STARTING A CONVERSATION: EXPLORING THE PEDAGOGICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING COACHING.

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Our observation

- Limited attention has been given to sociocultural and pedagogical issues in the strength and conditioning (S&C) literature.

Another observation

- Sports coaching has been described as:
  - a socio-pedagogical practice (Kirk, 2010)

Our aim

- to start a conversation regarding the merits of exploring pedagogical, sociocultural ideas in the context of S&C coaching.
- to be mindful that care is taken when challenging the status quo.
- Tinning (2002) argued for a ‘modest pedagogy’, which he described as an ‘orientating way of thinking’ (p. 236) rather than a prescription of what to do.

Our action

Cassidy, Handcock, Burrows & Gearity (commissioned)
Understanding Strength and Conditioning as Sport Coaching: Bridging the Biophysical, Pedagogical and Sociocultural Foundations of Practice

A bridging strategy

- Narratives, cases, and vignettes. Narratives are considered a ‘powerful professional development’ tool (Clandinin, 2001, p.viii)
- ‘Pedagogical cases’:
  - a professional development tool
  - a mechanism for incorporating ideas from multiple (sub)disciplines, using the personal voice and reflecting the emotions of practice
  - can develop an integrative science of learning and a shared language in human movement fields’ (Armour, 2014, p.12)
Why begin the conversation?

Those ‘who lack the capacity for reflective thought and informed critical judgement may be in danger not only of confirming their lowly professional status, but also of leaving themselves open to political manipulation and the subtle influence of propaganda’ (Kirk, 1986, pp 155–156).

Why begin the conversation?

S&C coaches employing critical reflection enables more engagement with some of the moral, ethical and societal issues likely to be intertwined with their practice (Handcock & Cassidy, 2014; Kuklick & Gearity, 2015; Mills & Gearity, 2016).

There is a need and a gap

THE NEED: “the strength and conditioner truly is a ‘coaching’ role and individuals are required to work closely with their athletes, to teach new techniques, evaluate performance and create learning environments that motivate and stimulate their athletes.” (Reviewer A)

THE GAP: “Looks at S&C from a new angle (pedagogical and socio-cultural informed research) – this is yet to be done so will certainly be novel and plug a void that certainly exists” (Reviewer B)

“The first academic book within the specific field of strength and conditioning and aligns itself with where some of the growing research interests are heading” (Reviewer A)

Using ‘professional competencies’ to map S&C competencies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies</th>
<th>NSCA</th>
<th>UKSCA</th>
<th>ASCA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>~5%</td>
<td>~10%</td>
<td>~13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>~90%</td>
<td>~90%</td>
<td>~80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal &amp; behavioural</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values &amp; ethical</td>
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Professional intellect operates on four levels:

− knowing ‘what’ (mastery of discipline)
− knowing ‘how’ (advanced practical translation skills)
− ‘knowing why’
− ‘caring why’
Table of Contents: Focus is ‘knowing why’ and ‘caring why’

- Chapter 3: First principles of strength and conditioning: the pitfalls of over-complexification
- Chapter 4: Training load: more, more, more, why?
- Chapter 5: Coaching styles and strategies
- Chapter 6: Evolving as a competent S&C professional
- Chapter 7: The ‘glass half-empty’, women in S&C
- Chapter 8: Finding a professional voice and collaborating

E.g. of a conversation: Increased volume of fitness training in rugby

- Pre 1995: low volume (3–4 h/wk) and poor compliance (~50%) (McKenna & Muckle, 1997)
- Post 1995: a minimum of 6–8 h/wk for all players (Brooks et al, 2005)

Contemporary Issue:
- the increase in volume of fitness training is contestable
- the S&C coach has a responsibility to consider “the personal, emotional, cultural and social identity of the athlete” (Cassidy et al, 2009, p. 11)

And....is more always better?

PRACTICAL
- How do I work with the older athletes who have played the game for many seasons and have a well-established training history?
- How much could a player reduce his/her training and yet still optimally perform?
- How could the above be achieved while accounting for the player’s training preferences and consideration of other family and lifestyle commitments?

CRITICAL
- If speed, strength, and fitness are so important, why does a coach overlook them and start the de-trained athlete?
- What are the ethical responsibilities of a S&C coach when a de-conditioned player is required to return to play prematurely?
- What could returning prematurely mean for the player’s longer term health and their performance and how could a premature return threaten their career progression?