and with reference to other related findings within this thesis, pleasingly, conversations with the wider FA Education Management team and the FA Coach Development Lead (Mentoring), have escalated to adopt a more robust, mentoring resource and wider training programme across the mentoring delivery. A selected cohort and working group of twelve experienced mentors have also been selected to support and critique this work and widen the support for the mentoring programme. It is pleasing that this research will have an impact on direct mentoring practice within its context and across the coming few months.

Finally, at time of writing June 2023, a training day for a cohort of 150 mentors is planned for July 2023 with a title of: contact to contract, the importance of rapport.

**Reflexive Thread:**

*This chapter has been enjoyable and the most challenging. I have felt real vulnerability within this chapter and study. I have also clearly realised the power of laying out my work, thoughts, and passion to experts outside my usual spheres. The process has helped me to accept my vulnerability, especially as an example, when asking if the components mentioned were relevant within the panels own thoughts and context, and asking what maybe missing, you do somewhat fear the responses! It has helped me critically reflect on aspects I may have not considered before, as an example, how the framework in early construction may be viewed as hierarchical. How the panel felt strongly how contracting should be present and visible. Things I had mentioned throughout the thesis but maybe became a blind spot. Expectations were highlighted (empirical study 1), expectations were raised (empirical study 2), So, Mr. researcher take stock of this as raised in (empirical study 3).*

*With all things considered, it has really help me challenge my thinking, reflect deeper on the; 'what and why regarding the work'. It has also helped me consider my biases, my blind spots, and areas much less considered. The Delphi Method has some real benefits when considering impact on practice. I will be making recommendations for the wider FA mentoring work to consider other*

*fields and experts more to both challenge, critique and ultimately, make the delivery more robust and rigorous.*

**Further Reflexive Thread. Taking stock of a 'seismic shift'.**

**End of the contract, start of a completely new personal chapter.**

*This entire journey, building of this thesis, the research interviews, studies, and all the reading has had more than its fair share of challenges, mostly due to the impact of Covid-19 just as this journey had started. Then, consequently, having to interview no less than 3 times for new roles during the restructure and amidst of the uncertainty with so many colleagues losing their roles during the adjustment around the 'Fit for The Future' strategy change for 2020-2024. Furthermore, the promotion into the senior leadership team in 2021 although pleasing, with its enhanced responsibilities, direct line management responsibilities of six full time regional officers, and the strategic D&I lead responsibilities for a further eight officers, put further strain on my research and studies. Something had to give, and the last thing I wanted to 'give' was my research.*

*In July 2022, one year after the promotion, I spoke to my line manager to discuss options. With support, I decided to move to a part time role, still in the leadership team, still as a national coach development lead, but for two and a half days a week to help me continue my role within inclusion, but importantly, also to be able to focus on my research and to use it to inform the mentoring programme that was now growing again into a significant enabler to the wider coach development team. Part of the role shift was to help the department focus more on disability and in the new role, to lead the coach development focus of an online module to support coaches working with disabled players but also develop a face-to-face CPD option for practical delivery. To support this work, and linking to my research and thesis, along with the national development lead for mentoring, and head of grassroots coaching, we increased the number of FA Disability Mentors from nine, to twenty-eight. This offered the opportunity to utilise the mentoring framework to directly impact on recruitment, training and development of the mentoring workforce which will be highlighted in chapter six.*

*However, in June 2023, as we approached the end of the part time contract, we also approached the business planning stage considering the new*

*strategy changes 2024 – 2028. Full circle from where the doctoral journey had begun. Unfortunately, with strategic changes, and head count considerations, it was decided that my part time role would end on July 31st, 2023. Although my employment with the Football Association for the last decade had now come to an end, my impact, research and development of the mentoring programme and its support on diversity and inclusion work continues. During the completion of chapter five, I have been offered an extensive consultancy contract to support the final development of the mentoring framework, and help support, the deployment, development, and training of the wider mentor workforce aligned to the framework. I have also been asked to support the development of wider departmental mentoring training and research.*

*This has been a worrying and stressful time, and its full impact is difficult to put down on paper. The uncertainty, the trepidation, and the need to not only to finish this current piece of work, but to ensure at the age of 59, I have the income to support my research and my family. I have started my own consultancy company Mentorial Performance. This work will see me utilise and further develop my research into wider circles to impact practice. A further exciting a related development is to have accepted a part time contract teaching at the University of East Anglia. I have joined the team delivering in the School of Education and Lifelong Learning on modules within Physical Education, Sport and Health, skill acquisition and the likes of Bandura, Vygotsky and Piaget have come back into my working focus. Furthermore, I have joined British Rowing as an Associate Coach Developer (Induction January 2024), and the framework has been received with interest from within their Learning and Education Team.*

# Chapter 6. Implementation and deployment of the FA coach mentor framework. The 'Applied Ness' of the research.

## 6.1    Introduction.

Future scholarly work should continue to disrupt dominant ways of thinking with respect to formalising sports coach mentoring. Problematically, formalised mentoring is often situated within institutional frameworks, inclusive of narrow learning outcomes, with external interests influencing the process (Sawiuk *et al.,* 2018). The proposal within this thesis may quite rightly be challenged as a 'formalisation' of the mentoring process. However, its purpose is to help in the training and development of a relational approach which frames ways in which the mentor and mentee may connect better from the outset of the journey. A framework created on the evidence and feedback from the mentees, the mentors, and the FA Leadership staff within this study. Therefore, the framework aims from the outset to set clearer tangible, and more relevant objectives to enhance role clarity (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). Furthermore, regarding this FA Coach Mentor Programme specifically; Leeder *et al.,* (2019) highlighted the need for an adapted and critically transformative approach towards mentor education with mentors showing a desire for specific support mechanisms to be implemented to support their roles. This is also supported within the findings of empirical study one where 41% of the mentees themselves stated they did not know what to expect from their experience of mentoring programme, and furthermore, by the FA Leadership citing the need to better define both the expectations and the connections with coaches. Therefore, adopting a guiding framework to help give some clarity on support, expectations, and direction, gives us the main purpose and overview for this proposed framework.

Furthermore, drawing upon the research conducted by Potrac, (2014) examining the impact of the FA mentoring programme where it was suggested that further qualitative research addressing the experiences of the mentees (and other stakeholders) would provide the FA with a richer understanding of the impacts and issues related to the grassroots Club Mentor Programme', it is hoped this work has helped the FA understand where it can have even more tangible and positively significant impact on coach development via coach mentoring.

**Recruitment, Induction, Training and Practice.**

## 6.2    Recruitment and interviews.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, mentor interviews were conducted in person by the Regional Mentor Officer who led the process. This was predominately with a designated officer from the County Football Association where the appointment was to be made. However, as the hiring body, invariably, the Regional Mentor would have the final decision on recruitment.  As Leeder *et al., (*2019) observed in his study of the mentoring programme; the regional mentors in charge of employing the coach mentors possessed the requisite capital to govern what knowledge is perceived as legitimate. Thus, the regional mentors leading the recruitment process possessed the required symbolic power to regulate what a 'good' mentor was. In this case, they tended to employ individuals who embodied comparable cultural capital in the form of dispositions towards both mentoring and coaching as themselves. Agents placed within an objective class are likely to have experienced similar situations to one another, thus developing comparable attitudes and preferences towards practice, accounting for a 'unity of style' (Bourdieu, 1977, 1998). When these individuals are brought together, this collusion results in "an immediate agreement in ways of judging and acting… the basis of a practical mutual understanding" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 145). Therefore, in summary, it could be argued that the FA mentors recruited may well be happy to collude immediately and mirror the recruiters needs, rather than understand the needs and wants of the mentee themselves.

On reflection, as a Regional Mentor myself pre Covid-19, this research resonates, over the period I was as a Regional Mentor, I had between seven and eleven counties to manage across the East, South and Midlands for the programme. Also, as highlighted previously and when considering the size of the programme at this time, the constraints on time and demographic, (Some 327 Mentors), having mentors who embodied the traits of current mentors made sense, and were often hired. Leeder *et al.,* (2019) also observed; As a result, some coach mentors felt this is perhaps a reason why they received a lack of guidance and training from the SGB (Sports Governing Body), as to how to perform their role, as it was assumed they were already capable and trusted. It is worth remembering that also at this time pre Covid -19, that the mentors were

generic in their coach development mentoring practice, with no set target areas (Diversity and Inclusion, Disability, Girls, and Women), supporting coaches of all demographics, male and female and within clubs around the nationally spread fifty-two counties. Therefore, potential cultural barriers and bias may also hinder initial relationships without set training or support. The mentor programme on its return in 2021, has supported two main strands of the 'FA Fit for the Future' Strategy, namely:

- Offering a Personalized and Connected Learning Experience for Coaches.
- Offering quality and support for a more diverse coaching workforce throughout the game.
- This has seen specific targeted mentor work to support:
- The Girls and Women's Game.
- Coaches of Black and Asian Heritage.
- Coaches working within the Disability Pathway.

Mentors once recruited will work specifically with the full time Coach Development Officers working in the areas highlighted. E.g., eight officers for Diversity and Inclusion, eight Officers for Girls and Women within the regions. The National Coach Development Lead for Mentoring in cooperation with the Coach Development Leadership Team and the Mentoring Working Group, established cohorts of FA Coach Development Officers to interview perspective new mentors. Interviews since 2022 have been conducted via recorded video interview. For the Disability Interviews as a clear example, myself as National Lead along with two colleagues working in the Disability sector, viewed and scored the interviews independently. Video Interviews were created using the FA Coach Mentor Framework within this thesis as central to the questions. As well as general questions around experiences and coach development, the candidates were asked (In turn), as an example, how do you build rapport with coaches? Or, when observing coaches in practice, what factors do you deem important for you as the mentor? Furthermore, when providing feedback to a coach, what do you consider are important elements? Therefore, considering from a coach mentoring perspective, what Rapport/Observation/Feedback/Reflection means to them in context'. The candidates have time to pause the recording before answering each question,

therefore, using the framework early in the recruitment process and highlighting the components as important to mentoring practice in this specific context.

## 6.3    Induction.

Pre Covid-19, regional induction days were of help as one-off events pre the season starting. As an example, all mentors recruited in the East would meet collectively at a central venue to learn about the programme together. After successful application and interview, coach mentors were required to attend this one-day training induction prior to heading out into the field. In the context of this research, it would appear the NGB had a clear idea on the 'type' of individual they wanted to recruit and employ as a coach mentor (Leeder *et al.,* 2019). Learning cultures which permit social practices such as peer discussions and interactions with other coaches are deemed invaluable by coaches to help share experiences and ideas they can implement in their practice (Bertram, Culver, & Gilbert 2017; Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2013). These days were beneficial in setting broad messages and engaging mentors in conversations and social discussion. However, based on the size of the regions, the number of mentors at each induction, which was often more than fifty people, it could be argued that one day together at the start of the process had the effect of limiting the messages given to those of a more corporate and logistical nature. This is potentially an issue, as sports organisations need to take responsibility for the training and preparation of their employed mentors otherwise mentoring practice will vary in quality and consistency, subsequently affecting the development of mentee coaches (Nash & Mallet, 2018). However, since the reintroduction of the Mentoring programme post pandemic, mentor inductions have changed. Initially, an online introduction is hosted by National FA staff, giving a broad welcome to the mentors which includes an introduction to the FA Education Mentoring Programme Definition of mentoring: '*Mentoring is to support, encourage and challenge coaches to manage their own learning within their own specific context, helping them maximise their potential, develop their skills, recognise their attributes; and all towards them becoming the coach and person they want to be'.* Alongside the message of coaches managing their own learning, and recognising their own attributes, the mentors are also re-introduced to the framework components and the definition of each in context building on the component questions they received at interview, the wider research itself and the context behind past historic

delivery e.g., the importance of rapport, connection, and the setting of expectations. Furthermore, on the online induction, the new mentors are introduced to their regional FA Officers where more localised face to face inductions take place within region where they attend relevant CPD activities. It has been acknowledged that for CPD to have a significant impact on participant learning, the educational content needs to be perceived as relevant by learners and recognise the nuances of practice (Nelson *et al.,* 2013). Mentors also play their part by actively attending and supporting regional FA CPD events to support coach learning with grass roots coaches in attendance then being able to seek mentoring support.

## 6.4   Regional meetings and mentor developers.

Alongside the online induction, each of the eight sub regions e.g., Northeast and Northwest, now meet independently with their own mentor groups and regional FA staff. This is on lesser scale than numbers pre Covid-19 but where good practice can be shared, and Coach Development Groups formed to support coaches locally. Mentoring is a pedagogical approach which supports the experiential learning of sports coaches (Nash & McQuade, 2015), and as well as supporting coaches on the ground, the regional groups meet independently to both critique, develop and establish a longer-term strategy to support coach mentor practice based around the framework components. Each region also has a mentor developer, a group of twelve experienced mentors to help support the delivery on the ground and within the region itself to ensure a more cohesive, local connection. This group of twelve have also met as a cohort to develop a cohesive approach to supporting delivery in the regions. Once again for clarity, the proposed relational framework does not seek to replace any wider tools and resources in wider use for example, the GROW Model, Whitmore, (1992), but works to compliment them by giving them a contextual standpoint. For example, when discussing reflection, Gibbs Reflective Cycle Gibb, (1988), may well be favoured by a coach or, a mentor as a vehicle in a certain environment, stages of building rapport, Di Ciccio, Bloom and Crabtree, (2006), may be useful when discussing certain aspects of rapport building. However, by understanding the historic references such as the perceived hierarchy of FA approaches, and subsequent apprehension, understanding the importance placed via: Rapport, Observation, Feedback and Reflection helps relate the mentors to support real

time practice and therefore, align to a more pedagogical approach to learning rather than an episodic and haphazard approach to mentor development. As Bailey *et al.*, (2019) alludes, we are still struggling to reconstruct and imagine what transformative mentoring practice for coaches entails, and basing mentor development around building rapport, observation, feedback, and reflexive practice may be a positive modular approach to transforming practice in this context.



**Image 1 FA Mentor Developers (Framework Components)**

At time of writing (September 2023), mentor developers are delivering mentoring workshops across the regions. Pleasingly, these workshops are being delivered to mentors across all disciplines of the mentoring programme, namely, Diversity and Inclusion, Girls and Women's, and Disability. The theme of the delivery to the 132 strong mentoring team is Rapport, Observation, Feedback and Reflection linking the framework to the mentoring workforce on the ground. I also met with Mentor Developers along with the FA National Lead for Mentoring in February 2023 to discuss and embed Contracting, Rapport and Observation, and again in May 2023 to discuss and embed Observation feedback. Both these meetings were precursors to the wider National Mentor Meetings at St Georges Park (July), Watford FC (November). At these events there were a variety of deliverers. These included FA staff, but also presenters from British Hockey, British Triathlon, and the Youth Endowment Fund. All presenters gave presentations linked to Rapport, Observation, Feedback and Reflection to ensure a coherent and consistent approach to mentoring.

## 6.5 National training days.

Research has tended to neglect mentor biographies, recruitment, and training, often assuming expert coaches naturally possess all the attributes of an effective mentor (e.g., Bloom *et al.,* 1998; Chambers, 2015). Furthermore, research on mentor education is sparse, thus little is known about the importance of mentor training events in relation to individual learning and development for those in attendance (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). In addition, mentoring has been heavily advocated within coaching to harness the influential power of experience through guidance, observation, and support, empowering coaches to become better equipped to deal with the ambiguous and complex nature of their work (Cushion, 2015; Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Nash & McQuade, 2015).

As demonstrated within this chapter, the framework has been adopted by FA Education and more specifically, the FA Coach Mentor Programme by offering a framework to support not just mentor recruitment and induction, but on-going development and training. The framework does not suggest or intend to be a fix all' but based on mentees feedback, FA Leaderships definitions and mentor practice, aims to develop mentor practice to enhance delivery and coach learning. Mentoring is a practice which operates across various domains, yet suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity, with no universal definition, (Dawson, 2014; Lefebvre, Bloom, & Loughead, 2020). The framework seeks to provide mentors with more clarity and definition within their programme context.

As well as appearing now within the recruitment and induction of mentors, and by several season long iterations via Mentor Developers and Coach Developers, the FA National Lead for Mentoring has also set out National training days in the diary based around the framework components and practice.

**8th July (SGP)**

**Contact to Contract**

• **Rapport, Relationships Contracting**

**17th November- Watford FC**

**Intent to Impact**

• **Observation & Feedback**

**15th June 2024 (SGP)**

**Context to what's next**

• **Reflection**

**Sept 2024**

• Review and apply

**Regional Catch ups**

**Jan/ Feb 2024**

• Review and apply

**Regional Catch ups**

**Figure 10 Mentor National Training Schedule 2023/2024**

Figure 10. shows the FA Coach Mentor Programme training programme for the next twelve months where the Framework will be pivotal in supporting the mentors training and delivery. Complimenting these national events, regional meetings, Mentor Developer sessions, and future interviews and inductions will be based around the framework. Also, FA Education are devising a resource guide to support both mentors and mentees on the ground and based on the feedback and research chapters within this thesis.

## 6.6    Next steps and future developments.

Although the framework and its components are embedded as outlined within this chapter, further resources are to be developed as a working guide to support practice on the ground as this research thesis reaches its conclusion. It is envisaged this resource will help with monitoring the future evaluation and development of the framework to keep it relevant and to analyse its impact on FA Coach Mentor Practice. The resource draft is currently in construction and in consultation with FA Education and the Learning and Development Department, FA National Coach Development Lead for Mentoring, and the Mentoring Working Group. What follows is wider (Draft) context on the components and their proposed use in development of the proposed resource.

## 6.7    FA coach mentor programme context.

**Contracting phase and components.**

As highlighted within the Delphi Study in Chapter 5, a contracting phase where mentee and mentor agree a personalised plan and set expectations will be more explicit within the framework context and will be within the starting point of the resource as well as all training and induction. Mentor/Mentee agreements and supporting documents will form part of the resources. It is important that the ground rules for the relationship are discussed and agreed and will include:

- What is expected (Reference Empirical Study 1 where 41% of mentees did not know what to expect from the process).
- How, when and where meetings will take place.
- What the boundaries are within the relationship.
- How progress will be reviewed and measured.
- The conclusion of the relationship. Sign-posting.
- Agreements around observational practice (How/where).
- Agreements around giving feedback (How/when/where).

The components will be set into a training resource and booklet. Each component: Rapport, Observation, Feedback, Reflection will be included in the resource to provide more clarity, but also to highlight some tactics for use, e.g., walk and talk to build rapport. The following will be formatted into a useable resource. However, they are listed here for reference.

**Building rapport wider components:**

− Positivity

 Informal stance – (Awareness of Hierarchy/Power Dynamics)

− Personalized

 Based on Mentee Needs and Wants

− Well Intentioned

 Building Trust, valued

− Listening Actively

 Allay Mentee Concerns, relevant empathy - Listen to Understand

− Connected

 Dialogically, Relevant Commonalities, Reinforcing, Reciprocal

- Authentic

  Relatable, personalized, Consistent

**Building rapport contextual tactics:**

It is important to explore at what the mentor and mentee share, in order to build trust and empathy to ensure there is a congruence and sense of purpose to the relationship (Clutterbuck & Lane 2004).

**Consider informal and various environments:**

- Mentee informed – Time/Place
- Walk and Talk
- Coffee Catch Up's

**Exploratory well-intentioned open questions:**

- Ask more questions to understand the responses
- Relevant questions, rephrase, reinforce
- Choose Questions that will elicit positive impact

**Empowering questions:**

- Help Mentee think
- Help the Mentee be connected, related
- Help the mentee be valued in their opinions

**Observation wider components:**

- Continued Rapport Building

  Consistency, Trust
- Authentic

  Relatable, Personalized, Consistent, Aware of Bias
- Well Intentioned

  Unobtrusive, Mindful of Environment
- Define Expectations

  Based on Mentee Needs, Concerns, Relevant
- Positivity

  Focused, Engaged (Awareness of Hierarchy/Power Dynamics)

**Observation contextual tactics:**

The presence of observers fundamentally affects people's perceptions of their own behaviour. By experiencing a shared reality, which enhances one's experiences, people magnify their actions when observers are present. Thus, showing how the social context influences not only what people do, but also how people think about what they do (Steinmetz *et al.,* 2016).

**Consider informal and various environments:**

- Pre-Observation Meet – Walk and Talk
  Allay Mentee Concerns, Listen Actively, Speak Positively
- Unobtrusive
  Considered, Aware of Perception, Positioning

**Well intentioned:**

- Pre-Agreed Expectations
  Mentee Led, (What and How), Clarifying
- Pre-Agreed Method
  Voice Note, Filming, Note Taking, Relevant to Topic, related Detail

**Feedback wider components:**

- Continued Rapport Building
  Consistency, Trust
- Positivity
  Focused, Engaged, Appropriate
- Well Intentioned
  Simple, Clear, Specific, Non-Judgmental
- Encouraging
  Credible, Relatable, Relevant, Honest
- Interactive
  Mentee Considered, Audio (Voice Note), Video, Verbal
- Appropriateness
  Mentee Considerations, Where, When, How

**Feedback contextual tactics:**

An area not commonly considered in feedback research is the reception of feedback, much time and effort has been spent on determining the quality and quantity of feedback provided, without considering its reception and subsequent action by a receiver (Anderson 2010; Mason *et al.,* 2020).

**Consider informal and various environments:**

– Post Observation Meet (Mentee Decision (If) – Where, When)
   Walk and Talk, Allay Mentee Concerns, Listen Actively, Speak Positively
   Hot, Cold, Warm
– Ensure Utilization of Pre-Agreed Method
   Voice Note, Filming, Note Taking, Relevant to Topic, related Detail

**Well intentioned:**

– Interactive
   Mentee Considered, Engaged, focused, Well Intentioned
– Revisit Expectations
   Use specific examples, Relevant, Real, Relatable

**Reflection wider components:**

– Continued Rapport Building
   Consistency, Trust
– Authentic
   Relatable, Personalized, Consistent, Aware of Bias
– Relating
   Be conscious of Feeling, Doing and Experiencing

**Reflection contextual tactics:**

The concept of dialogic practice seems to offer value for the ways in which coach developers could think about working with coaches to develop the depth of their reflective practice (Driska, 2018).

– Written
   Notes, Essays, Blogs, Doodles, Computer/Pad
– Conversation with Self

Audio Notes, Recordings, Quiet Thoughts

- Conversations with Others

Mentor, Peer, Family


- Reading and Interacting

Media, Books, social media, Articles

- Reflexivity

Build habitual Reflection, Reflection Doesn't just Exist 'At the End'.

'Walk and Talk, Catch Up Informally, Reflection doesn't have to be a formal and taxing process'.

These components broken into 'readable' areas are to give the mentors a wider understanding and point of reference to support a supportive approach to working with their mentee and better understand some tactics and approaches to support the relationship in its early stages. The resource will be built to support roll out of the programme moving forward and will be supported by training.

# Chapter 7. Final conclusions, reflections and future research.

## 7.1    Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to help gain some clarity around how an already well established and formalised national coach mentoring programme could (better) support coach mentees more consistently. Much of the prior internal research (FA Mentor Programme internal Report, 2017/18), highlighted the programmes impact through a purely FA Coach Mentor lens, based purely on the mentor's perceptions and experiences. This research builds upon the first formalised research into the programme, Potrac, (2014), where it is suggested that further qualitative research addressing the experiences of the mentees (and other stakeholders) would provide the FA with a richer understanding of the impacts and issues related to the grassroots Club Mentor Programme'. Furthermore, Potrac further highlights that there remains considerable conceptual debate concerning mentoring (i.e., what it is), and significantly, there is a paucity of empirical evidence related to the nature of the mentoring process, especially in terms of how it is experienced and understood by those involved at the micro level of social reality (Jones *et al.,* 2009). Furthermore, this research looked to address the following objectives outlined in the introduction:

1) To critically investigate the subjective experiences of mentee coach practitioners and relevant wider stakeholders within the programme.
2) To critically analyze different mentor/mentee needs based on their level of operation and experience.
3) To create a bespoke mentoring framework via this research to support future professional practice and delivery.
4) To provide recommendations on the mentoring framework for future application and direction within the programme.

## 7.2 Summary of results and implications.

As outlined in chapters one and two of this research and my own personal reflections, that over recent years there has been an increased focus on how formal coach education provision has been criticised for its often decontextualised 'one size fits all' approach, which often overlooks coaches' personal needs, wants, and desires and fails to change their practice (Cope *et al.* 2021, Cushion, Stodter, and Clarke, 2022). Mentoring has been positioned as a pedagogical approach, which may overcome these criticisms of formal coach education, due to its ability to support the experiential learning of coaches in a contextualised, bespoke, and meaningful manner (Cushion 2015, Leeder & Sawiuk, 2021). In response, initiatives such as the FA Coach Mentor Programme have sought to address this approach by utilising the concept of informal learning to support coaches within their own context. With FA Education taking this a step further by adopting a 'Personalised and Connected approach', mentoring may well be a vehicle for supporting this more person-centred approach. The concept of being more contextualised is being developed and adopted much wider. For example, UK Coaching list their Principles of Great Coaching as follows:

- **P**erson-centered
- **E**mpowering
- **O**rganized
- **P**ositive
- **L**earning
- **E**ngaging

The acronym of people is clear to see but with a person-centred approach at the very top. However, as reported in study one what the mechanisms should be for such an approach to be effective, or what the expectations between mentor and mentee are can often be even with good intent, ill-defined or poorly articulated. Furthermore, within chapter four of this research, the FA Leadership also highlighted the importance for them of a personalised, connected, trust filled, and supportive approach. Trust and trustworthiness are considered essential features of successful sport coach mentoring pedagogy (Alexander & Bloom, 2023, Chambers 2015, Jones, Harris, & Miles, 2009) and it could be argued that forming trust whilst building on expectations are closely linked via many mentoring relationships. During empirical study three, one of the main findings from the Delphi

Panel was to ensure expectations and contracting was more explicit in nature which moves full circle from the main finding in empirical study one where 41% of mentees were unsure of what to expect from their participation in the programme. Therefore, by understanding and drawing on some of the common threads across the research, we can look to adapt a framework that may start the mentoring dyad in this context with more purpose, more context and with being more connected. However, first and foremost, the key to the 'applied ness' of this framework is the ability to embed it into practice.

## 7.3    Summarising implementation.

Chapter five openly recognises the social arena which contains coach mentoring and therefore acknowledges the specific research around the FA programme which highlights the potential for hierarchical and political practice within formalised mentoring practice ref (Sawiuk *et al.,* 2018). However, this is why, it is important within the mentoring relationship to set clear objectives and enhance role clarity (Lyle & Cushion, 2017), especially around mentee wants and needs. Alexander and Bloom, (2023) reported the need to really get to know the person beyond the mentee to create a trusting developmental environment. To do this effectively, we need to encourage practice that supports mentee learning and therefore, mentor understanding of what the mentee needs. By utilising a framework, we offer an opportunity for a dialogic approach which builds rapport and understanding and also helps remove a platform for hierarchical practice.

Rapport, Observation, Feedback, Reflection as highlighted in this research, are components often cited and visited across the breadth of FA specific coach and mentoring practice. However, to utilise them effectively, understanding the importance and the potential impact on practice from both a practitioner context a learner context is important.  As an example, giving feedback, understanding it being well intentioned, and the quality of the feedback is important. However, to consider a relational impact from the framework, we must also consider the receiver, we must consider and understand how and when the receiver wants to receive the feedback, this is just as important. It may well be then, by the feedback being well intentioned, and based on realistic mentee expectations even more effective, and therefore potentially, any subsequent assimilation or reflection. FA

Education has accepted the framework and its core components to be utilised within their current mentoring practice and, Rapport, Observation, Feedback and Reflection within their recruitment, induction, training, and development. FA Education and the FA Mentoring National Lead, and FA Head of Grassroots Coaching have adopted the relational framework as a mentoring tool to support across the entire FA Coach Mentoring Programme. As of March 2023, the components are integral to the recruitment questions for perspective new FA Coach Mentors. The components will also be used as workshops to support induction and then, ongoing training for the workforce in the forms of rapport building workshops, observation workshops with a lens on supporting the observee, feedback training on the giving and receiving of feedback and on reflective practice in action. The current roll out of this training and development will continue into season 2024/2025. The contextual tactics and components highlighted in chapters five and six will be embedded into resources for implementation across the programmes.

## 7.4   Future research.

It is pleasing that in line with the ethos of a Professional Doctorate, that the years of research and hours of writing and reflection are having an impact on practice within this specific context. However, due to the timelines and barriers well visited in this work, Covid -19, changes in strategy and job titles, evaluating the impact of the framework and its impact is an obvious, yet exciting area for future research. The roll out of the training will run for the next twelve to eighteen months, (2024/25), and therefore, beyond the range of this study. Therefore, specifically:

evaluating the frameworks impact on 1) Contracting Phase  2) Mentor Practice 3) Mentee Practice 4) Component Areas of the Framework, are clear areas to further understand the impact on both mentor and mentee practice. Wider areas for consideration must be to determine the training and development of future mentors. As Leeder *et al.,* (2019) states, there is a need for an adapted and critically transformative approach towards mentor education in this context. Are the mentees the future mentors? If so, what can we do to support formal and informal mentors. What is the impact of less formal approaches to mentee/mentor learning How does this impact on engagement, understanding, and the setting of expectations? Mentoring is a practice which operates across various domains, yet

suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity, with no universal definition currently present (Lefebvre, Bloom, & Loughead, 2020), and therefore, this 'complex, or fluffy' area leaves plenty more depths and levels yet to explore.

## 7.5 Overview of other areas of 'Applied ness' for the proposed framework – British Rowing, University of East Anglia, UK Coaching.

Following the direct implementation of the framework into FA practice, and as highlighted in Chapter 6 reflections, following my departure from full time employment with FA Education I have been successful in securing a number of consultancy and teaching roles. Within these, there have been clear examples of areas where my research is being applied, added interest, and has had actual impact. Indeed, my research featured heavily in all interviews and discussions for the roles listed and has been instrumental in many cases.

**British Rowing:**

British Rowing have shown a keen interest in my research and more specifically, my mentoring framework. I have been appointed as an Associate Coach Developer to directly support two coaches, a female rowing coach at Cambridge University, and a male coach with international experience who is transitioning from athlete to coach. Both coaches have asked specifically for support in observing, giving feedback and relationship building to complement their own technical knowledge. I was therefore paired directly with the coaches based on my research and experience. On top of this, along with other coaches I have been asked to lead Coaching Cafés and Workshops to a wider coaching cohort with includes the Olympic pathway to discuss my research areas. These workshops include, 'how to build rapport within coach/athlete relationships', and 'creating the right environment to observe and feedback'. I have also been invited to attend British Rowing's Coaching Directorate meetings. This is an exciting challenge, and also a real opportunity to see my framework used across another sport and environment and another exciting potential avenue for future research.

**University of East Anglia:**

With the University, I was approached directly to see if I was interested in supporting the School of Education. I was asked to lead lectures and seminars across the Skill Acquisition and Sports Pedagogy Modules for undergraduate BSc students in the Sport, Health and Education Cluster. Theorists such as Bandura and Vygotsky were central to lectures for the year group and following discussions with the course director, I was given autonomy in bringing the likes of social constructivism and social learning theory to life during the subsequent practical seminars by using coach development, mentoring, rapport building and observational practice to broaden student experience. From this work, I have also delivered workshops and lectures on mentoring and feedback to supplement support for year two Sports Development students. At time of writing, I have been asked to support placement students and undertake on the Professional Practice Modules to utilise my rapport and relational skills with existing and new external university partners. Finally, I have also been asked to join the (SHE) Sport, Health, and Exercise Research Group at the University, which is led by Doctor Tom Leeder, who's research was widely read in this thesis with a view to exploring and publishing new areas of research. A fantastic opportunity to extend my academic knowledge and output further. I also believe my involvement now with other sports will help develop some interesting collaborative avenues.

**UK Coaching:**

In November 2023 I was appointed as an Associate Tutor for UK Coaching. UK Coaching are currently exploring a 'tier 2' suite of workshops to support coaches from a variety of sporting arenas. The workshops include, 'understanding the learner in front of you', and connecting and building relationships. I have been asked to support this work based on my interest in being learner focused, and my own lens of understanding the mentee/coach in being observed and receiving feedback. At time of writing (January 2024), this suite is under construction. Another real opportunity to share, use and include my work to impact directly on practice.

These unique opportunities give me a real opportunity to not only apply my research and work and impact direct practice, but also offer further and future platforms for mentoring research and practice. Areas to critique, to evaluate and

to develop further. Stepping back from full time employment has given me an opportunity to really use this professional doctorate which has been the key to all this happening.

## 7.6    Final reflective summary

*Lifelong learning. I have always said and agreed that this is me, open to it and living it. With regards to mentoring, I started this academic journey not four years ago, but in earnest, in 2014, when it became an integral part of my life and work practice. Academically, however, it started with pen to paper, button to screen, in October 2016, some eight years ago on a Post Graduate Certificate in Sports Coaching and with a view on coach mentoring. It remains, as this thesis starts, a somewhat Himalayan adventure. I know it isn't over by typing a final word here. However, I feel I have navigated a good few thousand feet via crevasse, ropes, and ladders. But the summit will remain often out of site if I use learning as the destination. This thesis? I hope to allow myself a quick selfie on a temporary summit. Things I have learnt over the last four years on this section of the ascent.*

*Personally:*

*1)  I am resilient.*

*I have had some unforeseen barriers. I knew it was a challenge; my blinkers were off. However, redundancy, and 5 x times interviews, losing a role a second time, promotion in between, and a serious family illness pushed me hard. Also, the birth of grandchildren. Wow. Those times when this particular work seemed my enemy, impregnable at times, but also, my friend, my constant, my escape.*

*2)  I am focused.*

*I have had to be, never has outlook/Microsoft/calendars/voice notes been so active, it has helped me in ways I couldn't have fathomed. Yes, I have often studied at stupid times (4am) when things pop in the head. But, when it needed to happen, I made it happen.*

*3)  To accept vulnerability.*

*If there was ever a metaphoric limb to climb out on, this was it. At times, I felt I was wearing waders crossing the channel. But I embraced it, accepted it. (I am resilient and focused after all).*

*4) To be selfish.*

> *This is important to me, a passion. If I needed time to write, then so be it.*

*5) To be scared.*

> *Boy, at times, the tears the worry, the anxiety. (But accept vulnerability right, I am resilient, I am focused).*

*6) I don't know what I don't know.*

> *That's OK, learning is good, finding out and reading.*
> *(Accept vulnerability)*

*7) People are amazing.*

> *Contrary to news at 10, many people want you to succeed, want you to flourish. A kind word goes a loooong way.*

*Professionally:*

*1) Sport and its inter-weaving with social science is acutely complex. Context is everything and the utopian view of 'defining mentoring' falls into the chasm of 'It depends'. That is OK, especially if we can find a mechanism that supports people on their developmental journey.*

*2) My work mantra of 'Inspire to learn, learn to inspire' is still intact, and in trying to learn more, know more I continue to have the opportunity to inspire others on their journey.*

*3) It's time to be selfish in what I study, and what I want to achieve. I am approaching my 60th birthday (March 24), and I have worked in sport, business, and education, and I want to use the learning not just to help others, but to help me. Slowing down and taking stock of what I want to do, rather than what others want me to do.*

*4) What next? If this has taught me anything it's that I want to continue my research. I want to develop my professional practice, improve my academic skill, and keep going. However, at my pace.*

*And finally, mentoring matters. This work is about mentoring, it's about lending your favourite tools so that others can use them to develop, grow and shape their own. It's about building something that people can see their own summit, supported by their own sherpa but feel like their ascent is their own. They have learnt.. developed, achieved..*

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# Appendix A1. Ethics Approval Letter.

**University of Central Lancashire**
**UCLan**

University of Central Lancashire
Preston PR1 2HE
01772 201201
uclan.ac.uk

12 February 2021

David Grecic / Darren Moss
School of Sport and Health Sciences
University of Central Lancashire

Dear David and Darren,

**Re: BAHSS2 Ethics Panel Application**
**Unique Reference Number**: BAHSS2 0164

The BAHSS ethics committee has granted approval of your proposal application 'To develop a coherent theoretically grounded mentoring framework to support the national FA coach mentor programme'. Approval is granted up to the end of project date.
It is your responsibility to ensure that

- the project is carried out in line with the information provided in the forms you have submitted
- you regularly re-consider the ethical issues that may be raised in generating and analysing your data
- any proposed amendments/changes to the project are raised with, and approved, by Committee
- you notify ethicsinfo@uclan.ac.uk if the end date changes or the project does not start
- serious adverse events that occur from the project are reported to Panel
- a closure report is submitted to complete the ethics governance procedures (Existing paperwork can be used for this purposes e.g. funder's end of grant report; abstract for student award or NRES final report. If none of these are available use e-Ethics Closure Report Proforma).

Yours sincerely

Daniel Bürkle
Deputy Vice-Chair
**BAHSS2 Ethics Panel**

\* for research degree students this will be the final lapse date

*NB - Ethical approval is contingent on any health and safety checklists having been completed, and necessary approvals gained.*

**Testimonial (1).**

December 2023

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this as a testimonial for the work that Darren Moss has conducted over the past 9 years at The Football Association. Darren has held several roles at The FA including Regional Coach Mentor Officer, Coach Development Officer (D&I) and National Lead for both D&I and Disability. In each of these roles he has been an outstanding member of staff contributing significantly to our work.

Throughout this time what has been really clear is Darren's passion and enthusiasm for the mentoring work that we conduct across The FA and the role he has played in its development to date, and we hope moving forward. Darren's work in this space really is ground-breaking and gives us not only academical underpinning but work that is context specific to our game and the coaches receiving this support.  This has enabled us to become one of the leading Governing Bodies that are able to offer Mentoring support to our coaches, and more recently using its power to support the diversification of our workforce.

One of the main areas this has been beneficial is around our Training and Development offer to our full and part time staff. It has provided us with a mentoring framework for our team to operate. An example of this would be how are training offer has been packaged up this season and this can be seen below:

- Rapport & Relationships- From Contact to Contract
- Observation & Feedback- From Intent to Impact
- Reflection- Mentoring in action


Using the framework, it has allowed us to connect a lot of our work together and also engage with experts from other sports and across the world of mentoring.

These core areas of the framework will support us as we head into our new FA Education strategy 2024/ 2028.

Our mentors now work across the country to a consistent foundation in which we can continually support both when we are together face to face and also remotely.

Moving forward we see this work continually evolving and supporting our work. It is also starting to form part of our wider Coach Development work and will be part our Coach Developer support and training we will be offering as we head through 2024.

If there are any points in the above you require more clarity on or would like to discuss further please let me know.


Kind Regards


Andy Somers  - Andrew.Somers@thefa.com

**FA National Coach Development Lead - Mentoring**

**Testimonial: (2).**

**The Impact of Mentoring Framework on Mentor Development Practice**

The use of 'Framework' rather than 'Model' empowers a more flexible and strategic approach to Mentoring. Rather than a series of steps that have to be followed in a certain way, it allows for the variation between and within Mentoring relationships.

The graphic which places both Mentee and Mentor in the middle (rather than just the Mentee), with the described enablers, suggests a more ecological approach, where all of this together form and influence the environment. If behaviour is defined as a response to an environment, and Mentoring is about empowering those in the environment to recognise, reinforce and change behaviours (depending on the context) then this is very important.  It also illustrates the concept that Mentoring is done 'with' rather than 'to' or 'at' someone, and challenges perceptions of hierarchy.

While a graphic cannot fully illustrate the connectedness of all of the elements, it shows there is no defined direction or necessarily discrete steps e.g., the building and maintaining of Rapport is an ongoing process rather than a 'Step One' which once completed, leads to 'Step Two'. As a starting point this clarity is very helpful, but it needs to be explained and reinforced so that the above can be explored and used in practice. It may be that the above is incorrect and incomplete but that leads to better exploration, with the support of those leading the research and Mentor training, if interpretation and understanding is regularly discussed with Mentor Developers and Mentors.

I feel that Training of Mentors is broadly split into four groups. New Mentors in Clubs, FA Coach Mentors, FA Mentor Developers & FA Mentoring Leads/Research. Within and between each group some aspects may need more, or less detail, or different framing and contextualisation. It is very important that strategically we include these groups as 'People' depending on context. This is where a Framework is more useful than a Model, so that feedback between (say) FACMs and FAMD shapes training content and delivery, when explored with FA Leads and Research, so that information is being transmitted across these groups rather than just up and down. In this

process ultimately the FA Leads and Research must ensure that the training and messaging is still anchored to the intended process and outcomes, not being diluted by the breadth of feedback, but rather evolving as it becomes more informed and thus more effective.

In this training, within these groups the Framework allows for the variety of Mentoring relationships that are present as well as those that are yet to be included. Consider the differences between the more organic, voluntary ,mutual beginnings of a Mentor/Mentee relationship at a Grassroots Club and the deliberate, mandatory Mentoring carried out in a workplace such as a school or Community trust.

In summary the Framework has led to better exploration of Mentoring for me personally, and a more engaging and effective (as far as I can tell) way to explain Mentoring when training and supporting others.

**Mike Nolan - FA Mentor Developer (Bedfordshire) East**

**Testimonials: (3).**

I am a current Mentor for the FA in the Women's and Girls game and have been in post for approximately 10 years. I have worked in many contexts from individual support to club development. My current situation is supporting 7 Mentees in their own context and towards UEFA C qualification.

Over the years I have used many forms of support including the use of target setting and Individual learning plans (ILP). In The last two seasons I have been involved in Mentor development also and have been introduced to the framework "Rapport / Observation /Feedback / Reflection". This framework has given clarity and direction for future contact with mentees.

The framework has allowed me to narrow down my focus and connections with the mentee giving both the direction and outcomes that are both supportive and measurable for both Mentor and Mentee. Following this process enables me to support and check and challenge in a way that allows the mentees to grow appropriately in a controlled manner.

The process I follow is to get to know the person before the coach building those relationships that will forge a connection that allows me to be able to really question their process in observation. Connections allow us to set and communicate appropriate challenges to allow the mentee to go out of their comfort zone with mine and the frameworks support. They understand the process as we are in constant communication agreeing each step and using, they framework to shape their journey. I believe it's also important to understand that it must be a fluid approach allowing honest open feedback to give the mentee further targets and allowing reflection of current and future performance.

The Mentee is at the heart of the process with clear aims and objectives agreed around observations so on each visit we clearly know areas of observation linked to ILP so future feedback can be clear and concise to their needs and development. The Rapport built early in the process sets the scene for how we discuss and check and challenge their growth and development. Each Mentee has different approaches and individual needs, it's important to be patient with

the process to allow Rapport to build as to build the trust elements of mentor / Mentee relationships to be able really apply the framework in its entirety to build their confidence and development.

In conclusion the framework has allowed me and the Mentee to apply a clear and manageable process that is both achievable and fluid to our needs. As a Mentor having that clarity of approach allows me to focus on each step-in support of the Mentee with SMART target setting approach for the mentee giving clarity to their journey and development. Following this process has enabled me to challenge and take my mentees on a far deeper journey of development and growth due to its simplicity of approach and setting appropriate expectations linked to individuals, context and the timing of targets set.

**Billy Horn, Women and Girls (Durham and Northumberland)**

## Appendix A2. Mentee Introductory email



University of
Central Lancashire
UCLan

Dear Coach Mentee,

I am sending you this email to enquire about your interest in taking part in research being carried out by myself, Darren Moss, with regards to the FA Coach Mentor Programme of which as a mentee you have participated in.

We would be delighted if you would be willing to donate approximately 15 minutes of your time to complete an online questionnaire. This questionnaire will relate to your views on mentoring and the support and experience of being mentored which we hope will contribute to developing the programme moving forward.

Please see Survey Information below.

We would appreciate if you could complete the survey by the _____.

### Survey Information

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before deciding you need to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve.

What is the purpose of the research?

To explore perceptions on coach mentoring from the perspective of FA Coach Mentees

What will you be asked to do?

Complete the survey which should take approximately 15 minutes.

The focus of these questions will be on your role as a mentee coach.

Please take your time in considering each question and be as honest as you can with your responses. The findings of this study rely on the accuracy of your views.

What are the anticipated benefits of participating in the research?

Other than stimulating reflection of your experience as a mentee coach, the main benefits will be your contribution to our understanding of the coach mentoring process.

The results will be used to form the basis of an academic paper that will potentially inform the FA coach mentoring programme moving forward.

Are there any risks associated with participating in the research?

Your only task is to complete the questionnaire. There are no associated risks.

Do you have to take part?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time during the survey without giving a reason. Incomplete surveys will not be included for data analysis.

What happens if you change your mind and want to withdraw?

If at any time you change your mind and wish to withdraw, then you may do so immediately by closing the survey on the screen or simply leaving it incomplete. You do not have to give a reason for withdrawing. You will have the right to withdraw from the study up to 3 weeks after the survey has taken place.

What will happen to the information collected as part of the study?

Data will be anonymous and stored for 5 years on a password protected computer accessible only to the researchers. It is our intention that data collected will be written for journal publication, conference presentations and may be used in textbooks or related magazines.

Who has reviewed the study?

The project has been approved by the University of Central Lancashire Ethics Committee.

Will I be contacted to take part in any future research?

Possibly. We are interested in conducting follow up individual interviews to obtain more detailed responses. Once again, your participation in any follow-up interview will be completely your decision.

Who can you contact if you have a complaint about the project?

If you have any complaints about the study, you may contact the University Officer for Ethics

(OfficerforEthics@uclan.ac.uk).

Who can you contact if you have any questions about the project? Please contact the lead researcher: Darren Moss. DPMoss@uclan.ac.uk

Consent

1) I confirm that I have read and understand the information detailed above. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2) I accept that data I submit will be used as part of the results of this research study and may be included for publication purposes.

3) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time, without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.

4) I understand that my responses in this survey will be anonymous.

5) I agree to take part in the study.

6) I understand and consent to all the above points and by clicking the link below and continuing the study I am giving my consent.


Please follow this link to complete the survey:

[LINK TO BE INSERTED HERE]

Darren Moss

Professional Doctorate Researcher

University of Central Lancashire, Preston, PR1 2HE

Email: DPMoss@uclan.ac.uk

**Appendix A3. Mentee Questionnaire.**

**FA Coach Mentor Programme Online questionnaire :**

**1) How long had you been coaching when you first engaged with your mentor?**

1a) 1-2 years

1b) 3-5 years

1c) 6-9 years

1d) More than 10 years

**2) What qualification if any had you achieved when you when you first engaged with your mentor?**

2a) no football qualification

2b) Level 1

2c) Level 2

2d) Level 3 (UEFA B)

2e) Level 4 (Full Badge)

**3) What best describes how you first heard about the programme?**

3a) Through club Meeting

3b) Via other coaches

3c) At a regular club training session

3d) Via club Official

3e) Other

**4) Who initiated the first contact?**

4a) I initiated contact.

4b) The mentor-initiated contact

4c) The club recommend that I receive support.

4d) Other

**5) On average, (what best describes) how frequent the contact was with your mentor?**

5a) Once a week

5b) Twice a Week

5c) Once a fortnight

5d) other

**6) Where did you receive the most frequent support?**

6a) Match Day

6b) Training session

6c) Online/phone/skype.

**7) From your involvement with the mentoring programme, can you please tell me which of the following best describes how the mentor supported your development?**

7a) The mentor provided me with practices to be used in my coaching sessions.

7b) The mentor outlined skills/techniques & practices for me to learn and develop to enhance my coaching sessions.

7c) Working with my mentor we discussed the strengths and weaknesses of my coaching sessions with suggested areas of development.

7d) The Mentor listened, observed, and responded to my needs as a coach by discussing and signposting me to further experience to enhance my coaching sessions.

7e) The mentor signposted me to further experience to enhance my coaching sessions.

**8) From the below statements, what do you feel best describes your relationship?**

8a) The mentor led my development.

8b) The mentor presented a range of ideas to help me develop.

8c) We discussed and questioned aspects of my coaching sessions

8d) I told the mentor what I wanted to work on within my coaching sessions.

**9) From the list below, what mentor strategies did you find the most helpful to you during the process to support your coaching practice?**

9a) Individual feedback (i.e. one to one)

9b) Mentor coaching demonstrations (with your group)

9c) Group coaching demonstrations (Club Coach Development Event)

79d) They Signposted me to new resources (e.g. on-line websites) New practices and ideas.

**10) Could you please rate how beneficial the mentoring support has been for you as a coach?**

10 a) No benefit

10 b) Limited benefit

10 c) Some Benefit

10 d) Lots of benefit

**11) Finally, could you please rate how you feel your expectations of the programme were met.**

11a) I had no prior expectations as I didn't know what to expect.

11b) Slightly met, I expected more.

11c) Adequately met, about what I expected.

11d) Exceeded, I received much more than I expected.

**Appendix A4. Example of Empirical Study 1 Analysis.**

**Chapter 3 - Empirical Study 1 - Reflections/Themes from Mentee Questionnaire 2021. (Questions nuanced to Mentor Models).**

| Questionnaire 75 Mentees | **Relational:** Support where most was received | Training Session 80% <br> Match Day 4% <br> Online 16% | Mentor influence Practice |
|---|---|---|---|
| Questionnaire 75 Mentees | **Relational:** How the mentor best supported you. <br><br> **(Mentee)** | Outlined Skills/Practices for me to learn and develop. 12% <br> Provided me with Practices to use in sessions. 41% <br> Discussed strengths & weaknesses, suggested development 28% <br> Listened, observed responded to my needs as a coach. 14% <br> Signposted me to other experiences to enhance my coaching. 4% | Mentor influence – Practice <br><br> ==Mentor Model:- Mentor as Master== <br><br> <mark style="background:cyan">Mentor Reflective Practitioner</mark> |
| Questionnaire 75 Mentees | **Relational:** What best describes your relationship? <br><br> **(Mentee)** | Mentor Led my development. 40% <br> We discussed & questioned aspects of my sessions. 22% <br> Mentor presented me with a range of Ideas to develop. 20% <br> I told the mentor what I wanted to work on in my sessions. 16% | Mentor influence – Practice <br><br> ==Mentor Model:- Mentor as Master== <br><br> <mark style="background:cyan">Mentor Reflective Practitioner</mark> |
| Questionnaire 75 Mentees | **Relational:** What mentor strategies did you find the most helpful during the process to support your coaching practice? <br><br> **(Mentee)** | Mentor Led demonstrations coaching sessions with my group. 52% <br> Individual Feedback on 1-2-1's 34% <br> Group coaching Demonstrations (Club Event) 4% <br> Signposting to new resources (e.g. Online) 8% | Mentor influence – Practice <br><br> ==Mentor Model:- Mentor as Master== |

# Chapter 3 – Empirical Study 1 – Wider reading/Themes from Mentees in Programme.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Regional Case Study<br><br>2019 | **Relational: Confidence.**<br>Fear – Self-doubt. Confidence – Reassurance – challenged – open myself - ideas<br><br><br>Mentor/FA Staff) on Staff Mentor | XXXX there to sort of help me and guide me it's given me a load more **confidence** in my own ability and as XXXX says, it's your journey with those players isn't it, and we **doubt** ourselves, we fear stuff there are no rights and wrongs as we are all different, but by having a coach mentor with me, that really challenged me to open myself up to as many ideas as possible really. I tried new ideas, tested them really. | Mentor influence – Self Efficacy from Self doubt<br><br><br>Mentor Model:- Mentor as Trainer |
| Regional Case Study<br><br>2019 | **Relational: Confidence.**<br>Fear – Self-doubt. Confidence – Reassurance – influence – boosted - worth<br><br><br>Mentor/FA Staff) | He It boosted me that she said I had helped with her confidence, reassured her she was a good coach and influence. I helped her keep positive, and in the game I think. | Mentor impact – Self Efficacy from Self doubt<br><br><br>Mentor Model:- Mentor as Inspiration |
| Regional Case Study 2020 | **Relational: Confidence.**<br>Fear – Self-doubt. Confidence – Reassurance – positive – affected – responsive -<br><br>Mentor/FA Staff) | I think for me I have been through some things outside of football that really affected his coaching and **confidence** at times, and I emailed XXXX to say, let's do this together, let me know what you want, I am here to help. | Mentor influence – Self Efficacy from Self doubt<br>Mentor Model:- Mentor as Inspiration |
| Regional Case Study<br><br>2020 | **Relational: Confidence.**<br>Fear – Self-doubt. Confidence – Reassurance – reassurance – balanced - freely<br><br>Mentor/FA Staff) | He gives freely of his time it's not just when they are coming to the ground its being in the background, kind of being there, **offering reassurance, balancing my negative thoughts about parents and other coaches for him**. I can only say good stuff really about how I inspired change. | Mentor influence – Self Efficacy from Self doubt<br>Mentor Model:- Mentor as Inspiration |

**Appendix B1. Manager Introductory Email.**

Dear FA Manager ,
I am sending you this email to enquire about your interest in taking part in research being carried out by myself, Darren Moss, with regards to FA Coach Mentoring and your thoughts around the mentoring.

We would be delighted if you would be willing to donate approximately 60 minutes of your time to attend an online interview but also to answer 4 pre-questions which would assist the overall findings be sent through separately. The interview will relate to your own views on mentoring as a manager within the organisation who either mentors personally, or manages staff who mentor coaches, or have input into the workforce that mentors' coaches.

Please see Information below.

**Information Sheet**
We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before deciding you need to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve.
What is the purpose of the research?

To explore perceptions on coach mentoring from the perspective of FA Managers

What will you be asked to do?

Answer some pre questions to help understand the rationale for personalised and connected learning experiences and to help support findings from other studies within this research.

Attend an online virtual interview which will be recorded and transcribed.

The focus of all questions will be around your view and perception of mentoring. Please take your time in considering each question and be as honest as you can with your responses. The findings of this study rely on the accuracy of your views.

What are the anticipated benefits of participating in the research?
Other than stimulating reflection of your experience as a manager, the main benefits will be your contribution to our understanding of the coach mentoring process.

The results will be used to form the basis of an academic paper that will potentially inform coach mentoring programmes and any mentoring practice within the FA Education Department moving forward.

Are there any risks associated with participating in the research?

There are no associated risks.

Do you have to take part?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time during the survey without giving a reason. Incomplete surveys will not be included for data analysis.

What happens if you change your mind and want to withdraw?

If at any time you change your mind and wish to withdraw, then you may do so immediately. You do not have to give a reason for withdrawing. You will have the right to withdraw from the study up to 3 weeks after the interview has taken place.

What will happen to the information collected as part of the study?

Data will be anonymous and stored for 5 years on a password protected computer accessible only to the researchers. It is our intention that data collected will be written for journal publication, conference presentations and may be used in textbooks or related magazines.

Who has reviewed the study?

The project has been approved by the University of Central Lancashire Ethics Committee.

Will I be contacted to take part in any future research?

Possibly. We are interested in conducting follow up individual interviews to obtain more detailed responses. Once again, your participation in any follow-up interview will be completely your decision.

Who can you contact if you have a complaint about the project?

If you have any complaints about the study, you may contact the University Officer for Ethics

(OfficerforEthics@uclan.ac.uk).

Who can you contact if you have any questions about the project? Please contact the lead researcher: Darren Moss. DPMoss@uclan.ac.uk

Consent

1) I confirm that I have read and understand the information detailed above. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2) I accept that data I submit will be used as part of the results of this research study and may be included for publication purposes.
3) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time, without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.
4) I understand that my responses in this survey will be anonymous.
5) I agree to take part in the study.
6) I understand and consent to all the above points and understand that by taking part in the study I am giving my consent.

**Darren Moss**
**Professional Doctorate Researcher**
**University of Central Lancashire, Preston, PR1 2HE**
**Email: DPMoss@uclan.ac.uk**

**Appendix B2. Participant Consent Form**

Version number 1 August 2022          Research ethics approval number:

BAHSS2 0164

Title of the research project: To develop a coherent theoretically grounded mentoring framework to support the national FA coach mentor programme.

Name of researcher(s): Darren Moss

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated 08.08.2022 for the above study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that taking part in the study involves the completion of (virtual online face to face interview via MS Teams) and answering 4 pre-questions.

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop taking part and can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without my rights being affected. In addition, I understand that I am free to decline to answer any particular question or questions.

4. I understand that if I withdraw from this study data collected prior to my withdrawal will be retained but no further data will be collected.

5. I understand that the information I provide will be held securely on an online encrypted platform and in line with data protection requirements at the University of Central Lancashire.

6. I understand that signed consent forms and questionnaires & Video recordings will be retained in secured university encrypted online cloud for 5 years.

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant name          Date          Signature

Name of person taking consent   Date          Signature

**Principal Investigator**

_____     _____     _____

**Appendix B3. Manager Rationale Example.**

**Empirical Study 2: Chapter 4 Research Aim: Rationale', Themes & Codes for Empirical Study 2: FA Senior Managers Corporate View of Mentoring**

Question Rationale'.

**Chapter 4 – Interview Rationale'**

Senior Managers – Corporate view of mentoring offer. FA Full time Staff (Coach Developers) View of mentoring offer.

1. Manager 1 – FA National Coach Development Lead (Girls & Women)
2. Manager 2 – Overall Head of Grassroots Coaching
3. Manager 3 – FA National Coach Development Lead (Mentoring)
4. Manager 4 – FA Learning, Development & Evaluation Manager (Including Associate Workforce)

- **Manager 1** – oversees FA Grassroots Girls and Women Team and also 52 FA Coach Mentors who support the G&W work.
- **Manager 2** – Oversees all coach development – Mentors/D&I/G&W. also sits on coach development group (UEFA B)
- **Manager 3** – oversaw mentoring offer at time of last study 2017-19. Also involved in new role out of UEFA C (Old Level 2) and mentor development.
- **Manager 4** – Links the L&D team (New Introduction to Coaching Football/FA Playmaker (intro qual)) to workforce development/training – part time tutors/workforce.

The four senior managers are at the heart of the coach development part of the strategy. Mentors, full time Coach Developers and Workforce. There are other members of senior management who are influential but with constraints on time and capacity, the four selected would offer a good insight across relevant domains.

**Considerations - 'Linked and distinct' Segway Empirical Study 1, Chapter 3 to Empirical Study 2, Chapter 4.**

1. Examine rationale of department strategy for a 'Personalized & Connected' Learning experience for coaches.
2. Ensure outcomes from study one is the catalyst for study 2.

*(Considering Study 1 was pre-restructure and 2020-2024 fit for the future strategy).*

Key Findings from Empirical Study 1.

− 41% of mentees did not know what to expect from the mentoring programme?

***Potentially process 'happened to mentees rather than with mentees?'***

− 70% of mentees mentor relationship was instigated by others (Mentor/club/County FA)

***Potentially entered with trepidation and lack of understanding of why/undefined.***

− 80% of mentees had their mentoring visits at training with only 4% highlighting a significant presence on Match Day.

**Transference of learning, connected to match day environment unobserved or part of mentoring process? Connected Learning Experience?**

**FA Fit for the Future Strategy 2020-2024 highlights a personalised and connected approach.**

## Appendix B4. Manager Question Matrix. Pre Questions - & Interview Questions.

| Purpose<br><br>What do you want to know or find out?<br><br>Coach Developer Questions Study B: | Question<br><br>What 'open' question do you need to ask to achieve this purpose? | Probe<br><br>What 'open' question can I ask to get info on the things I want to know if they don't seem to understand the question? Or if they don't provide enough detail? | Prompts<br><br>If they still don't give me the information that I'm most interested in then what can I ask them to directly comment on? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Examine rationale for Personalised &connected learning experiences for coaches. | | | |
| Ensure outcomes from study 1 are the catalyst for study 2. (Chap 3 to 4). | | | |
| Pre-Questions. Based on Study 1. | Pre-Questions. Based on Study 1. | Pre-Questions. Based on Study 1. | Pre-Questions. Based on Study 1. |
| 41% of mentees did not know what to expect from the mentoring programme | How effective do you feel the FA are able to promote and share the content, rationale, outcomes and processes of the mentor programme to key stakeholders? E.g. mentor workforce Counties, Clubs and Mentees? | Are you confident that the key stakeholders are all aware of the aims of the mentor programme | For example, do you believe the mentor workforce could tell you what the aims of the programme are? |
| 70% of mentees mentor relationships were instigated by others (Club/Mentor/County FA). | How can the FA Best find out as much information about each mentee needs in advance of the programme starting? How can the FA make it clear to | What do we need to know about potential mentee coaches and why?<br><br>What communication methods can we employ at the start of the process? | Our perception of the benefits to mentoring? |

| Purpose<br><br>What do you want to know or find out?<br><br>Coach Developer Questions Study B: | Question<br><br>What 'open' question do you need to ask to achieve this purpose? | Probe<br><br>What 'open' question can I ask to get info on the things I want to know if they don't seem to understand the question? Or if they don't provide enough detail? | Prompts<br><br>If they still don't give me the information that I'm most interested in then what can I ask them to directly comment on? |
|---|---|---|---|
| | the mentee as to how and why they have been selected and the positive benefits? | | |
| 80% of mentees had their mentoring visit at training with only 4% highlighting a significant presence on Match Day.. | How can the FA fit around mentees needs to better support their learning? | Where do you feel mentors' visits & observations will be of most benefit to the process? | Desired outcome on the mentee from any observations and feedback given? (Environment/Behaviour) |
| Understanding Interviewee Introduction. | 1-Can you please confirm name & role within FA Education | What are your other Responsibilities | Wider roles |
| Understanding Interviewee Introduction. | 2-How long have you been in post at the FA? | What other roles do you hold | Other departments |
| Understanding Interviewee Introduction. | 3-Have you experienced mentoring within wider roles/careers/sports? | Have you seen mentors in Volunteering/Club environment? | What mentoring there looked like? |
| Understanding of mentoring as a development tool. (Personalised & connected) | 4-More generically, what do you feel makes a good mentor? | What Skills & Attributes do you feel mentors need? | Reflection<br>Competence |
| Perception of programmes impact. Where/How.<br><br>(Personalised & Connected) | 5-From your involvement and knowledge of mentoring as part of the programme, how would you describe how FA Mentors have impacted most positively on coach development? | Do you see it as - Supporting novice coaches. Inspiring, Building confidence? Developing Practice, Technical. Self. | Signposting<br>Legacy |

| Purpose<br><br>What do you want to know or find out?<br><br>Coach Developer Questions Study B: | Question<br><br>What 'open' question do you need to ask to achieve this purpose? | Probe<br><br>What 'open' question can I ask to get info on the things I want to know if they don't seem to understand the question? Or if they don't provide enough detail? | Prompts<br><br>If they still don't give me the information that I'm most interested in then what can I ask them to directly comment on? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Perception of the reality & limitations mentors face in context. (Constraints from Study 1) | 6-In your opinion, what are the main challenges FA coach mentors may encounter on the ground? | Is initial Mentee confidence a challenge-engagement? Or Time – Acceptance – Hierarchical? | Buy in, understanding |
| Perception of the challenges for a large-scale formalised programme. (Personalised & Connected) | 7-In your opinion what are the main challenges of deploying a large-scale formalised mentoring programme? | How do we ensure the offer in consistent? Keep engagement. | How do we ensure consistent outcomes? |
| Long term view of mentoring, what type of coaches are we looking to develop? | 8-With regards to FA Education more specifically, what part do you see mentoring playing with regards to future coach development? | Is it in Developing Cognitive/autonomous/reflective coaches?<br>Is it a more | What is important as an outcome for mentees |
| Further info – deemed important | 9-Are there any other aspects around your experience of mentoring you would like to discuss? | Process- - Outcomes? | Challenges – successes? |

# Appendix B5. Microsoft Teams Transcript Example.

Transcript Example 1: Transcribed via Microsoft Teams. Empirical Study 2:

Chapter 4

Interview with FA Managers (Corporate View) Interview Manager 3

Better just want start by saying thanks for completing both the information and consent forms that you did and also the pre questions which is a precursor for me to get into more nuanced detail, really of the transcription. Just to reiterate, totally confidential, anonymous.

## Manager 3

Yeah.

Darren Moss

I'll breakdown this corporate managers type of view of mentoring in the organisation into you know Manager so it would be completely anonymous. They'll be no names used. Nine questions coming up.

## Manager 3

Yeah.

Darren Moss

I may prompt, but I want it to be more of an informal chat, really.

## Manager 3

Right

Darren Moss

And again it will be transcribed, but it will only be used for my own purposes and with such OK.

## Manager 3

Darren Moss

No, thank you, I really appreciate your time and how busy you are. So, to start off nice and straight forward being transcribed. Can you please confirm your name and your role within FA education?

**Manager 3**

Yeah, my name's XXXXXXX and I'm the current head of grassroots coach development in F education.

Darren Moss

Thank you and how long have you been in that post and I know it spreads wider than that, so maybe just a just a bit of background about other roles you've held as well.

**Manager 3**

Yeah, been in this role now. 2 1/2 years took over just before COVID struck in the first locked down and I've been in the FA just over 15 years now and playing a national role around football development. Male pathway, youth development and then previously to that I was a regional relationship manager in the East Midlands and the east and then before that a couple of roles within County affair.

Sorry All in all about 22 years in football but just over 15 years in the F and 2 1/2 years in this current role.

Darren Moss

Thinking, I suppose in a nutshell, that's probably why I wanted to interview you. As part of this, because you're your knowledge and understanding of the wide FA landscape,  I know relationships are very key to your leadership style as well. So, I'd be really interested to get your views.

**Manager 3**

Yeah.

Darren Moss

<mark>Have you experienced mentoring within those wider roles or in your career?</mark>

**Manager 3**

<mark>Yeah, absolutely. I want to look back. It's Probably, been something that's run through every role, but I probably didn't realise it in in my early career.</mark>
Um, <mark>I look back now and I can say that I've I have and have had a formal</mark>

==mentors that I've saw out and had a formal sort of mentioned relationship with a real clear sort of objective to help me progress in my career so that my personal perspective. I've certainly helped.==

And colleagues, people have been responsible for management, respect perspective. Find mentors, have mentors.

Um, I think sometimes we've referred to them as as maybe buddies or coaches, or you know, but there's a certainly a mentor relationship there.

**Manager 3**

But I also think in my early early years I probably didn't realise that I'd end up. You know, if I've got a challenge at work or even in in life that you you seek some advice from certain people, and you know, I'd probably look back on those conversations. Relationships as being mentoring relationships, mentoring conversations. So yeah, it's probably been a constant through through my career and but but probably showed not very differently. And Italy.

==Probably now reflecting on it that you you realise that you know that was mentoring going on.==

## Appendix B6. Transcript Analysis Example.

**Empirical Study 2: Chapter 4 Research Aim: Rationale', Themes & Codes for Empirical Study 2: FA Senior Managers Corporate View of Mentoring Interview Transcriptions:**

| Initial Questions | Text | Emerging Codes |
|---|---|---|
| Initial (Mentor) skills Commonalities | | |
| Manager X | Yeah, I think it's it's being that **sounding board**. They're just really curious with how they ask questions. Helps me open my open my mind up to different viewpoints. | Listening, Rapport, Connection |
| Manager X | For me that Rapport is massive. But I think it's that **connection** that people have with you and they see something in, in you that can potentially help them | Connection |
| Manager X | Work together with each other and give each other **advice.** | Listening, advice |
| Manager X | Don't think we place enough value on the the ability to work and **connect with people is huge connexion** and people like to massive things that. | Connection |
| Manager X | They're understanding of self and being able to build that really **strong relationship** really quickly with people. | Relationships |
| Manager X | ? I think they've gotta be able to **build relationships** to be able to get on with people. They've then gotta be able to use that as a vehicle to help coaches get better now. | Relationships, people |
| Manager X | That doesn't always mean like they have to get better at their delivery with the footballer bit it can be with other stuff as well. And I think we've been really purposeful and the definition of mentoring that we did over the last couple **of years to have person in there as well**. Because I think it's not just about them being able to put a practise on better on a Tuesday night. It's about actually think a lot of the stuff that **always comes out is around like life skills** and having a mentors help them with their parenting and with their kids who are going to school or we're going through adolescence or puberty or like what I think we have a wider. | Person centred, life skills, definition of mentoring |

| Challenges for mentors / programme | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Manager x** | **The stigma around the three lions** and someone from the FA is coming to see me, and it's actually so someone from the FA is coming to see me. language clarification: 'oh no, someone from the FA is coming to see me'. 'oh yes, someone from the FA is coming to see me. | **Nervousness of mentor visit, stigma, assessment**  Defining |
| **Manager x** | Whenever anyone traditionally is work with the FA, it's always probably **been in an assessment format** to get equal or to get something, and we are seeing as like the ones you can say yes or no to that. So I think that has been a real challenge. | **Not assessment focused (perception)** |
| **Manager x** | And cause as an organisation, I don't think we've actually jumped to development. We're still on education even though we say we're developing, we're still on education cause that's the crux of what we do. **But definitely confidence. People feeling more at ease** when they turn up on a Tuesday night or Wednesday night or whatever night of the week it is that they feel **a bit more confident** to be able to stand up in front of young players or older players deliver some stuff. | **Development based, confidence**  **Need to jump (Haven't yet)**  **Delivery of practice** |
| **Manager x** | And the mentors on in their regions was like, really powerful. What we failed to do at that time. Was then connect that with. Or their offers that were in the grassroots space. and become more targeted. Going to try and summarise… Network built was amazing. I think we've failed to recognise its value and plan initially at the outset an Intersect it well enough. And be really like targeted to it's for post and where we are now | **Plan initially, from outset link to broader work.**  **Failed to recognise.**  Failed its Value. |

**Emerging & Aligning Themes – Pre-Questions & Interviews. Managers View.**

**Pre-Questions**

Instigation of relationship/Clarity/Expectations

Rapport/Relational Impact

Defined Roles Mentee development as focus

Emerging Theme

**Interviews:**

Development of Person over qualification attainment

**Interviews:**

Rapport/Relationships/Interaction/Mentee Focus

Improve initial brokerage/Clarity/need for Mentee/Defining
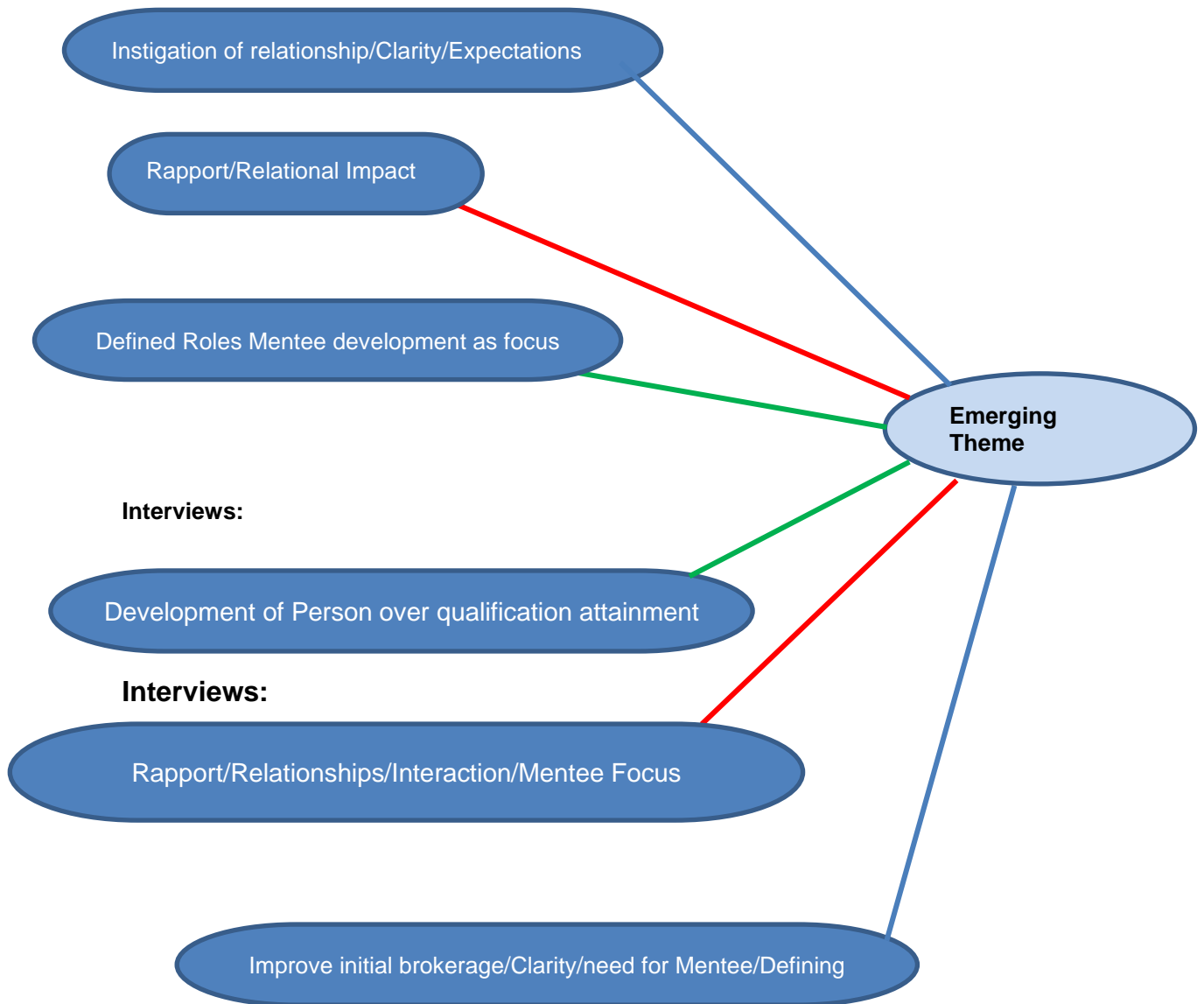
**Themes**

The initial brokerage/defining & expectations of programme from a mentee perspective.

The Importance of rapport, relationships, and connections

The development of the Mentee / person (Skills) over qualification attainment

## Appendix C1. Delphi Introductory email
**Chapter 5 Generation of Mentoring Framework and Delphi Study.**
xxxxxx

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this Delphi Method Study.

To confirm, your participation as a panel member will be completely anonymous & confidential, including to the other members of the panel.

The study will consist of three rounds of questions, each will be analysed and round two and three questions will be formatted from all panel members answers and sent to you.

I understand this first round will require a bit of reading on your behalf, but subsequent emails and questions will be more straight forward.

It is important that I initially provide you with enough information to inform your answers and opinions.

Please find attached:

− An overview of the thesis and findings to date along with the initial four questions.

− A PowerPoint slide, designed to give you a six-minute audio overview of the framework to help your understanding (It should play in slideshow automatically).

− A Participant consent form which I would ask you to name, sign, date, and return, thank you.

Following the completion of the questions, an analysis and overview will be shared with you.

Thank you so much for your valued participation and time.

Darren Moss

**Appendix C2. Delphi Consent Form.**

**Title of the research project:** <span style="color:red">**Relational Framework (FA Coach Mentor Programme). Consent Form.**</span>

|  |  | *Please tick* |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | I confirm that I have read and have understood the information for the study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. | |
| 2 | I understand that taking part in the study will involve participation in specific data collection process (e.g., an interview, focus group or observational research). | |
| 3 | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without my rights being affected. | |
| 4 | I am aware that, if I wish to withdraw, then any data already collected can only be withdrawn up to 1 week following data collection. | |
| 5 | I also understand that my anonymised data may be included in various publication formats (e.g., dissertation/thesis, peer reviewed journal, presentation, or other). | |
| 6 | I understand that the information I provide will be held securely and in line with data protection requirements at the University of Central Lancashire. | |
| 7 | I understand that signed consent forms, audio-recorded files and transcripts from the interviews, and electronic versions of field notes from observational research will be retained in accordance with UCLan guidelines on a password protected area of the UCLan OneDrive for the next 7 years, with only the researchers and professional transcriber having access to data. | |
| 8 | I agree to take part in the above study. | |

**Participant Name:**

**Participant signature:**

**Date:**

**Researcher Name: Darren Moss**

**Researcher Email:**

**Module Leader: David Grecic**

**Module Leader Email: DGrecic1@uclan.ac.uk**

**Appendix C3. Delphi Email Questionnaire Overview**

**Delphi Email Questionnaire Overview.**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in a survey exercise for this research project. Your participation will be completely confidential, and you will remain completely anonymous throughout this process. The data gathered within this survey will be used as part of a Doctoral research project. The project aims to critique a proposed relational framework for coach mentoring which I have outlined for context. The following survey is stage 1 of a Delphi questionnaire. This is designed to obtain your opinion relating to this issue.

The Delphi process involves questions on three separate occasions:

**Round 1:** Some general open-ended questions will be submitted to you requiring your response. These are below for you to reply to now.

Also, a brief voice over PowerPoint to explain the Framework.

**Round 2:** Your answers from round 1 (and those from the other panellists) will be analysed and summarised anonymously and formulated into a series of more specific questions that you will be asked to respond to.

**Round 3:** Following Round 2's questions, and the subsequent analysis, there will be a final round of questions based on the combined findings of the panel.

**Round 4:** Will comprise of a final analysis and summary of the findings which will be shared with you individually.

**Please note there are no right, or wrong answers and your individual opinion is important. Please send your answers via email where your answers will be kept confidential.**

## Appendix C4. Voice over slide for Delphi Panel Members.



**Relational Framework (FA Coach Mentor Programme). Current Iteration.**

**Form Part of Future Training and designed Modules for Induction**

**Form Part of Future Mentoring Guidance Document & Tactics**

**Some Tactics**
**Rapport**
 - Location, coffee, walk and talk.
**Observation**
- Considered Positioning,
- Recorded Voice, Mentee Considered
**Feedback**
- Well intentioned, Interactive
**Reflection**
- Building Reflexively
- Self, Others, Networking

## Appendix C5. Delphi Analysis Example.

Blazeley (2009). Describe- Compare- Relate Analysis.

| Panel member response U: (Interdisciplinary Artist). | Panel member response T: (Commission Mentor). |
|---|---|
| **Describe:** | **Describe:** |
| *'I have in mind **something around flexibility**… individual needs - in recognition that life can be messy and complicated, and people may have competing obligations at various points. Having scope for the framework to flex and evolve would be great'* | *'Explaining what confidentiality means and **sharing the Code of Ethics** followed by the mentor· Needs Analysis – clarify the purpose of the work to be done.*<br><br>*· Setting the goals for the mentoring process'* |
| **Compare:** | **Compare:** |
| **Understanding wider issues, (bigger picture) Flexibility** | **Ethical but corporate approach - clarifying Explicit Goal Setting** |
| **Relatedness:** | |
| <mark>Contextual, understanding (Volunteer constraints)</mark><br><mark>Flexibility but scoping for understanding</mark> | **Clarity/Expectations** |
| | |
| **Panel member response S: (Teacher).** | **Panel member response R: (Counsellor).** |
| **Describe:** | **Describe:** |
| *'need to be flexible based on needs**, Expectations** – probably time issue is a player here?'* | *'I like the **fact Rapport and relationships is front and centre this will help with any form of contracting'.*** |
| **Compare:** | **Compare:** |
| **Expectations important, mindful of reality/time Flexibility** | **Rapport front and centre, honesty to support contracting. Person centred.** |
| **Relatedness:** | |
| <mark>Supporting expectations in Reality</mark> | **(Contracting/Boundaries/Expectations).** |
| | |
| | |

| Panel member response S: (Teacher). | Panel member response Z: (PhD Student/Consultant). |
|---|---|
| **Describe:** | **Describe:** |
| *'How can a formal mentor programme both challenge and support coach learning so that mentoring is more than just the transmission of information?'* | *'Understanding social capital and social value and how this can 'play out' in different scenarios connected to the mentor/mentee relationship (as well as the relationship with the wider community').* |
| **Compare:** | **Compare:** |
| **Utilising formal status of contracting/expectations but ensuring more relational – approachable.** | **Mentor understanding (Self) and perceptual understanding (hierarchy)** **Help with values/confidence and initial 'buy in'.** |
| **Relatedness:** | |
| Supporting a contractual approach, BUT 'knowing' to support potential lack of confidence, perceived hierarchy. | **(Contracting/Boundaries/Expectations).** **(Mentor Skills and Attributes).** |
| Panel member response T: (Commission Mentor). | Panel member response Y: (Psychology/Therapist). |
| **Describe:** | **Describe:** |
| *'Sharing something of the mentor so that trust is built more authentically, more easily. This could even be something personal (e.g. I enjoy the outdoors), especially when it's something that could be a positive influence to the mentee'* | *'Reduce power imbalances, it can sometimes be appropriate to 'give a little' of own experience. So if, for example, the mentee is finding a particular aspect challenging, if the mentor has faced similar challenges this can be shared in brief in offer of support, highlighting possible progress'* |
| **Compare:** | **Compare:** |
| **Empathetic, relatedness, sharing - connection** | **Empathetic, specific, sharing** |
| **Relatedness:** | |
| Mentor Skills/Disposition, Influence (People Skills & leadership knowledge. | **(Mentoring Training/Skills/Attributes around framework)** **(Rapport/Trust)** |

**Appendix C6 . Delphi Summary Examples.**

**Panel Summary Report: Round 1.**

Thank you for your answers, opinions, and thoughts. Following an initial analysis of the data, this summary outlines **the main similarities towards a consensus** from the panel members responses and will act as a precursor to the round two questions; *(whilst also acknowledging other wider individual comments made that may be become important as the process progresses).*

Please note, a consensus in this context is around themes based on panel agreement and does not assume any agreement with the presented framework. Across round one of the questions the panel broadly highlighted the following as important.

- Rapport was deemed important but questioned on where it may sit as a theme – Trust/Partnering – Fluid. Where do values sit? Basis for programme and clarifying.

- Bringing the components to life, e.g., ensuring (to support the relational aspect) and where ethics may fit/should fit. Broad agreement on there should be conceptual tactics but (Clarity on if tactics was the right phrase) to invoke discussion and understanding. Example: Feedback how & when. Clarity. How it is framed.

- Mentoring was seen as important as a tool to support historically underrepresented groups. If so, Ethics and values important to be acknowledged.

- The time it takes to build rapport, to ensure needs are met, location, honesty, safety, confidentiality, emotions.

- The contracting phase within the context of the programme. Clear need to address expectations and needs.

- Ensure the framework is not presented as hierarchical, recognizing the mentees importance within the process, (co-productive). How emotion underpin/should underpin aspects of framework. Mentors understanding/disposition.

- Nothing was thought to be 'not relevant'.

- However, need to ensure a 'reciprocal approach' ensure components capture two-way consideration'. Non-hierarchical. What is prioritised/when?
- Re-emphasis on clarity and expectations based on relationship.
- Ensuring humanity in conversations, reciprocity
- Need for a focus on the skills of the mentor to be able to help mentee develop. In Summary Themes - across all answers received:

1. **Contracting/Agreement/Expectations.**
2. **Developing tactics based on the components: (To support the process of Learning).**
3. **Skills and focus, the mentor's disposition to enable learning within the process.**
4. **Inclusivity (wider programme and relationally).**
5. **Human aspect of a relational focus – Emotions, behaviours, reciprocity of learning.**

**Round 1 - Questions.**

1. Given the context, listed in this document and the PowerPoint presentation, can you please list any aspects you feel are important or, significant as part of the proposed relational framework? Please feel free to list as many as necessary.
Please feel free to add further context if you wish.

2. Given the context, listed in this document and the PowerPoint, presentation, can you please list any aspects or components you feel may be missing from the proposed framework? Please feel free to list as many as necessary and why. Please feel free to add further context if you wish.

3. Given the context, listed in this document and the PowerPoint, presentation, can you please list any aspects or components you feel may not be relevant within the proposed framework. Please feel free to add further context if you wish.

4. Please could you list any further components not mentioned, you feel are important to any mentoring practice based on your own experiences.

**Thank you for your valued Participation.**

## Appendix C7 . Delphi Likert Scale Overview.

| No: | Statement |
|-----|-----------|
| 1 | The concept of a having relationally based framework within this context is a positive one |
| 2 | The setting of initial expectations (Contracting) was not explicit in the framework and within this context and needs to be included |
| 3 | The framework initially presented a hierarchical picture |
| 4 | The skills & ongoing training of the mentor is important within the context |
| 5 | The components listed (Rapport/Observation/Feedback/ Reflection) are complex in nature |
| 6 | The components (Rapport/Observation/Feedback/Reflection) are complex and need contextualising with more tactics/behaviour detail |
| 7 | A relational framework would be beneficial in supporting the initial recruitment of mentors in this context |
| 8 | Rapport should be present at all stages of the process |
| 9 | Signposting to others/other opportunities is important within the context |
| 10 | Observation and observing mentee practice needs to align to previously agreed protocols and this needs to be more explicit within the framework |
| 11 | The giving and receiving of feedback need to align to previously agreed protocols |
| 12 | Mentors' reflections are as important as the mentees within this context |
| 13 | Emotions can play a significant part in a relational framework |
| 14 | Formal mentoring programmes need to be mindful of bias and narrow learning outcomes |
| 15 | Informal more organic mentoring practice can support a more formal mentoring programme |

## Panel Member 1 – 6: 1 Disagree – 5 Strongly Agree

| Q | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | Total Numerical Value | Respondents | | Agree strongly Agree Neutral |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----------|-------------|-----|------------------------|
| **1** | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 27 | 6 | 4.5 | **A** |
| **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 27 | 6 | 4.5 | **A** |
| **3** | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 27 | 6 | 4.5 | **A** |
| **4** | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 30 | 6 | 5 | **SA** |
| **5** | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 26 | 6 | 4.3 | **A** |
| **6** | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 30 | 6 | 5 | **SA** |
| **7** | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 29 | 6 | 4.8 | **A/SA** |
| **8** | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 27 | 6 | 4.5 | **A** |
| **9** | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 22 | 6 | 3.6 | **Nu** |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|-----|------|
| 10 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 29 | 6 | 4.8 | **A/SA** |
| 11 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 26 | 6 | 4.3 | **A** |
| 12 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 23 | 6 | 3.8 | **Nu** |
| 13 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 25 | 6 | 4.1 | **A** |
| 14 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 26 | 6 | 4.3 | **A** |
| 15 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 30 | 6 | 5 | **SA** |

| Q | Outcome |
|----|---------|
| 1 | Relational Framework Positive |
| 2 | Setting of Expectations essential |
| 3 | Initial Perception of Panel (Hierarchical) |
| 4 | Training/consistency important |
| 5 | Components are complex |
| 6 | Need for contextualisation/delivery mentor tactics |
| 7 | Utilise for recruitment-Training |
| 8 | Rapport Important to tactics/Behaviours/Expectations |
| 9 | 'Others' – important and signposting opportunities |
| 10 | Align tactics/behaviours to expectations stage |
| 11 | Align tactics/behaviours to expectation stage |
| 12 | Mentor importance in 'relational' framework |
| 13 | Emotions significant and need consideration |
| 14 | Bias/hierarchical delivery may lead - narrow outcomes |
| 15 | Informal behaviours to support formal approach |

**Panel consensus aligned to framework**
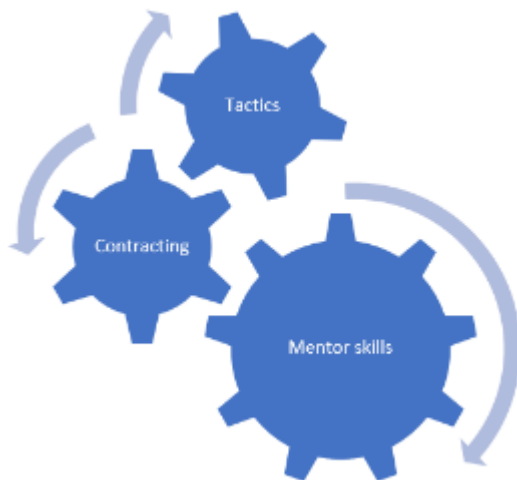
**Initial framework schematic (Hierarchical)**

# Formal Thesis Presentations

## FIFA Relationship Building via Mentoring (Worldwide online to Technical Directors).

**March 2022 Presentation to FA Diversity and Inclusion Staff – Understanding roles, tactics.**

## May 2022 Presentation to FA Mentor Staff– and Mentor Developer - Define Stage.





## July 2022 Presenting on current research specifically around Observation within Diversity and Inclusion Mentoring - Observation - Leeds Beckett University

**September 2022 - Loughborough University Thesis Presentation to 300 Coach Developers – Rapport and Observation emerging framework**



QR Code of Rapport Video made by Coach Developer Colleagues to Support Rapport as a component for the presentation.

Rapport Circuit



Observation Circuit



Feedback Circuit



Reflection Circuit



Engagement Circuit



Relational Framework (FA Coach Mentor Programme). Current Iteration.

# July 2023 'Contact to Contract' Mainstage Presentation to 110 Mentors and FA Staff
# St Georges Park - Rapport, Relationships, Contracting.

## Presentation on Contracting delivered by: Paul Connelly – British Hockey
## Rapport & Relationships by Dr. Sarah Fullick – Youth Endowment Fund

**November 2023 'Intent to Impact' Observation and Feedback to Mentors and FA Staff Watford FC.**

**Recap Presentations: Paul Connelley - British Hockey, Dr Sarah Fullick - Youth Endowment Fund, Observation – Steve Tones (Chester University), Ian Bateman the FA**

**Feedback - Tom Hodgkinson (British Triathlon).**
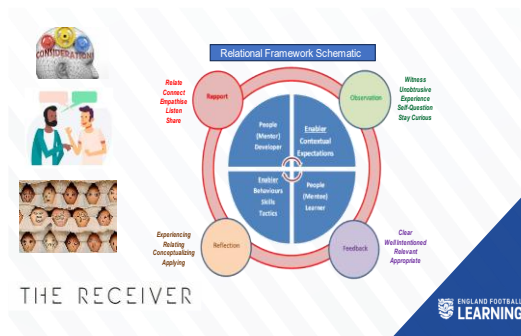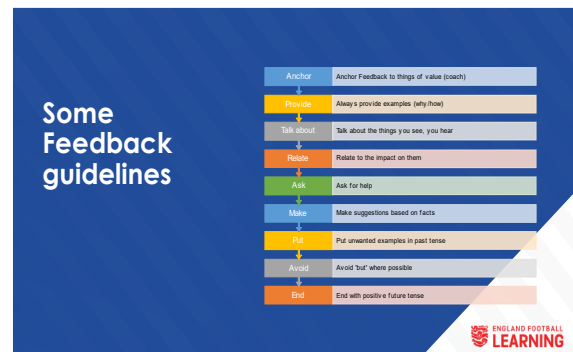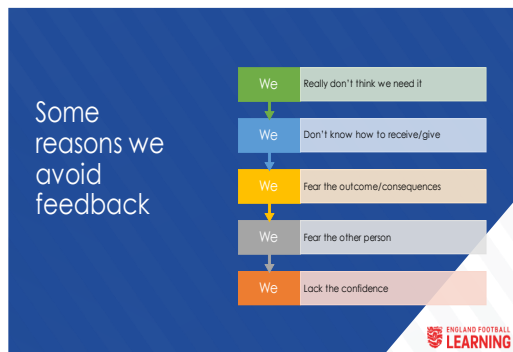
# Sketch Notes
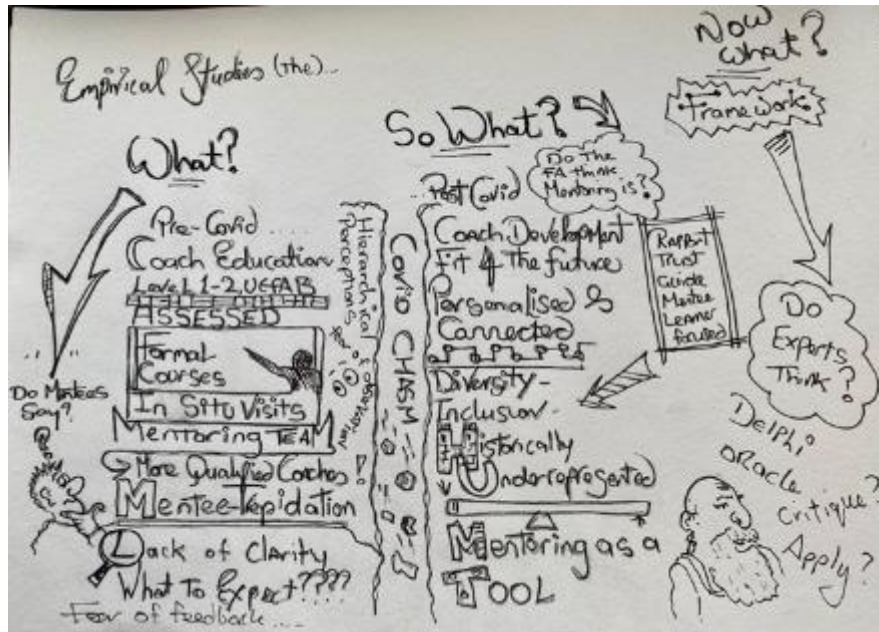
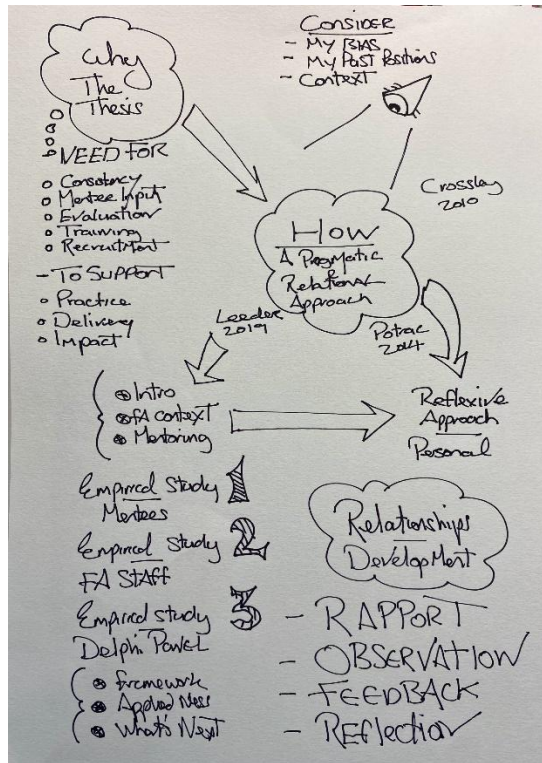**Sketch Note 1**. Methods, Contemplating the Studies

**Sketch Note 2.** Hierarchical Mentoring

**Sketch Note 3.** Reflections on Models, Mentoring and Choices.

**Sketch Note 4.** Reflecting on the Framework.

**Wider Sketches:**