

An In Situ Exploration of Practising Rugby Coaches' Cognitions, Higher Psychological Functions and Actions Using Think Aloud Protocol

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Abstract : Psychology-based research has been a characteristic of empirical enquiry in sport coaching for over fifty years and cognitive function is widely accepted as a fundamental component of sport coaching expertise. Within the academic literature, much empirical research on coaches' cognitions has tended to adopt retrospective approaches, such as post-session interviews or stimulated recall, thus capturing coaches' cognitions after the incident, training session or competition. Such methods are prone to a variety of issues, including memory decay and the reordering of accounts. The aim of this research was to overcome the limitations that exist with retrospective approaches and, rather, to capture coaching cognitions in situ using Think Aloud Protocol. Data that were captured was broken down into meaning units and analysed using a Thematic Analysis. Situated in the practice of 6 experienced rugby coaches, findings revealed that Think Aloud Protocol generated rich data, although problematic in a site of enquiry confounded by multiple social interactions and requiring coaches to provide frequent instruction and feedback. The resultant interaction between cognition and action is conceptualised by the tentative offering of a model that situates these elements in conjunction with cognitive triggers and thresholds. The implications of these findings can help academics and coaches to understand the dynamic relationship between types of coaching cognitions and the complexity of the coaching environment.

Keywords : sports coaching, Psychology, Pedagogy, cognition

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