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Positioning mentoring as a coach development tool

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2   **Positioning Mentoring as a Coach Development Tool: Recommendations for Future Practice and**

3   **Research**

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2 **Abstract**

3   *Current thinking in coach education advocates mentoring as a coach development tool to*

4 *connect theory and practice; however, little empirical evidence exists to evaluate the*

5 *effectiveness of mentoring as a coach development tool. Business, education and nursing*

6 *precede the coaching industry in their mentoring practice and research findings offered in*

7 *these domains could be drawn upon to position mentoring as sports coaching development*

8 *tool. Given the remote basis of some of the mentor-coach relationships that exist in sports*

9 *coaching additional learning can be drawn from mentoring conducted by virtual or*

10 *electronic mediums. This paper concludes with a series of reflective questions arising from*

11 *research findings in other domains, designed to engage the potential coaching organization*

12 *with the mentoring process.*

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18 **Keywords** Mentoring, coach development, informal & formal learning, effectiveness,

19 mentor-coach relationships

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2   Research exploring coach learning and development remains a relatively unexplored area

3   with the most effective mechanisms for educating and supporting coaches still being

4   contested (Nash & McQuade, 2014). According to the International Council for Coaching

5   Excellence (ICCE, 2012, p. 10) coaching is defined as 'a process of guided improvement and

6   development in a single sport at identifiable stages of athlete development.' It is the many

7   different contexts and environments in which coaches can, and do, operate that poses

8   problems for large scale, formal coach education programmes that currently are advocated in

9   many countries (Mallet, 2010).

10

11   Formal learning, which has traditionally dominated coach education, is located almost

12   exclusively within the classroom setting and offered by educational establishments such as

13   Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) (Jones, 2006).

14   Whilst formal learning can provide coaches with access to essential need-to-know

15   information leading to the achievement of awards, certificates and qualifications, these

16   programs of study are not as valued by coaches as their day-to-day experiences in the field

17   because of the lack of experiential opportunities to apply and reflect on learning (Werthner &

18   Trudel, 2006). Significant personal learning can occur spontaneously within the context of

19   real work; on the field, track, court, or poolside because the learning is situated within the

20   context in which it is applied, that is the coaching environment (Marsick &Volpe, 1999; Lave

21   & Wenger, 1991).

22

23   This learning is referred to as informal learning and, in the context of the coaching

24   environment, coaches learn through on-going interactions, observations, listening and from

25   reflections on their own coaching practice (Nash & Sproule, 2011). Informal learning

1   challenges coaches to adopt a problem solving approach to explore real life situations and

2   find solutions (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Conceivably this method of connecting theory to

3   practice and practice to theory is applicable to any coach who is open and receptive to

4   learning from practical experience, has sufficiently evolved independent learning skills and

5   the motivation to undertake this or who is appropriately supported in the field, however many

6   coaches struggle to make sense of the complexities of coaching on their own (Werthner &

7   Trudel, 2006; Kerka, 1998). Mentoring could be considered as an effective and accessible

8   method of supporting practice in the field.

9

10   Current research in coach education advocates mentoring as a coach development tool

11   to connect theory and practice and coach education providers are being challenged to relocate

12   learning from the classroom into the practical environment to offer opportunities for

13   professional development (Mallett *et al*, 2009; Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2009; Rynne, Mallet

14   & Tinning, 2006; Billet, 2001). Mentoring can act as the bridge between theoretical learning

15   drawn from the formal education environment and the practical application of that learning in

16   the field and many coach-mentoring programs have been put in place by organizations to

17   support coaches in the field (e.g. National Governing Bodies, and lead agencies such as UK

18   Sport and Coaching Association of Canada). The intent behind these mentoring programs is

19   to enable coaches to benefit from the many opportunities experiential learning provides,

20   although the effectiveness of these programs is yet to be explored. In fact little empirical

21   evidence exists to authenticate the effectiveness of mentoring as a coach development tool

22   and opportunities to undertake research and explore how mentoring programs and

23   independent coach-mentor relationships can contribute to coach learning should be

24   prioritized (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2009; Cushion, 2006; Bloom *et al*, 1998).

25

1   The aim of this paper is to position mentoring as a coach development tool. As

2   suggested by the ICCE in their global strategy (2010) there are a number of challenges facing

3   coaching, coaches and coach educators, not least encouraging and supporting the ongoing

4   learning and professional development of coaches and coaching systems. This article will

5   draw on limited mentoring research within the sports coaching and coach development

6   literature as well as business, education and nursing to provide a parallel and more detailed

7   perspective. In addition the concept and practice of electronic mentoring will be explored as a

8   discrete domain as this is an area, which is growing in credibility both in terms of the breadth

9   of practice and the growing research base (Hamilton & Scandura, 2003).

10

11   **Origins and Definitions of Mentoring**

12   Mentoring originated in Greek mythology, where Mentor, friend and advisor to Odysseus

13   (King of Ithaca) was entrusted with the upbringing of Odysseus's son (Telemachus) while

14   Odysseus was fighting the Trojan War. Mentor became Telemachus' teacher, coach,

15   counselor and protector, building a relationship based on affection and trust (Gutierrez, 2012).

16   Since this first documented mentoring relationship, mentoring has existed in formal and

17   informal guises and, as a result, numerous mentoring definitions exist; the best parallel to

18   draw for this study is offered by Weaver and Chelladurai (1999) who developed a mentoring

19   model for management in sport and physical education (PE). Consistent with Mentor's role

20   they define mentoring as 'a process in which a more experienced person serves as a role

21   model, provides guidance and support to a developing novice, and sponsors that novice in

22   his/ her career progress' (Weaver & Chelladurai, 1999; p. 25).

23

24   **Mentoring in Sports Coaching and Coach Development**

1   Mentoring in sports coaching has been provided both informally and through structured

2   formal programs. Informally mentoring is evidenced through interactions (e.g., observation

3   and conversation) in the practical coaching context (Jones, Harris & Miles, 2009; Armour

4   Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). The coaching environment provides significant opportunities for

5   informal learning as well as opportunities for application and on-going reflection, which are

6   critical stages of the learning cycle and essential for continuing personal and professional

7   development (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Kolb, 1984).

8

9   In an early study, Bloom *et al* (1998) examined the mentoring experiences of expert team

10   coaches from Canadian sports including field hockey, ice hockey, basketball and volleyball

11   using semi-structured interviews. This research established coaches had received informal

12   mentoring experiences throughout their athletic and coaching careers but only labeled them

13   as such retrospectively after they had recognized what the interactions were and how they

14   had influenced their professional and, critically, personal lives. This retrospective concept is

15   important to acknowledge; because it is only through experience and with increased

16   awareness about personal and professional learning and development strategies that the

17   recognition of how valuable a specific instance has been or the impact it has had on coaching

18   performance and effectiveness.

19

20   It could be assumed mentoring occurs constantly in the practical coaching environment,

21   although perhaps subliminally within various mentoring relationships including coach-

22   mentor; coach-athlete and coach-coach (Baek-Kyoo, Sushko & McLean, 2012). Given the

23   transitory and informal nature of mentoring opportunities it is difficult to gauge how

24   effectively they contribute to long-term learning (For a coaching perspective see Nash &

25   McQuade 2014 p. 206).

1   The distinction between formal and informal mentoring lies in the formation of the

2   mentoring relationship (Jones, 2013). Informal relationships, which are the most prevalent in

3   the sports coaching industry are spontaneous, grow organically and are not managed,

4   structured or formally recognized (Chao, Walz & Gardner, 1992). By contrast, formal

5   relationships are sanctioned and managed and structured by an organization, (Srivastava &

6   Thakur, 2013). In formal coach mentoring situations, such as the Canadian Women in

7   Coaching Program administered by Canadian Association of Coaching (CAC), mentors are

8   integrated into the learning support with defined roles and assigned to a mentee or group of

9   mentees (Nash, 2003; Marshall, 2001). The CAC believe structured programs require a

10   strategically planned approach, should have a coordinator, facilitated matching of mentor and

11   mentee, training and support where appropriate, and a formalized career development and

12   tracking system (Marshall, 2001). More recently, the UK Coaching Certificate (UKCC)

13   promotes the use of a mentor to support self-directed and work-based learning across all

14   UKCC levels and some sports, including athletics, cricket and golf, have formalized this role

15   at UKCC levels 3 and 4.

16

17   In the UKCC formalized mentoring is evidenced through the recruitment and

18   deployment of mentors, typically from the coach developer pool that exists within the sport,

19   although some sports are now recognizing the benefits of using non sport-specific mentors

20   (sports coach UK, 2012). Bloom (2013) suggests that in Canada the use of non-sports

21   specific mentors in smaller sports is a challenge as there is a lack of suitably qualified

22   personnel. However in the UK, these mentors, whether sports specific or not, are allocated to

23   support coaches and may work with three or four coaches at any one point in time. Typically

24   the relationship occurs remotely through electronic mediums and in the field with mentors

25   tasked to support learning and development and in some instances undertake assessment

1   functions. However, the structures, exact roles, outcomes and effectiveness of these UK-

2   based formalized mentoring programs and mentor-coach relationships is extremely unclear

3   and yet to be evaluated.

4

5   Focusing on the mentoring relationship, regardless of whether it has been formally or

6   informally constructed is important as, mentors play a significant role supporting and guiding

7   the learner to identify, analyze and ultimately reflect on a context or coaching issue and

8   identify relevant solutions (Gilbert & Trudel, 2006). The guidance function assumed by

9   mentors is widely referenced (Jones, Harris & Miles, 2009; Cushion, 2006; Cassidy, Jones &

10   Potrac, 2009). Guidance can be integrated through "scaffolding" (Vygotsky, 1978), a

11   sociocultural theory, which proposes that a more knowledgeable coach provides scaffolds or

12   supports to facilitate the learner's, or performer's development. Scaffolds may include

13   instructions, resources, a compelling task, templates and guidance (Vygotsky, 1978). As the

14   learner or performer develops their cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills and

15   knowledge, the scaffolds are gradually removed (Collins, 1991). Vialle, Lysaught &

16   Verenkina (2005) explored this concept in relation to child-athlete development although

17   parallels can be drawn with mentoring adults. Vialle and colleagues suggest that the coach

18   adjusts the amount of guidance to fit the performance level so more support is offered when

19   the task is new or the learner is experiencing difficulty and less support is offered when

20   competence and expertise increases, fostering learner's autonomy and independence.

21   Successful scaffolding assumes the mentor has sufficiently evolved skills to determine the

22   most appropriate learner-centred pedagogy to guide the coach.

23

24   An effective mentoring relationship, again regardless of the formal or informal base,

25   relies heavily on an evolved two-way communication process so avoiding the temptation to

1   tell or direct the learner to solutions is a key challenge to develop problem-solving skills

2   (Tomlinson, 1995). Allowing the learner to develop their own responses rather than

3   mimicking the mentor is fundamental to ensure the development of skills such as independent

4   thinking and decision-making (Fletcher, 2000; Wickman & Sjodin, 1997). Simply being part

5   of the relationship is not sufficient to invoke personal change. Gilbert and Trudel (2006)

6   describe the mentor's role as a sounding board and effective mentors need to be able to

7   extract and synthesise information from the mentoring conversation. They need to use

8   incisive questioning and model active listening to stimulate critical reflection and decision-

9   making (Gilbert & Trudel, 2006).

10

11   The current mentoring research base in sports coaching is limited and at this time

12   insufficient to effectively evaluate mentoring as a tool to support coach development

13   (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2009). As such many organizations, practitioners and educators

14   within the field draw on learning provided by other domains that precede the coaching

15   industry in their mentoring thinking and practice. These domains include business, education

16   and nursing. Electronic mentoring will be explored as a discrete area because of its

17   unprecedented growth as a medium for mentoring.

18

19   **Mentoring in Business**

20   Most business mentoring relationships adopt an outcome-led approach or have a results

21   driven focus, however, there are arguments for and against this approach. For example,

22   Megginson and Clutterbuck (2009) offer two contrasting perspectives; from one angle, they

23   question the merits of a goal-oriented focus as the key driver and from another they suggest

24   developing clarity around the goals can ensure a sense of meaning and direction, where

25   support of the mentees is considered as key to the success of an outcome-led approach.

1   Traditional corporate mentoring relationships emphasise the use of the mentor's power,

2   influence and authority on the mentee's behalf. That focus has now shifted to a more

3   developmental approach supporting the mentee to develop autonomy and independence,

4   empowered to access multiple sources of support and learning (Clutterbuck, 2004).

5   Reinforcing this developmental approach and drawing a parallel with sports coaching,

6   Cassidy, Jones and Potrac (2009) suggest mentoring involves doing something "with" as

7   opposed "to" the coach. "With" infers that any perceived hierarchical relationship has been

8   levelled and there is an emphasis on the facilitation of learning and development as opposed

9   to a one-directional approach stemming from mentor to mentee.

10

11   Within the corporate setting Kram (1988) suggested mentors could support learning

12   and development through two broad functions. Career function is the umbrella term for sub-

13   functions including "sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure-and-visibility, and

14   challenging work assignments" (p. 613). In the context of sports coaching, a more

15   experienced coach acting as a mentor inevitably has an evolved network to which the mentee

16   coach could be introduced. This could be significant in terms of signposting to new contacts,

17   new opportunities and critically, new learning. The second function, the psychosocial

18   function, includes "role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling and friendship"

19   (p. 614). Drawing the parallels with coaching again, the key psycho-social or support roles

20   that complement coach learning could be identified as relationship building, confidence

21   building, cheerleading, empowering, championing and being a critical friend.

22

23   Kram's work (1988) has been the basis for further research within the corporate

24   context. Studies of mentoring programs and informal mentoring relationships within

25   corporate America, specifically journalism, engineering, social work (Ragins, Cotton and

1 Miller, 2000) and technology (Fagenson-Eland, Marks and Amendola, 1997) established that

2 mentees engaged in informal relationships perceived greater psychosocial mentoring as

3 compared to those arranged formally. Interestingly, Ragins, Cotton and Miller (2000)

4 concluded mentee satisfaction in the relationship was more important than whether the

5 relationship was formal or informal. How the quality of the relationship, regardless of its

6 status (formal or informal), impacts upon mentoring effectiveness remains unanswered.

7

8   An intriguing research study, concerning the support for learner development is

9 offered from a study of mentor-client relationships of young entrepreneurs with Youth

10 Business International (YBI) (Cull, 2006). This study highlighted that mentors are required to

11 use a less directive and more empowering approach to reduce dependency and increase self-

12 confidence. The key skills of asking the right question, actively listening and paying attention

13 to the language patterns, paralanguage and kinesics or body language are integral to the

14 success of this approach (Cull, 2006).

15

16   The mentor is only one player in the mentoring relationship; the mentee is the other.

17 The concept of two-way communication has already been explored through the research

18 offered by sports coaching and in order for the two-way communication and the relationship

19 to be successful; the mentee also has responsibilities to ensure a successful outcome. Klasen

20 and Clutterbuck (2002) argue an effective mentee needs to assume responsibility, be pro-

21 active by preparing fully, follow-up all meetings and conversations and be confident to talk

22 openly. Inevitably this is only possible if there is transparent understanding of mentor and

23 mentee roles and the boundaries of the relationship have been set.

24

25 Many business organizations have established formal mentoring programs. Formal mentoring

1   programs should not be substitutes for informal relationships, however, by constructing

2   formal programs Ragins and Cotton (1999) recommend making informed decisions about

3   who will be mentored, securing mentees commitment to voluntary participation; establishing

4   a matching process; minimizing rules governing how the relationship is managed and

5   maximizing the mentor's personal freedom within the relationship. Collectively these factors

6   mirror the principles of high quality informal mentoring and could contribute to the outcome

7   and quality of the mentoring program and independent relationships in business and in sport.

8

9   **Mentoring in Education**

10   The largest body of research in mentoring has been conducted within education (Jones,

11   Harris & Miles, 2009; Bloom *et al*, 1998). Within the education field in England and Wales

12   mentoring is used as an induction or apprenticeship, to develop competency, provide

13   challenge and to support progression, (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2005;

14   Green, 2002). In order to assure coherence and a positive impact on teaching and learning the

15   DfES engaged in a capacity building exercise to define the functional roles of those involved

16   in supporting initial training and qualification and on-going or continuous professional

17   development CPD. They commissioned research, which included an extensive literature

18   review, 24 stakeholder-interviews, evidence gathering from mentoring practice in schools

19   and 17 consultation sessions across England with approximately 700 people. Each

20   consultation was used to develop, test and refine the resources emerging from the project.

21   The DfES (2005) recognise the integral role the mentor plays in supporting and developing

22   teaching practice and define mentoring as "a structured, sustained process for supporting

23   professional learners through significant career transitions" (p. 3). As a result of this

24   extensive research the DfES suggested effective mentoring involves a thoughtful relationship,

25   setting challenging and personal goals, having a learning agreement and learning

1   conversations, growing self-direction, understanding why different approaches work,

2   experimenting and observing and using resources and support effectively. These principles

3   are generic, can be applied across contexts and could be used to benchmark mentoring

4   practice in other domains including sports coaching.

5

6   These principles lend themselves to a developmental approach, which is consistent

7   with what Young et al (2005) refer to as the "responsive mentor". Based on work conducted

8   with mentors and trainee teachers in North America, Young and colleagues identified three

9   patterns of mentoring; responsive, interactive and directive. According to Young et al (2005),

10 the responsive mentor looks to the mentee for guidance and direction with the mentee setting

11 the agenda, whereas interactive mentoring is a peer relationship where there is relational

12 parity within the mentoring pair and finally directive mentors assume control and work to an

13 agenda. Mentors do not typically confine themselves to one style but drift on a needs-led

14 basis within the relationship, which is consistent with Kram's (1983) observation around

15 fluidity in business noting mentoring relationships are dynamic and changing.

16

17   How mentors and mentees are matched has been subject to research in education.

18 D'Abate and Eddy (2008) explored the use and effectiveness of mentoring in undergraduate

19 business education and suggested the effective matching of mentors with mentees is

20 fundamental to a successful relationship. In a formal mentoring program matching is

21 common practice and coordinators often assign mentoring pairs (Noe, 1988). A number of

22 studies have explored the practice of matching to identify cross- cultural awareness (Johnson-

23 Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Frels & Onwuegbuzie , 2012). Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2004)

24 explored matching in a cross-cultural academic context in order to analyze the complexities

25 of race, class and gender. They encouraged a black woman associate professor and a white

1   male full professor to reflect on the dynamics of their 13-year cross-cultural mentoring

2   relationship. Their findings recommended mentees should be paired with mentors who share

3   similar cultural backgrounds, identities, perspective and experiences of the world. They

4   suggest informed matching could address potential problems within cross-cultural mentoring

5   relationships because of a lack of cultural awareness, language and communication issues,

6   and cultural-racial-ethnic heritages. Drawing on relevant research from another educationally

7   driven cross-cultural perspective Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2012) suggest mentors need to

8   model selflessness, active listening, honesty, a non-judgmental attitude, persistence, patience,

9   and an appreciation for diversity. This research suggests these skills are critical in to order

10 build the relationship but do not necessarily guarantee that the relationship will be effective.

11 Perhaps the most critical building block for a successful cross-cultural mentoring relationship

12 is trust (Crutcher, 2007; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero; 2004). From an extensive literature

13 review conducted across business, education and health care, Jones, Harris and Miles (2009)

14 suggest that trust must be sufficiently evolved so as to enable both partners to share successes

15 and shortcomings and critically learn from the experience associated with both.

16

17   In her study of mentoring support for undergraduate sport coaching students within a

18 Higher Education setting Nash (2003) established the highest-ranking qualities coaching

19 students believed mentors should possess (effective communication skills, approachability

20 and enthusiasm) and those mentors believed mentors should possess (knowledge of their

21 sport, experience, organization and leadership). A comparison of the lists generated

22 highlights the top ranking qualities perceived to be important by the coach and mentor does

23 not match. It is assumed an early emphasis on developing mutual clarity through the

24 exploration of the purpose of the relationship and both roles is essential. More recently the

25 support for student coaches and university coaches is still seen as an area for concern (Nash,

1   Sproule, Hall & English, 2013)

2

3   **Mentoring in Nursing**

4   The introduction of the Fitness for Practice curriculum (FFP) commissioned by the UK

5   Central Council Commission (UKCCC) in 1999 for Nursing Midwifery and Education

6   (NME) formed the basis of a new pre-registration nursing and midwifery curricula

7   throughout the UK. The FFP demanded various actions including improvement to assessment

8   strategies in order to measure student nurses' competence to practice effectively (Hughes,

9   2004). This insistence on practical competence to practice has direct parallels with sport

10   coaching and the ability of the coach to translate theory into practical coaching situations.

11

12   Mentoring lies at the heart of nurse education with mentors performing a critical role

13   facilitating learning and assessment within education and the clinical context (Hughes, 2004).

14   The NME have defined the functional role of the mentor in the occupational standards

15   framework (2008). The framework includes establishing effective working relationships,

16   creating an environment for learning, facilitating and evaluating learning and leadership. The

17   key role difference in nurse mentoring when compared with business and education is the

18   overt assessment function, although the assessment function is assumed within coach

19   education by some mentors in certain sports. Nurse mentors assess nurses and have "sign-off"

20   responsibilities, making judgments about whether a student has achieved the required

21   standards of proficiency for entry onto the NMC register (NMC Standards, 2008). Whilst the

22   roles are notionally separate, inevitably mentors do act as assessors within practice settings

23   which can present problems ensuring objectivity in the decision-making process (Andrews &

24   Chilton, 2000). There is an additional mentoring role assumed within nursing and it is that of

25   the long-arm mentor and in this context the long-arm mentor fulfills a supervisory role

1   conducted remotely supporting the nurse mentor as opposed to nurse trainee.

2

3   The integration of mentoring into the nurse education system has experienced

4   problems. From an extensive literature review Andrews and Wallis (1999) established the

5   concept and role was unclear, with different models and frameworks proposed for the various

6   mentoring activities. They cite the fundamental reason for this as a lack of a clearly defined

7   role, suggesting the term mentor carries a multiplicity of meanings including preceptor,

8   coordinator, facilitator and supervisor. Despite the lack of clarity and transparent definitions

9   research exploring student nurses perspective of the experience rated their mentor's

10   positively and aspects of the experience as supportive and effective, although this was

11   contingent with having a secure productive relationship (Teatheredge, 2010; Andrews &

12   Chilton, 2000).

13

14   **Electronic Mentoring**

15   The concept of long-arm mentoring exists within nursing and the role is a supervisory one,

16   not necessarily conducted electronically. Regardless of the role and focusing purely on the

17   "long-arm" terminology as a descriptor, it serves as useful metaphor for any mentoring

18   relationship that is conducted predominantly on a remote basis and relies on the use of

19   electronic technologies to sustain the relationship (Bierema and Merriam, 2002). An

20   extensive literature review produced no research upon the effectiveness of this role although

21   parallels can be drawn with the role performed by the electronic or e-mentor.

22

23   With the advent of modern technology the traditional concept of mentoring as a face-

24   to-face support mechanism has been challenged (Panopoulos & Sarri, 2013). In the global

25   corporate world mentoring has been integrated to provide both in-situ support and remote

1   support for international employees (Gibson, 2004). To be classified as e-mentoring, at least

2   75 percent of the relationship must occur electronically (Hamilton & Scandura, 2003). The

3   most appropriate definition of e-mentoring to use as a reference point is offered by Bierema

4   and Merriam (2002):

5

6   A computer mediated, mutually beneficial relationship between a mentor and a

7   protégé that provides learning, advising, encouraging, promoting, and modeling, that

8   is often boundaryless, egalitarian, and qualitatively different than traditional face-to-

9   face mentoring. (p.214).

10

11   E-mentoring unlike the traditional format does not have to happen in situ, it can be

12   asynchronous, occur anytime and anyplace and problems associated with geography and

13   travel time are easily negated. Bierema and Hill, (2005) suggest physical proximity between

14   the mentor and mentee is no longer a requirement of the relationship and potentially mentors

15   are more available to their mentees through e- mentoring. Online technologies enable

16   mentoring relationships to be cultivated regardless of race, gender, physical ability, or other

17   personal variables and this increased equalitarianism increases access for all involved in the

18   mentoring process (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2002).

19

20   Traditional electronic media widely used include text, e-mail, Internet and intranet

21   and there are various emerging technologies that could be used. E-mentoring currently has a

22   dominant text-based nature which can provide a written record of the process and the

23   inevitable time lag between communications could be used to foster a more deliberative,

24   reflective, and thoughtful exchange assuming people take advantage of the time delay to

25   consider and respond in an informed manner (Bierema & Hill, 2002). The opportunity to

1   engage through Skype and other visually based technologies are ideal opportunities to

2   replicate the role of the missing mentor in the field and engage in face to face conversation,

3   although the effectiveness of this as a medium to support the mentoring relationship has yet

4   to be explored comprehensively.

5

6   There are challenges associated with e-mentoring. Physical access to the internet is a

7   key requirement and it cannot be assumed that all people have 24x7 access especially in

8   developing countries. Intellectual access can also be a challenge with using online

9   technologies; technical competence and confidence or information literacy skills to use

10   electronic media are essential (Hill, Wiley, Han, & Nelson, 2003). Assuming both mentor

11   and mentee can access the internet there is still the issue of the one-dimensional nature of

12   text-based technologies. Messages can be open to misinterpretation and even distorted

13   because the recipient cannot gauge the sender's intent (Hamilton & Scandura, 2003).

14

15   Anecdotal evidence suggests many current mentoring relationships within sports

16   operate on a remote basis and inevitably rely on internet and computer-based technologies to

17   support the communication process (Lamb & Aldous, 2014). However, at this time there is

18   limited evidence of e-mentoring happening within sports coaching or indeed what mediums

19   are used to support the relationship and how effective these are. Research in e-mentoring

20   within coach development should be identified as a priority in order to establish the

21   effectiveness of this approach. Key learning for the future development of this type of

22   mentoring should then be shared across coaches, across sports and across countries because

23   its potential use is universal.

24

25   **Recommendations for Future Practice and Research**

1   The aim of this paper was to examine relevant mentoring literature generated across sports

2   coaching, coach development and wider domains (business, education, nursing) to highlight

3   how mentoring has been positioned to support a wide variety of functional roles. Electronic

4   mentoring was explored as a discrete area because research conducted in this domain offered

5   insight into how the remote or long-arm element of the mentoring relationship might be

6   constructed and conducted (Williams, Sunderman & Kim, 2012). Although mentoring is

7   gaining acceptance within coach education, there is still consistent support for the 15-year old

8   claim that mentoring in coaching lacks a clear conceptual definition (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac,

9   2009; Jones, Harris & Miles, 2009; Bloom *et al*, 1998). Mentoring remains an ill-defined

10   activity, especially in sport coaching, possibly due to the diverse use of the term and variety

11   of contexts in which mentoring occurs (Jones, Harris and Miles, 2009).

12

13   Coaching is a very complex activity and, added to that occurs in a variety of contexts. The

14   ICCE (2012) suggest that sports participation can happen in two broad areas; participation or

15   performance sport, with each including a number of sub-categories (See p.15 for further

16   details). Added to this coaches can be part-time or full-time, paid or voluntary and have an

17   eclectic mix of learning experiences. In North America there is also the practice of student-

18   coaches who undertake practicums or internships as part of their university course. Given

19   these numerous combinations of contexts and experiences the establishment and subsequent

20   evaluation of mentoring programs remains a challenging but ultimately rewarding endeavor.

21

22   To allow key aspects drawn from the research presented in this article a series of

23   reflective questions that the organization or practitioner should seek to answer before

24   committing to constructing any form of mentoring program, using mentoring as a coach

25   development tool or engaging in any mentoring practice. The questions in Figure 1 are

1   suggested to be considered as key before the organization or implementation of any coach

2   mentoring program, regardless of the level or context.

3

4   Insert Figure 1 about here

5

6   The answers to these questions may provide the organization with some guiding

7   principles against which they can construct their own program and position mentoring as a

8   coach development tool. Critical to the success of any program constructed will be on-going

9   and post-program evaluation to establish the:

10

11   1. effectiveness of the program in setting up and managing the various relationships

12   2. roles, functions and working practices assumed by mentors

13   3. characteristics and qualities of the effective mentor and coach

14   4. effectiveness of the mentor-coach relationship

15

16   The use of e-mentoring in sport coaching cannot be underestimated as a potential tool to

17   help the development of effective sport coaches. Given that many sports coaches feel isolated

18   and disconnected in their practice, tend not to value formal education and are lacking a

19   professional structure the use of electronic media could help in addressing some of these

20   perceived issues. Promoting e-mentoring as a coach development tool could enable many

21   smaller organisations to access more coaches, recruit more geographically dispersed mentors

22   and provide a valuable service with reduced costs. This type of e-mentoring could be of use

23   across many coaching contexts, such as, volunteer coaches, coaches in education and elite

24   coaches as well as a wide range of organisations.

25

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7

1

2

Key Questions to be considered
What is the role of the mentor within the organization's coach education structure?
How many coaches require mentoring?
Will the program offered be a formal or informal program?
Who would assume the role of mentors?
Will the organization need to provide training for the mentor to ensure they have the relevant skill sets and expertise to undertake the role
How will mentors and mentees be selected

3   Figure 1: Key Questions