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## Positioning mentoring as a coach development tool

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

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**Research**

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**Abstract**

*Current thinking in coach education advocates mentoring as a coach development tool to connect theory and practice; however, little empirical evidence exists to evaluate the effectiveness of mentoring as a coach development tool. Business, education and nursing precede the coaching industry in their mentoring practice and research findings offered in these domains could be drawn upon to position mentoring as sports coaching development tool. Given the remote basis of some of the mentor-coach relationships that exist in sports coaching additional learning can be drawn from mentoring conducted by virtual or electronic mediums. This paper concludes with a series of reflective questions arising from research findings in other domains, designed to engage the potential coaching organization with the mentoring process.*

**Keywords** Mentoring, coach development, informal & formal learning, effectiveness, mentor-coach relationships

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Research exploring coach learning and development remains a relatively unexplored area with the most effective mechanisms for educating and supporting coaches still being contested (Nash & McQuade, 2014). According to the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE, 2012, p. 10) coaching is defined as ‘a process of guided improvement and development in a single sport at identifiable stages of athlete development.’ It is the many different contexts and environments in which coaches can, and do, operate that poses problems for large scale, formal coach education programmes that currently are advocated in many countries (Mallet, 2010).

Formal learning, which has traditionally dominated coach education, is located almost exclusively within the classroom setting and offered by educational establishments such as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) (Jones, 2006). Whilst formal learning can provide coaches with access to essential need-to-know information leading to the achievement of awards, certificates and qualifications, these programs of study are not as valued by coaches as their day-to-day experiences in the field because of the lack of experiential opportunities to apply and reflect on learning (Werthner & Trudel, 2006). Significant personal learning can occur spontaneously within the context of real work; on the field, track, court, or poolside because the learning is situated within the context in which it is applied, that is the coaching environment (Marsick & Volpe, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

This learning is referred to as informal learning and, in the context of the coaching environment, coaches learn through on-going interactions, observations, listening and from 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, Mallett  
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.

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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