



UEFA RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAMME

FINAL REPORT

‘WHAT DOES A WORLD-CLASS COACH EDUCATOR LOOK LIKE?’ EXPLORING EFFECTIVE COACH EDUCATION WITHIN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT AIMS

In their 2024-2030 strategy, *United for Success*, UEFA emphasised the development of more and better coaches, the enhancement of coaching standards, and the improvement of the quality of coach educators to drive coach education excellence as key strategic priorities. However, several issues relating to coach education (e.g., equivocal understanding of the role of the coach educator; the integration of andragogy into qualification design and delivery; the concept of effective coach education practice) continue to be highlighted in the literature. The aim of this project, therefore, was to provide a rigorous examination of current UEFA Level 4 (Advanced Licence) and 5 (Professional Licence) coach education programme delivery with a specific focus on understanding what effective coach education *looks like* across different UEFA National Associations. Specifically, this study sought to identify and examine principles of effective education in the context of football coaching, better understand the nature, role, and characteristics (e.g., competencies; personal attributes) of the coach educator, and critically examine the barriers impeding optimal learning experiences. It is anticipated that the findings obtained from exploring *best practice* across a variety of European coach education settings could be used to inform coach education policy, training, and support programmes across UEFA National Associations.

METHODS

Design: A qualitative methodology with a relativist-constructivist lens was adopted. Semi-structured interviews facilitated an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences.

Participants: Data were gathered from 28 Coach Educators from 16 different UEFA National Associations and 12 Coaches from 8 different UEFA National Associations, ensuring diverse and meaningful insights.

Data Collection: Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, lasting 55–75 minutes. They were recorded, transcribed (yielding over 1000 pages of data), and analysed.

Data Analysis: Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was employed, following a structured six-step process to develop descriptive and interpretive themes. A "critical friend" approach ensured reliability and mitigated researcher bias.

Rigour: Methodological credibility was strengthened using Tracy's (2010) "big tent" criteria, ensuring ethical, rigorous, and coherent research.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS: ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION

Defining Effective Coach Education at Level 4 and 5 and its Associated Processes. Data indicated that effective coach education is a personalised, process-oriented approach that facilitates the development of both the professional and personal competencies of coaches. It emphasises the cultivation of experiential/craft knowledge, critical reflection, and self-awareness, enabling coaches to apply learning meaningfully within their unique contexts. Rather than focusing solely on qualification outcomes, effective coach education requires a flattened hierarchy where educators and learners work collaboratively to facilitate the learner's growth. It centres on individual development, fostering environments

where coaches feel safe to explore, question, and evolve and includes co-constructed individual development plans, context-relevant learning tasks, mentorship, reality-based problem-solving, and the nurturing of lifelong curiosity. It aims to create lasting and meaningful behavioural change, bridging the gap between knowing and doing, and ultimately enhance coaches' ability to have a positive impact.

Exploring the Role of the Level 4 and 5 Coach Educator. The role of the coach educator is multifaceted and dynamic, encompassing responsibilities as an educator and developer, mentor, and assessor. While these roles vary across National Associations, they are often intertwined, particularly in resource-limited contexts. Importantly, the roles of educator and developer are becoming more closely aligned as National Associations seek to underpin Level 4 and 5 coach education programmes with andragogical principles, requiring the Coach Educator to not only deliver course curricula but also nurture an environment that engages and empowers learner coaches to be a fundamental part of the coach education process. Thus, as developers, coach educators must work *with* programme candidates.

The Characteristics of Effective Level 4 and 5 Coach Educators. Effective coach educators must embody a broad range of personal, interpersonal, professional, and game-based characteristics to support meaningful coach development. Personally, they require self-awareness, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and resilience, alongside a passion for learning and development. Interpersonally, they adopt a learner-centred approach rooted in empathy, trust, and open communication, fostering safe, respectful environments that encourage growth and self-reflection. Professionally, they must demonstrate strong organisational skills, extensive theoretical and practical coaching knowledge, and the ability to moderate, challenge, and support learners effectively while modelling lifelong learning. Game-based expertise is equally vital; educators must not only possess deep understanding of the game but also translate complex ideas into contextually relevant insights and exemplify high standards through their own practice. Collectively, these characteristics enable coach educators to inspire, challenge, and guide coaches through dynamic, learner-focused educational journeys.

Barriers to Effective Level 4 and 5 Coach Education Delivery. Several critical barriers undermine the effective delivery of coach education at Level 4 and 5. A predominant issue is the lack of resources, leading to overburdened educators juggling multiple roles with limited time for course design, reflection, or continued professional development. This resource deficit also includes inadequate infrastructure and a shortage of qualified staff, contributing to diluted learning experiences. Philosophical tensions further complicate delivery, as educators often struggle to balance the Association's coaching identity with learner autonomy, risking a homogenised, compliance-driven environment that stifles individual coaching philosophies. Additionally, pressures to conform to rigid qualification structures result in a shift from andragogical, learner-centred approaches to pedagogical, content-driven delivery, limiting the depth and authenticity of coach learning.

PRACTICAL IMPACT OF THE RESEARCH FOR EUROPEAN FOOTBALL

1. **UEFA National Associations need to prioritise building coach education programmes around andragogical principles of learning.** This means shifting away from purely pedagogical approaches towards adult-centred learning where coach educators work collaboratively with coaches, recognising their experiences and ensuring their active participation in the learning process.
2. Linked to andragogical principles, at Levels 4 and 5, **coach educators need to adopt a flattened hierarchy, working collaboratively with learners to co-construct individual development plans, context-relevant learning tasks, and provide support through mentoring.** This highlights the importance of personalised learning experiences tailored to the individual needs and objectives of each coach. Thus, the focus of **coach education should move beyond solely qualification outcomes to a process-oriented approach.**
3. **Effective coach education (at Advanced and Professional Levels) should focus on the holistic development of coaches, encompassing both their professional and personal competencies.** Indeed, through their Level 4 and 5 coach education programmes, **UEFA National Associations should emphasise experiential / craft knowledge, critical reflection, and self-awareness.**
4. **Effective Level 4 and 5 coach education aims to create lasting and meaningful behavioural change in coaches,** enhancing their ability to positively impact their players and learning environments, as well as improving the longevity of their coaching careers. Thus, **coach educators play crucial roles as educators and developers.** UEFA National Associations must consider the transition of the coach educator role to ensure that they are appropriately equipped philosophically, physically, and cognitively to be able to integrate principles of coach development (e.g., facilitating holistic growth; ongoing mentoring; facilitating the transfer of learning) into formal education programmes.
5. Given the evolving role of the coach educator, **to be effective, Level 4 and 5 coach educators need to possess a range of personal, interpersonal, professional, and game-based characteristics. UEFA National Associations should consider these characteristics when selecting and training coach educators.** Indeed, the findings presented in this report can be used to support the development of more focused coach educator training programmes that support the development of a more expert coach education workforce.
6. **Barriers to effective coach education, such as a lack of resources, philosophical differences between UEFA National Associations and coaches, pressure to conform to qualification requirements, and challenges in evaluating long-term impact, need to be addressed.** Providing adequate resources, fostering open dialogue about coaching philosophies, balancing content delivery with individual learning needs, and developing better methods for evaluating the impact of coach education are all important considerations for UEFA National Associations delivering, or seeking to deliver, Level 4 and 5 qualifications.

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INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE TO UEFA

In 2021, UEFA confirmed its commitment to improving the [standards of coach education](#) by providing “high quality technical programmes and support systems designed to improve the quality of coach education in all UEFA member associations, with the aim of developing better coaches and, ultimately, better players and the overall quality of the game.” Thus, coach education was recognised as a key factor in UEFA’s football development vision ([UEFA Coaching Convention, 2020](#)). As a result, many UEFA National Associations have sought to develop their coach education provision by explicitly targeting the education and training of their respective coach education workforces (e.g., Football Association of Wales [FAW] [Coach Educator Tutor Development Programme](#)). More recently, in their 2024-2030 strategy, [United for Success](#), UEFA has continued to emphasise the development of more and better coaches, the enhancement of coaching standards, and the improvement of the quality of coach educators to drive coach education excellence as key strategic priorities.

Given such strategic commitments to, and subsequent investment in, coach education, it is perhaps surprising that research into what effective coach education looks like in a football context, particularly at the more elite levels (e.g., Level 4 [UEFA Advanced Licence] and Level 5 [UEFA Professional Licence]), is scarce. Additionally, despite the relationship between coaches and their educators potentially being vital in facilitating coach learning and growth (Paquette et al., 2019), little attention has been afforded to the *coach educator* and the crucial role they can play in “maintaining and further developing the game” ([UEFA Coaching the Coaches, 2019](#); Watts et al. 2022). Indeed, researchers have highlighted how, while prospective coaches all engage with the same learning material during a coaching qualification (i.e., curriculum modules), what is learned and retained will be influenced by learners’ values, knowledge, preferred methods of learning, and past experiences, and thus the ability of the coach educator to connect person, content, and context (e.g., Culver et al., 2019). These principles align with recent calls for coach education providers to better embrace *adult-centred* or *andragogical* approaches to learning, where focus is placed on the active participation of learners in the learning process, who utilise their own experiences to learn in a manner that is self-determined and meaningful (e.g., Garner et al., 2021).

Having identified the potential beneficial impact of integrating andragogical principles into coach education programmes, UEFA have recently promoted the use of [reality-based](#)

learning; a method that “focuses on the participant’s own unique experience linked to their context and culture ... to ensure theoretical and classroom-based content links directly to their experience on the football pitch.” Nevertheless, while coveted, adult learning methodologies, such as reality-based learning, are often challenging to implement due to structural constraints and limitations in coach educators’ understanding of, and ability to apply and facilitate, andragogical strategies. Such issues are further compounded by the lack of clarity over what it *actually means* to be a coach educator and how this role changes depending on the level of qualification being delivered (cf. Jones et al., 2023).

Researchers have highlighted how the complexity of the role can make it difficult for coach educators, who are often coaches seldom trained as educators, to manage the demands of the position in a way that allows them to create a positive learning experience for trainee coaches built on andragogical principles (Garner et al., 2021). Thus, the effectiveness of coach education remains challenged by the often-misunderstood role of coach educators and an imbalance between adult-centred learning approaches and qualification content requirements, which has perhaps suppressed the benefits that can be gleaned through high-quality coach learning experiences (Jones et al., 2023). It is imperative, therefore, to investigate how coach educators may navigate (or fail to navigate) these challenges to better understand how they can engage in effective (i.e., facilitating growth through learning) rather than just successful (i.e., completing the qualification) coach education, as well as the wider context of coach learning and education (Stephens et al., 2024).

These issues perhaps underline the need for UEFA National Associations to re-consider how coach education is facilitated, particularly at the elite levels (e.g., Levels 4 and 5), and ensure that coach educators are prepared to engage coaches in meaningful, collaborative learning. It appears timely, therefore, to empirically examine the quality of the coach education processes implemented across UEFA National Associations. In doing so, a better understanding of the nature of the coach educator role and whether (and how) coach educators engage trainee coaches in effective, collaborative learning processes, centred around the learners’ needs and professional experiences can be obtained. Further, through such research, it is likely that novel insights can be constructed into the concept of *effective coach education* in football that may help to address the extant issues in the area, and an evidence-base developed that can support UEFA in its pursuit of being a “global leader in

coach education excellence”. Consequently, by investigating the experiences of UEFA National Association Coach Educators, and those coaches who have recently completed a UEFA Level 4 or 5 qualification, the current project seeks to explore best practices in elite-level coach education across UEFA National Associations and aims to enable UEFA to provide actionable insights into improving coach education standards across Europe.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

CONTEXT

Given the nuances associated with the nature of coach education at different levels of the game (e.g., the process of education and the skillsets of coach educators will likely need to be bespoke to the level of the programme), and the request of the supporting National Association (FAW), this project will focus on the elite game – UEFA Advanced (“A”) and Professional Licences (Levels 4-5). Indeed, it is reported that coaches’ preferred learning sources may change as they gain expertise and advance in their careers (Mallet et al., 2016). This means that coach education providers must adapt the delivery mechanisms integrated into their provision as the purpose and level of the qualification change (e.g., what works on the UEFA B Licence maybe less effective at UEFA A Licence level; Jones et al., 2024).

The [UEFA A Licence](#) and [UEFA Professional Licence](#) are governed in terms of aims, purpose, and learning outcomes by UEFA. This means that to become accredited to deliver these qualifications, UEFA National Associations must demonstrate that their courses meet pre-defined criteria. However, UEFA affords National Associations the agency to decide on the content (both theory and practical) of each qualification, the methods of assessment utilised to identify whether a coach is deemed at the level to pass the qualification, and the delivery mechanisms used to bring the content to life. Thus, while the level of the qualifications remains consistent, the way in which they are delivered and experienced by learner coaches will vary, at times considerably, across those UEFA National Associations accredited to host them. To date, researchers have failed to explore the experiences of those working in coach education at Levels 4 and 5, and coaches who have completed those programmes across the European landscape. Consequently, there is limited understanding of potential best practices and areas for development when considering the effectiveness of elite level coach education programmes.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this project was to provide a rigorous examination of current Level 4 and 5 coach education programme delivery with a specific focus on understanding what effective coach education *looks like* across different UEFA National Associations. To achieve this aim, four objectives have been developed:

1. Explore what the process of effective Level 4-5 coach education looks like within the international (European) football environment.
2. Examine the roles and responsibilities of coach educators delivering Level 4-5 UEFA qualifications from the perspectives of different UEFA National Associations.
3. Identify the characteristics of effective coach educators delivering Level 4-5 UEFA qualifications from the perspectives of different UEFA National Associations.
4. Consider the barriers that prevent effective Level 4-5 coach education within the international (European) football environment and how these might be navigated.

SUMMARY OF THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The research that underpins this project is concerned with *coach education*, with specific emphasis on the role of the *coach educator* within the learning process, and the importance of embedding *andragogical* principles into formal coaching qualifications to render them more effective. While research within the domain of *coach learning* has grown over the past 20 years, researchers have continued to argue that the explication of the concept of effective coach education, in a way that might furnish qualification providers with the insights required to move the process from transactional to transformational, remains limited (Garner et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). Indeed, it is argued that coach education programmes have largely been dominated by a “train and certify” approach that positions coach learners as “uncritical consumers of knowledge” (Cope et al., 2021, p. 66). Consequently, coaches’ involvement in their own learning and critical reflection become suppressed, which is thought to result in subdued educational outcomes rather than the transformational behaviour change and improvements in practice that should be expected (Cushion et al., 2022; Webb & Leeder, 2022). In response to these criticisms, and with the aim of driving higher quality coach education practices, National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) have begun to explore the value of structural change in design, delivery, and quality assurance processes, by focusing on learner-centred, humanistic, and interactive approaches to coach education (Wang et al., 2023). These principles align with recent calls

for coach education providers to better embrace *adult-centred* or *andragogical* principles, where focus is placed on the active participation of learners, who utilise their own experiences to learn in a manner that is self-determined, contextually relevant, and meaningful (e.g., Garner et al., 2021; Webb & Leeder, 2022).

Despite growing emphasis being placed on integrating constructivist and andragogical principles into coach education programme design and delivery, researchers have expressed concern that these efforts have been undertaken without the support of an appropriate evidence base (e.g., Dempsey et al., 2021). It is also argued that limited attention has been afforded to the role of the coach educator in this process, the knowledge and skills they require to support learning through such approaches, and how they might be positioned within the broader relational system of coach education (e.g., Cushion et al., 2019; Stephens et al., 2024). Indeed, while the key delivery mechanisms associated with adult-, learner-centred coach education (e.g., creating a sense of belonging; Dohme et al., 2019) are well established, less is understood about *how* coach educators engage in such approaches via their working relationships with adult learners (Garner et al., 2021). Researchers have also questioned whether coach educators are equipped philosophically, conceptually, and physically to facilitate adult learning effectively; in a way that supports learner growth and purposeful change (e.g., Watts et al., 2022).

The lack of attention placed on exploring the coach educator, what they do to support learning, and their ensuing rationales is perhaps surprising given the widespread acceptance that the coach educator plays a critical role in ensuring the efficacy of formal coach education (Garner et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). Researchers have, instead, placed more focus on exploring the role of the *coach developer*, those responsible for facilitating the ongoing development and improvement of a coach's practice mainly following formal education (e.g., Fawver et al., 2020), than on those educators delivering formal coaching qualifications. This is problematic given that the coach educator role often requires the fulfilment of a plethora of responsibilities, with the ability of the educator to effectively enact these responsibilities being a key determinant in coach learning, development, and improvement (Stoszkowski & Collins, 2016). Indeed, trainee coaches often cite poor coach educator delivery and inferior communication skills as factors that limit the efficacy of formal coach education (Paquette et al., 2019).

Researchers who have examined the coach educator have proposed that their role is to act as agents of change by supporting adult learners (trainee coaches) to re-examine their beliefs, “influencing practice-based learning and contesting, legitimising, and recreating coaches’ practice” (Cushion et al., 2019, p. 532). However, it is argued that coach educators often operate in a culture of anti-intellectualism where informal learning experiences are favoured for their impact on improvement than formal education, which can make the delivery of transformative coach education challenging (Blackett et al., 2015). The role of the coach educator, therefore, extends far beyond simply delivering a coaching syllabus. Instead, the coach educator must foster working relationships with all learners to better understand their individual needs (Cushion et al., 2019). Further, the coach educator must tailor their delivery approach to meet these needs and foster a sense of autonomy whereby each learner understands how they acquire knowledge most effectively and takes responsibility for their own development (Stephens et al., 2024). Indeed, coach educators in Watts et al.’s (2022) research detailed how knowledge of learning was important for facilitating meaningful coach education and associated it with contextualised and situated practice (i.e., coach educators must facilitate the transfer of knowledge into the learner’s own coaching context). However, Watts et al.’s participants viewed the coach education they delivered to be decontextualised and to have low impact (i.e., that course content, delivery, and educator ability fell short of what is needed to facilitate effective education).

Related to the rather equivocal nature of the role, “coach educator” is widely considered an umbrella term for a variety of roles related to the continued professional development of coaches, including qualification designer, tutor, assessor, mentor, and developer (Jones et al., 2023). While one individual can cover several different roles if required, these roles are typically carried out independently, meaning coach educators must not only possess the capacity to conduct their own role effectively but be capable of working as part of a larger team to deliver a coherent coach education process (Garner et al., 2021). In this way, coach education can be viewed as a series of critical moments on which coach educators should regularly reflect to become more cognisant of the context and role in which they operate and how they can engage in more innovative educational practices to facilitate meaningful, lasting learning in their learners (Downham & Cushion, 2020).

Following a systematic review of the formal coach education literature, Wang et al. (2023)

concluded that a necessary next step in research is to focus on helping sport organisations to recognise the support coach educators need to understand and develop their educational practices in a way that elicits meaningful learning. Indeed, the implications of the extant literature (e.g., Maclean & Lorimer, 2016; Nelson et al., 2013; Stephens et al., 2024; Webb & Leeder, 2022) suggest that researchers need to: (a) explore how coach developers across multiple contexts utilise their personal characteristics, practical, and contextual knowledge to engage in an effective (i.e., learner-centred) coach education process; (b) examine the multiple roles coach developers undertake within their respective National Associations and how they engage in effective coach education within these roles; and (c) identify potential barriers that prevent coach developers from engaging in effective coach education and how these may be overcome across contexts. Indeed, there remains a dearth of understanding regarding the *quality* of the coach education process, and how coach educators use both their personal qualities and innovative techniques to deliver coach education effectively in a way that meets learner needs and supports the development of a high-quality coaching workforce (Voldby & Klein-Døssing, 2020).

RESEARCH DESIGN: METHODS

RESEARCH DESIGN

Aligned with the project aims, a qualitative research design based on an *exploratory* approach has been adopted (cf. Stebbins, 2001). To actualise this, we adopted a position of ontological relativism and a constructivist epistemological stance. Accordingly, our research was supported by the goal of understanding the complex nature of the lived experience of effective coach education from the point of view of those who live it (Gergen, 2001). Indeed, through this position, we propose that one's social reality is derived through interactions with other individuals and phenomena in their outer world via a process of active cooperative enterprise (Kusch, 2020). Consequently, we recognised that to engage with, and accurately construct the multiple realities of our participants, we had to accept that value-free inquiry and theory-free knowledge development were not possible (Patton, 2015). Thus, a critical friend approach has been adopted to address any researcher bias (Smith & McGannon, 2018) and criteria for methodological rigour (e.g., worthy topic; significant contribution; resonance; credibility) are being adhered to (Tracy, 2010).

SAMPLING AND PARTICIPANTS

This study contains a multi-population sample that includes both Level 4-5 Coach Educators working across UEFA National Associations and Coaches who had recently completed a Level 4 and/or 5 qualification with those Associations. Participants were sampled using purposive and snowball procedures (cf. Patton, 2015). Coach Educators were invited to participate if they: (a) were currently working as a coach educator for a UEFA National Association at Levels 4 and/or 5; and (b) had worked as a coach educator for a minimum of three years. Coaches were invited to participate if they: (a) had completed a Level 4 and/or 5 UEFA coaching qualification within the last 12 months; and (b) were currently coaching full-time. Using the principles of information power, such as sample richness, specificity, and integration of established theory (cf. Malterud et al., 2016), a sample size of 30 was deemed sufficient to address the aims of the study.

The final sample consisted of 28 Coach Educators (Female = 4; Male = 24) from 16 different UEFA National Associations (Belgium; Denmark; England; Finland; France; Georgia; Hungary; Malta; Netherlands; Northern Ireland; Poland; Republic of Ireland; Romania; Scotland; Slovenia; and Wales), who ranged in age from 30 to 69 years ($M = 46.6$; $SD = 9.9$) and coach education experience from 5 to 32 years ($M = 15.8$; $SD = 7.8$). Alongside delivering coach education, Coach Educators were employed in roles including: National Team Manager, Technical Director; National Age Group Head Coach (e.g., under-19s), Head of Coach Education, Coach Education and Development Manager, and domestic coaching roles across both youth and senior level. Additionally, 12 coaches (Female = 3; Male = 9) were sampled from eight different UEFA National Associations (England; Finland; France; Malta; Netherlands; Northern Ireland; Scotland; and Wales). Coaches ranged in age from 29 to 42 years ($M = 36.1$; $SD = 5.7$) and coaching experience from 3 to 22 years ($M = 15.0$; $SD = 6.6$). Coaches were all working full-time in professional positions at the time of the study across both senior and youth football (e.g., Head or Assistant Coach in the senior national league system; professional youth academies) and had all completed a UEFA qualification (Level 4 = 8; Level 5 = 4) within the previous 12 months.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND PROCEDURE

Following receipt of Institutional Ethics Board Approval (231101LR), data were collected through one-off, semi-structured interviews. Two semi-structured interview guides (one for each participant group; see Appendix A) were used to allow for a thorough examination of

each participant's lived experience of delivering or receiving coach education within their respective UEFA National Association. The semi-structured guide afforded the interviewer flexibility to ask a standardised set of questions and explore responses of interest where appropriate (Patton, 2015). As such, we attempted to overcome previous issues in coach education research, where insufficient detail has been provided on the relational and andragogical principles associated with effective coach education (cf. Martins et al., 2024). The interview guides were designed to address each of the project's four objectives. For example, participants were asked to distinguish between *effective* coach education (i.e., qualification relevancy, autonomy, scenario-based learning) and *successful* coach education (i.e., completion of qualification objectives), and to outline what they do, or their coach educators did, to facilitate perceived effective coach education processes (objective 1). Amongst other items, participants were asked about: (a) the role of a coach educator, as well as their responsibilities (objective 2); (b) the characteristics that the "ideally effective" coach educator possesses personally, professionally, socially, psychologically, and how these differ across coach education roles (objective 3); and (c) the barriers that prevent effective coach education and hinder the pursuit of being an effective coach educator (objective 4). The guides were pilot tested with two matched sample participants (one coach educator and one coach) following which some minor editing of question wording was made to ensure clarity and improve the flow of the interview.

Interviews were all conducted by author two via the online platform Microsoft Teams. This system was also used to record and transcribe the interviews verbatim. Each transcript was cleaned and organised by both authors and then sent to the participant via email to check for accuracy and appropriate representation. 75% of participants responded positively, the remaining 25% did not reply to the email. Interviews lasted between 55 and 75 minutes ($M = 61.6$; $SD = 6.1$) yielding over 1000 pages of single-spaced text.

DATA ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGICAL RIGOUR

Data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) with an experiential orientation and through both semantic and latent coding. RTA allows researchers to identify and interpret patterns of meaning within data and construct themes to account for participants' experiences. These themes can then be used to provide new insights about phenomena (McKay et al., 2023). RTA is deemed more appropriate than other

analytic approaches as it aligns with our aims and intentions for translational impact.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-stage approach, the analysis procedure commenced with the research team familiarising themselves with the transcripts to establish a comprehensive understanding of the dataset. Author two then identified initial codes pertinent to the study's aims, substantiating codes with selected textual excerpts. Following this, discussions took place between authors one and two, with author one serving as a *critical friend* to question coding labels and identify potential biases in their construction (e.g., "How well does this code represent participants' experiences?", "How do these codes differ?"; Smith and McGannon, 2018). These discussions facilitated the refinement and organisation of the initial codes and allowed overarching patterns within the data to be considered, with these patterns being used to construct initial sub-themes (e.g., *creating a learner-centred environment*). Main themes were then constructed by systematically collating sub-themes with the same semantic and latent qualities (e.g., *effective versus successful coach education*) before providing definitions and descriptions of the themes (cf. Braun & Clarke, 2021). The themes and their definitions were discussed between the authors as a way of making sense of the alignment between the final themes and the raw data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Once satisfied with the nature and relevance of each theme, compelling data extracts that effectively encapsulated each theme were identified, thus enhancing the clarity and rigour of the analysis process (Byrne, 2022).

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, a range of additional strategies were adopted to enhance methodological rigor including: (a) meeting appropriate ethical standards; (b) selecting an appropriate, information rich sample; (c) piloting the interview guides; (d) preparing participants by ensuring that they were fully informed about the nature of the study and interview process; and (e) providing participants the opportunity to comment on the rigor of the interview process (cf. Tracy, 2010).

FINDINGS

OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

The findings have been divided into three main sections. First, a summary of the main findings from both Coach Educators and Coaches are presented separately to offer some insight into the participants groups' different perspectives (see Table 1). Second, in accord with the aims of this study, findings from both participating groups are presented together

to offer a detailed analysis of how effective coach education is defined, the process of effective coach education, the roles and responsibilities of coach educators (see Table 2), the characteristics effective coach educators possess (see Table 3), and the barriers that prevent coach educators from being effective in their roles.

SUMMARY OF COACH EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVES

Participating Coach Educators believed that to deliver world class coach education, UEFA National Associations must build their programme delivery around andragogical principles of learning. Participants indicated that effective coach education requires a flattened hierarchy, whereby the coach educator works *with* rather than *for* the coach learner in all aspects of session design, delivery, and evaluation. Through this working alliance, the coach educator must ensure the coach is an active participant in the coach education process rather than a passive recipient of coaching knowledge. Therefore, participants outlined that an effective coach educator should work in partnership with the coach to identify their learning needs and co-construct an individualised development plan centred around these needs, with objectives that can be accomplished through delivery of programme content. In this way, participants suggested that effective coach education involves the creation of a learner-centred environment where coach learning is self-determined (i.e., coaches are driven to achieve their personal learning objectives), and coaches are encouraged to take personal responsibility and autonomy over their own development. Moreover, through co-creating individual development plans with each coach, participants indicated that effective coach educators recognise the experiences and knowledge coaches from various contexts bring to the coach education process.

Participants also detailed that effective coach educators acknowledge that their (or their Association's) philosophy for coaching and the game should not be imposed onto coach learners. Instead, by using coaches' existing knowledge, coach educators should facilitate coaches' exploration and development of philosophical positions that fits with them and their personal context. In this way, coach educators should seek to enhance the overall learning experience by embracing opportunities for peer-to-peer learning via group discussions, presentations, and sharing of best practice. Consequently, these "micro-groups" stimulate healthy conflict between coaches of different backgrounds and diverse philosophical approaches, leading to the formation of more well-rounded coaches.

Participating Coach Educators acknowledged that to be effective they must seek to understand learner coaches' backgrounds and experiences. In doing so, coach educators can create and deliver problem-based learning activities that are relevant to each coach's own context. During these activities, effective coach educators demonstrate an ability to challenge coach learners to provide a clear rationale for their actions, related to their underlying coaching philosophy. Participants indicated that effective coach educators, therefore, scaffold the learning process and coaches' ongoing development by providing them with tailored feedback and instigating further critical thinking around their coaching practice. Thus, participants were clear that to be effective they not only need to ensure high-quality interactions on the pitch and in the classroom but also augment learner coaches' capacity to reflect on these activities, make sense of their experiences, and make necessary adjustments to enhance their own practice. Participants reported that they must also demonstrate this capacity for reflective practice, critically considering their own performance in meeting individuals' learning needs and identifying areas for further improvement. As a result, effective coach education facilitates both the coach to translate meaningful experiences during their qualification into purposeful action in their own coaching environment, and the coach educator to consider how they might more effectively tailor their programme's content to meet the ongoing needs and objectives of their learners.

Finally, participants reported that effective coach education should extend beyond instigating meaningful behaviour change in the learner coach and focus on the holistic growth and development of the individual. Therefore, coach education programmes should focus on supporting coaches to develop competencies such as their self-awareness, decision-making, self-regulation, and emotional management, which help coaches to view learning as a fundamental part of their ongoing growth and development as a human being. Implicit within this process, participating Coach Educators detailed how effective coach education is a developmental journey – it does not cease once a coach has completed their qualifications. As a result, effective coach educators play a crucial role in creating a self-determined motivational climate during programme delivery, where coaches are motivated to learn how they learn most effectively, thus fostering an intrinsic motivation to continue their learning post-qualification. Further, effective coach educators continue to support the lifelong learning of their coaches via post-qualification mentorship. This role requires effective coach educators to engage in informal “check-ins” with their coaching

candidates, for both practical and emotional support, alongside regular site visits to evaluate the lasting impact that the coaching qualification has had on each coach's outlook towards and engagement in their own practice (see Table 1 for overview).

SUMMARY OF COACH PERSPECTIVES

Participating Coaches suggested that for coach education to be effective a tailored approach is required, which is co-constructed between educator and learner and designed to meet individuals' learning needs. Participants proposed that this process should begin prior to qualification commencement. Effective coach educators should take time to build rapport with each of the learners, understanding their unique coaching experiences, personal values, and the context in which they coach, before utilising this knowledge to support the learner in creating an individual development plan designed to support their growth through the programme. This educator-learner relationship plays a crucial role throughout the coach education process, but requires effective coach educators to be approachable, friendly, and able to create a safe space for learner coaches to open-up, be vulnerable, and ask for advice when needed. Participating Coaches also acknowledged the importance of developing a mentoring relationship with coach educators. They expressed that these individuals (educators/mentors) need to be highly knowledgeable, experienced, and current with the latest trends in coaching and the game. Further, participants reported that, within the mentoring aspect of their role, coach educators should treat coach learners as equals, as well as being empathetic to the learner's background and valuing their coaching insights. Through fostering the right conditions, an effective coach educator should create a trusting rapport with coach learners, demonstrating a willingness to go above and beyond in supporting learner development, including regular site visits to check and challenge learners on how they are integrating knowledge developed through the programme within their own coaching contexts.

Given that coach learners come from a variety of different backgrounds, coaching levels, and have independent learning preferences, participating Coaches detailed that effective coach educators must be capable of differentiating between these learning needs when delivering programme content. As such, coach education programme providers should not dilute what a Level 4 or Level 5 coach should know or be able to do based on their National Association's coaching philosophy.

Table 1. Summary of Coach Educator and Coach Perceptions: Key Themes

COACH EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVES		
Principles of Effective Coach Education		
Sub-Theme	Description	Supporting Participant Quotes
Successful vs. Effective Coach Education	Successful: Achieving the qualification; Effective: Personal development accomplished on the qualification journey.	“Successful coach education is measured by how many people are on your course and how many people pass their course. But effective coach education is about producing good coaches; motivating and inspiring coaches at all levels and supporting coaches develop a better understanding of themselves at the elite performance level.”
Co-Construction	Forming a working alliance <i>with</i> each coach to support their individual needs rather than providing education <i>for</i> the coach.	“To be effective you need to create an individual development plan with each coach ... Their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This provides a reference point for discussing the ongoing process of development throughout the course, monitoring during club visits, and assessments.”
Reality-Based Learning	Encouraging problem-based learning through allowing coaches to experiment and apply their knowledge in real-game scenarios.	“We [coach educators] help coaches by giving them examples. It’s like giving them a library. Then it’s up to them to start working with the tools in the library and to develop their own philosophy. Being effective means getting into interactive, realistic tasks with them, doing a lot of interventions and asking open questions, “Why would you do like this?”
Behaviour Change	Facilitating the translation of meaningful experiences into purposeful action.	“For coach education to be effective, you need to see a change in behaviour. It’s the gap between knowing and doing...” Coaches need to be able to apply the principles they have learned in their own environment, when no one is watching.”
Individual Growth	Scaffolding coaches’ personal (e.g., self-awareness) and professional (e.g., tactical understanding) development.	“I think you’ve [coach educator] gotta go much deeper into who they [coaches] are and what they’re doing in practice, because unless they know themselves and how this impacts their actions, what’s the point of dumping more information on them? They need to learn about themselves and how to use that information appropriately and pass it on correctly.”
Processes of Effective Coach Education		
Creating Individualised Objectives	Tailoring coach development to meet individual needs of all learners.	“If I’m [coach educator] allocated 8 coaches to mentor, my priority is to delve a little bit deeper into each individual’s needs, gain some understanding of the journey they’re on and what they’re looking for from enrolling on the qualification. I feel like that allows for a more personalised approach.”

Table 1. Summary of Coach Educator and Coach Perceptions: Key Themes ... continued

COACH EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVES		
Processes of Effective Coach Education		
Sub-Theme	Description	Supporting Participant Quotes
Creating a Learner-Centred Environment	Coaches' individual backgrounds, knowledge, and experience are highly valued and used to create peer-to-peer learning.	"We create micro groups of 3-4 coaches, and they provide each other with peer-to-peer evaluation... During the qualification, visiting each other at their clubs, observing each other's sessions and providing feedback, alongside the educator... They learn from each other, and we [educators] learn from them too."
Creating Individualised Objectives	Tailoring coach development to meet individual needs of all learners.	"If I'm [coach educator] allocated 8 coaches to mentor, my priority is to delve a little bit deeper into each individual's needs, gain some understanding of the journey they're on and what they're looking for from enrolling on the qualification. I feel like that allows for a more personalised approach."
Importance of Experiential Learning	Creation of opportunities for coaches to utilise their acquired coaching knowledge to identify context-specific solutions to complex issues they encounter.	"It's important to engage coaches in learning where it's most meaningful, which is on the pitch, in the heat of the moment... Yes, there might be emotions involved, they might feel uncomfortable, initially with being challenged that way, but it's much more meaningful when learning takes place on the grass, practicing scenarios that are relevant to you and your context."
Providing Continuous Feedback and Feedforward	Ongoing dialogue between coach educator and coach to help both parties adjust and enhance the learning process.	"The educator should not say, 'This was bad or not.' They should be asking open-ended questions, 'What were your goals for the session? What went well or needs to be improved?' to encourage self-reflection. Only then can they [educator] provide feedback, based on the coach's responses. This is a true learner-centred approach; giving feedback on what the coach sees."
Engaging in Reflective Practice	Supporting coaches to learn how to purposefully examine their experiences and develop critical thinking skills.	"An effective coach educator should have a lot of insightful questions to ask coaches related to their session goals... The coach should come out of the qualification with the tools to go into their club environment and challenge themselves to constantly reflect, to constantly evaluate, to critically analyse their decision-making in practice. That's the skillset we should be giving coaches."
Evaluation of Coach Educator Effectiveness	Engaging in lifelong learning and development as a coach educator.	"We have an anonymous [coach learner] feedback process – what they liked, what they think could be improved... The Monday after the course, we [coach educators] meet to discuss this feedback and how we can use it to shape and optimise our coach educator CPD... We use the coach feedback to improve our 'menu' of coach educator skills."

Table 1. Summary of Coach Educator and Coach Perceptions: Key Themes ... continued

COACH PERSPECTIVES		
Principles of Effective Coach Education		
Sub-Theme	Description	Supporting Participant Quotes
Successful vs. Effective Coach Education	Successful: Achieving the qualification; Effective: Personal development accomplished on the qualification journey.	“Effective coach education is about meeting the learner where they are... Recognising that each individual is unique, has their own coaching philosophy, and so requires tailored support throughout their developmental journey.”
Ongoing support	Providing guidance throughout the qualification journey.	“Effective coach education is about supporting candidates throughout their qualification journey. Setting them homework tasks or micro group tasks with clear objectives between residential blocks ... Meeting with them [educator] regularly to provide guidance.”
Practical Application and Relevance	Affording coaches opportunities to test their knowledge in contextually relevant practical settings, rather than via generic sessions.	“Educators need to tailor the way they educate coaches around the modern realities of what the game is now. The game isn’t just about going on and delivering multiple sessions on the pitch every week. There’s more to it than that, depending on whether you’re working at first team level with multiple games each week or youth team level with players moving up and down. How do you adapt as a coach? That’s true effectiveness.”
Developing a Rationale for Coaching Practice	Assisting coaches to develop a clear ‘why’, behind their coaching philosophy, driven by their values and background.	Effective coach education asks coaches to think critically and evidence what they value and how that impacts what they do as a coach [rather than conforming to National Association’s DNA]. That means coaches come away from a course going ‘I can think to the highest level of detail now about what I do and why I do it ... You can critique things a lot better because you put yourself in a [coach education] environment where you were given the opportunity to critically analyse your practice.”
Creating Self-Determined Learners	Fostering a curiosity or hunger for lifelong learning among coach learners.	“Effective coach education should trigger that curiosity or hunger for further learning once the course is complete... Coaches should leave each session with a level of inquisitiveness, discussing what they learned and asking the coach educator questions... The qualification is just the tip of the iceberg.”

Table 1. Summary of Coach Educator and Coach Perceptions: Key Themes ... continued

COACH PERSPECTIVES		
Processes of Effective Coach Education		
Sub-Theme	Description	Supporting Participant Quotes
Mentorship and Individual Support	Having a personal mentor to help scaffold coaches' development by acting as a 'critical friend' who challenges a coach's rationale or way of thinking.	"A mentor has to be someone who's good on a 1-1 basis ... They're not just going to sit there and constantly tell you what to do. They're going to try have an open dialogue with you. So, the educator is the one who's leading the sessions and can get across the key points and take-home messages for all coaches. But the mentors must have that knowledge of you as an individual, so you can get what you need out of them."
Peer-to- Peer Learning and Networking	Opportunities to engage in discussions and share best practice with coaches to challenge existing beliefs.	"I think peer learning is hugely important because otherwise you're just sat there listening to coach educators and you're not getting the real life, diverse experiences of the coaches around you. We're all on the same coach education journey and so I learned a lot from the coaches around me."
Learning with a Clear Purpose	Tangible improvements in a coach's ability to deliver effective sessions and support player development.	"I've become more confident as a coach [since completing the A Licence], I understand how to communicate more effectively with my players now and ask things of players that perhaps before I didn't fully understand, gaining their [player] input and feedback on sessions ... that you have to be able to adapt to."
Theoretical Understanding and Critical Thinking	Facilitation of critical discussions regarding coaching principles to foster a deeper theoretical understanding of coaching to foster individual growth.	"It's important that it [effective coach education] gives the candidates the coaching tools and theoretical knowledge, along with an understanding that 'this information is not gospel or final.' But that it's up to us as coaches to use that tool to find new ways to be innovative within our own practice, to be reflective and critically analyse yourself. That for me is what effective kind of coach education should look like."
Reflection and Self-Assessment	Providing coaches opportunities to translate meaningful experiences into learning.	"Doing the Pro Licence has allowed me to become more self-aware of my coaching practice. It's allowed me to reflect a lot more on my sessions and who I am as a coach and manager. So that element of reflection I think has been massive for me."
Openness to Feedback	Effective coach educators are willing to take onboard feedback from learners to improve future practice.	"They're [National Association] quite forward thinking and ambitious in their coach education. They're desperate for feedback after every course, and I do think they genuinely take it on board and try to enhance their offering which isn't always the case ... I've experienced coach education courses where there is a confidence or a belief within an organisation that they know better than the candidates and they're not really aware of what it actually feels like or what the actual experience is as a coach learner."

Rather, effective coach education programme providers recognise coach learners encompass multiple realities based on contextual factors, which requires coach educators to adapt content and support coach learners to develop the tools they need to thrive across a variety of different settings. Participants reported that this also means that coach educators need to help learner coaches translate programme content for meaningful integration into their own coaching contexts.

Participants discussed how effective coach education requires educators to bring the course material to life through a blended approach, placing scenario- or problem-based learning at the centre of the process. Through these approaches, participants indicated that effective coach educators facilitate the cross-pollination of philosophies and ideas of individuals from a variety of different coaching backgrounds, stimulating critical discussions around effective coaching practice and meaningful peer-to-peer learning. Moreover, effective coach educators recognise that they do not possess all the answers regarding coaching practice. Instead, they are honest and either seek to find an appropriate response or they use others, including learner coaches, to establish appropriate understanding. Participants suggested that this can create greater learner coach buy-in and foster more self-determined attitudes towards learning. During on-pitch learning activities, participants acknowledged that much is gained through observations of their practice, which are subsequently reflected on to make sense of their ability to adapt, make decisions, and manage their team effectively to the given scenario. In such situations, effective coach educators do not seek to control and shape learner coaches in the image of their own philosophy, or that of the National Association. Instead, they provide learner coaches with the freedom to experiment and to make mistakes in pursuit of meaningful and purposeful growth in their coaching philosophy and practice.

Finally, participating Coaches indicated that effective coach educators are able to scaffold learner coaches' development by providing them with varying amounts of feedback and instruction depending on the coaches' stage of development. This feedback typically includes discussions designed to help learner coaches develop their self-awareness and decision-making processes in a non-judgemental manner. In so doing, effective coach educators emphasise the importance of coaches developing their psychological skills – communication, building relationships, conflict management – to develop an enhanced

team culture within their own environment as well as helping them to perform and thrive in their own environments (see Table 1 for overview).

MAIN FINDINGS: COLLECTIVE INSIGHTS INTO EFFECTIVE COACH EDUCATION

DEFINING EFFECTIVE COACH EDUCATION (Objective 1). Based on analysis of the entire data set, it is proposed that effective Level 4 and 5 football coach education:

1. Is a personalised, process-oriented approach that facilitates the development of both the professional and personal competencies of coaches (e.g., “There’s got to be a level of bespoke coach education for me to get the most out of the qualification” [C9]; and, “It’s [effective coach education] got to be about holistic coach development ... developing individual’s own needs but holistically so that they’re better prepared for the realities of the game” [CEd5]).

2. Emphasises the cultivation of experiential/craft knowledge, critical reflection, and self-awareness, enabling coaches to apply learning meaningfully within their unique contexts (e.g., “Being effective is about inspiring coaches to develop a greater understanding of themselves and how they perform under pressure in different contexts” [CEd27]; and, “Programmes must develop those reflective skills to avoid coaches becoming stagnant in terms of their development ... to review my actions, how I’m implementing new knowledge, and what that says about me as both a coach and a person” [C8]).

3. Rather than focusing solely on qualification outcomes, requires a flattened hierarchy where educators and learners work collaboratively to facilitate the learner’s growth (e.g., “The process has to be a collaborative one where we [coach educators] work with them [coaches] on a similar level. They invest in their own learning and development rather than expecting us to give them the answers” [CEd10]; and, “What works well is when we’re [coaches] given a level of autonomy to question and check and challenge the educators and shape the content by bringing our own ideas. In that way, we share responsibility for our own development” [C12]).

4. Centres on individual development, fostering environments where coaches feel safe to explore, question, and evolve (e.g., “You’ve [coach educators] got to get that environment right where coaches become enthused by learning and their own progression ... they feel free to question and challenge” [CEd4]; and, “Effective coach educators ... foster that curiosity in coaches by getting the culture right ... where coaches feel empowered to

explore who they are and what they do as coaches and are then given the support to grow and get better” [C11].

5. Includes co-constructed individual development plans, context-relevant learning tasks, strong mentorship, reality-based problem-solving, and the nurturing of lifelong curiosity (e.g., “It’s important to create an individual development plan with each learner to meet their learning requirements ... You may have several coaches struggling from a practical sense, a communication sense, or a leadership sense ... Having a plan helps them engage with the course process” [CEd7]; and, “There has to be a connection between how they [learner] trains and the real-life situations you face in a game. With those ingredients of the game in place, the training environment becomes more complex, so learning in coach ed has to represent that reality” [CEd19]).

6. Aims to create lasting and meaningful behavioural change, bridging the gap between knowing and doing, and ultimately enhancing coaches’ ability to positively impact their players and learning environments (e.g., “[Effective coach education] appropriately prepares coaches for a variety of different roles and the challenges and situations they will face within the game” [C1]; and, “To be effective, coach education courses need to ensure that coaches are better prepared, more knowledgeable, to have a positive impact on their players and the environments they work in” [CEd16]).

Indeed, both Coach Educator and Coach participants outlined a clear distinction between successful coach education and effective coach education. Specifically, participants highlighted how successful coach education is outcome-focused, prioritising “ticking all the boxes and meeting the required criteria to pass the qualification” (CEd18), which often leads to coaches “going back to their clubs and reverting back to their old style” (C10), and “failing to transfer what they have learned into their own environment” (C11), resulting in a paucity of meaningful learning. By contrast, participants detailed how effective coach education focuses on the process of individual development and “forming a greater understanding of the self” (CEd2) by creating an environment where “coaches can express themselves ... they’re not afraid of making mistakes, reflecting, learning, developing and engaging in healthy debates around coaching practice” (CEd6). Consequently, effective coach education focuses on the development of the individual rather than the successful (or unsuccessful) completion of a qualification. Further, participants indicated that

effective coach education seeks to “maximise a coach’s ability to perform ... to educate and mentor coaches to an optimal level to connect with the staff and players around them and have a tangible impact in building their own healthy learning environments” (CEd3) with a view to creating more positive developmental and performance experiences for players.

EFFECTIVE COACH EDUCATION PROCESSES (Objective 1). Participants were largely united in their views about how effective coach education at Levels 4 and 5 is attained. Participants acknowledged that it requires a multifaceted process that is founded on principles of *andragogy*. To bring this to life, participants reported several key factors.

1. Collaborate with coaches to co-construct clear, individualised learning objectives in line with qualification specifications. Coach educators discussed how, at the outset of all qualifications, it was important to engage in intake interviews or assessments with coaches to evaluate, “who the coach is, what they want to learn, and how they learn most effectively” (CEd27). These intake interviews were deemed important by coach educators to “balance content delivery and individuality” (CEd9) rather than “try to fit coaches into boxes” (CEd15). Coaches stated how this individualised approach to coach education was essential as “the coaches on these courses are not robots” (CEd9) and so required coach educators who were willing to take the time to understand each coach’s background to ensure the learning experience was a meaningful one and contextually appropriate to the level of qualification being delivered. Based on these assessments, coach educators discussed how they then collaborated with coaches to co-create individual development plans (IDPs) centred around coaches’ learning needs, with clear learning outcomes focused on key areas for individual development: “From UEFA A level onwards, coaches build their development plan alongside their coach educator. We [educators] ask coaches to set objectives with clear timelines... what are you working on in the first 3 months? What support do you need to achieve those objectives?” Educators discussed how these IDPs allowed coaches to “create their own brand or game model and justify who you are” (CEd26). These individual meetings were not a one-off, with coach educators emphasising the need for each coach to receive individual support from a mentor to monitor their ongoing progress towards their learning objectives: “All coaches on the A and Professional level course get site visits from their coach mentor ... They [coach] have to show that they can achieve their objectives in the day-to-day reality of their working environment” (CEd17). In providing ongoing mentor support, coach educators highlighted

the fundamental need to develop respectful, trusting relationships with their coach learners (e.g., “People don’t learn or take on board new information from those they don’t like or trust” [C7]). As such, coaches repeatedly emphasised the “personal” nature of effective coach education and the importance of having a mentor who they respected to help scaffold their own development. Further, coaches discussed valuing mentors they could trust to, “Go to with an issue and say, ‘listen, I’m struggling with this’ or ‘I don’t quite understand’ and they [educator] will listen, take that on board, and provide some advice” (C12). Therefore, aligned with andragogical learning principles, effective coach educators do not view the educator-coach relationship as hierarchical, but rather work *with* coaches, acting as a critical friend to challenge and support them in their ongoing development.

2. Create a learner-centred environment designed to fully engage and immerse the coach, while giving them agency to direct their learning and development experiences. Participants discussed how effective coach education is delivered through a blend of learner-led methodologies where learner coaches’ knowledge, experience, and contexts are considered, “On the A and Pro Licences there are people with high playing experience, low coaching experience and vice versa. You must take them all seriously and ensure everyone’s opinion is equally valued and heard” (CEd19). Participants also outlined about the importance of learner coaches feeling valued in order to maximise engagement in, and the quality of, the learning experience, “There was a massive wealth of different experiences [in group discussions], but I felt like my opinion was valued and I could actually speak up and engage in the conversation” (C5), and, “I’ve been on coach education courses where only three or four voices are heard and everyone else is silent. The focus is on content delivery and getting everyone through the qualification and that’s not right or effective” (C1).

Learner-led methodologies utilised in coach education included include “a mixture of theoretical, classroom-based sessions, discussions and on-pitch practical demonstrations and activities” (CEd7), which are interactive in nature and encourage coaches to critically discuss and debate their own philosophies and approaches to practice: “The days of standing up and delivering [as a coach educator] are gone. You need to challenge your students, ‘Have you thought about this? Let me hear your thoughts’... It should be interactive, the educator should let their candidates learn from each other too, because they have different experiences at different levels of the game” (CEd18). Aligned with andragogical principles, participants expressed how effective coach educators encourage

coaches to actively engage in and take autonomy over their own learning and development processes, often seeking to instigate peer-to-peer learning and sharing of best practice among fellow candidates, “What I love about [coaching qualifications] is that you think you have an idea of how a certain coaching technique should be done, but then you meet someone from a completely different background and they coach the same technique, but in a totally different way ... You’re constantly learning from different people” (C10). Moreover, participants discussed how coaches are encouraged to maintain contact with their micro groups outside of qualification contacts to support transfer of knowledge and ongoing development, “Each micro-group has their own educator that will help them during the course. After each coaching block, these micro-groups are expected to visit each other, observe and analyse each other’s training sessions and give each other advice based on their observations” (CEd23). As such, effective coach educators engage in transformational leadership, through acknowledging that they are not the experts in the room with all the answers, but rather encouraging coaches to collaborate and challenge each other regarding their own coaching philosophies, leading to development of coaches’ critical thinking skills and innovation of practice both during and after their qualification.

3. Translate theoretical knowledge into reality-based, experientially derived scenarios. Both on and off the pitch can be linked back to each candidate’s own context, to ensure meaningful learning takes place. To achieve this, coach educators emphasised the importance of experiential learning and immersing coaches within situations that reflect the challenges they will face in their respective environments, “On the UEFA A Licence and the Pro, we [coach educators] try to design sessions that replicate as closely as possible complex, high-pressure game scenarios... allowing coaches to enhance their problem-solving, professional judgement and decision-making skills in a controlled environment” (CEd19). Participants reinforced the crucial role reality-based learning played in helping them “learn by doing” and “being viewed as a performer” to enhance their own practice, “The best part of the A Licence was that 70-80% of the course was on the pitch. That’s where you learn from your mistakes and hone your craft” (C10). Further, participants detailed examples of scenario-based exercises, “[Coaches are expected to] pick a game, observe it, and analyse it, before designing a training session based on the problems they have identified from that game” (CEd10). During these exercises, participating Coach Educators outlined how they added complexity to the task to recreate the challenges coaches might

face in their club environments, “In the competition environment, there is an opponent, limited time and space, the pressure of the score and time in the match. We try to manipulate these factors during sessions to enhance coaches’ decision-making and communication with their players” (CEd15). Participants proposed that, through reality-based training approaches, coach educators assisted coach learners in translating their acquired coaching knowledge from the classroom into practical sessions on the pitch.

Some participants acknowledged that some National Associations overly promote unrealistic application of knowledge through reality-based coaching sessions, failing to consider the complexities that are often associated with coaches’ own realities. For example, “When you’re coaching at [National Association] and you’ve the goals setup and all the mannequins, the right number of players, everything’s perfect. [Coach education] would be more beneficial if the educators prepared you for the realities of your own context ... You’re delivering a session and only 17 players show up when you need 22 ... Players are injured, players are playing up or down an age group. How are you going to adapt? I don’t think you can ever have a perfect session and that’s probably something that needs to be considered when you’re being assessed” (C2). For these participants, effective coach education involves tangibly improving learner coaches’ ability to deliver high-quality sessions within the contextual constraints they faced within their clubs, rather than simply learning to adapt to the generic demands of high-level coaching.

4. Provide continuous feedback to coaches throughout the qualification.

Participants recognised the importance of learner coaches being provided with “continuous feedback” on their coaching philosophy, session delivery, and theoretical tasks to help them navigate the inevitable challenges they will encounter on the coach education journey, “You [coach educator] give feedback to the candidates based on the session they’ve delivered and the goals they were trying to achieve. Then you have a discussion around that feedback. Their homework task is to go away and integrate that feedback, then you have a follow-up observation during the site visit to see if they have done that effectively. It’s an ongoing process” (CEd13). Aligned with andragogical principles, participants highlighted how learner coaches need to be afforded autonomy over their own development, with coach educators needing to provide opportunities for discussion and allowing learners to construct their own solutions to role-specific problems, “Feedback is not telling the student what to do actually. It’s asking questions, ‘What was your objective? What do you see, what

went well? What do you think went not so well?” (CEd21). According to participating Coach Educators, such feedback must be delivered in a manner that “focuses on their [coach] development, rather than being purely evaluative or personal” and so relied on “establishing clear, two-way communication between educator and coach” (CEd12).

Participants also outlined the benefits of learner-led feedback as a tool to help them foster a deeper understanding of who they are and how they coach most effectively, leading to personal growth, “Our coach educators were good in the sense that they’d almost guide you towards getting the answer yourself, as opposed to saying, ‘Right, here is the answer. This is what you need to do.’ Instead, they would ask, ‘Have a think about [your session plan] now. If they [opposition] did this now, what would you do?’” (C10). Indeed, participants highlighted the value of learner coaches receiving feedback and feedforward from a variety of sources, including coaching peers to broaden their coaching knowledge and understanding of their practice, “I think the observations and discussions within the micro groups is powerful... It’s important they [coaches] learn from each other to gain a diverse range of ideas and experiences” (CEd24). Thus, coach educators did not view themselves as the “expert” or the coach as the passive recipient of their knowledge but actively worked to create a self-determined learning environment where coaches could take control over their own learning and development. In this way, coach educators outlined how they were trying to assist coaches to “connect the dots between the feedback and feedforward cycle” (CEd19). To elaborate, coach educators outlined how effective coach education involves “helping coaches turn reflections and feedback into action” (CEd28) through utilising feedback to help coaches set clear intentions for their next session and focus on iteratively improving their coaching performance.

Participants discussed the importance of coach educator / mentor availability with regards to accessing feedback and follow-up discussions regarding the integration of feedback into practice, “It’s [effective coach education] knowing that they’re [coach educators] available, even if it’s just a quick chat on [message] ... ‘what do you think if I tried x, y, or z?’ ‘What are your thoughts on ...?’ That sort of feedback and insight” (C2). Therefore, for coach education to be effective, continuous feedback should not only not take place within the controlled coach education environment. Rather, participants suggested that effective coach educators develop a strong mentoring relationship with their assigned candidates outside

of on-site qualification delivery, conducting regular, informal “check-ins” to ensure meaningful coach learning is being translated to their own coaching contexts, leading to long-lasting change and enhancement of coaching practice.

5. Encourage coaches to engage in reflective practice to solidify learning experiences. To be effective, coach educators must create a culture in which coaches are accountable and responsible for their own experiential learning through reflective practice. As one participant outlined, effective coach education is a process during which coach educators collaborate with their coach learners to help them become reflective practitioners, “It [coach education] should be a journey where the coach is supported to figure out who they are; to create and implement an individual development plan within their environment. That journey should be built on self-reflection” (CEd3). According to many participants, self-reflection was not merely a tool that augmented their ability to critically analyse key experiences, but prompted them to consider the reasoning behind their coaching practice, linked to their deeper-rooted coaching values and beliefs, “When you get to A Licence level, meaningful self-reflection is about honestly asking yourself, ‘What do you value? What do you believe in?’ Effective coach educators are those who are able to critique what you are doing currently, rather than just showing you another way” (C1).

Aligned to this viewpoint, participants discussed then importance of coaches recording critically reflective accounts of their coach education journey to, “Create the habit of reflecting on their experiences and turning these experiences into knowledge” (CEd9). It was proposed that this allowed learner coaches to purposively reflect on both critical coaching incidents and everyday experiences, considering the meaning behind these situations in a way that allowed coaches to excavate the learning embedded in their experiences and thus develop the craft knowledge required to actually coach, “The reality [of coaching] is it’s about how much reflection you’ve done on your experiences and the knowledge you have as a result, rather than your length of experience. If someone has reflected on every single one of their experiences, then they’ve built building blocks each year, they have an extraordinary knowledge of the space. Whereas if you’re not reflecting and simply repeating techniques, you’re not turning your experiences into knowledge and you’re not developing as a coach” (CEd18). Further, participants acknowledged the need for learner coaches to gain feedback and feedforward as fuel for their reflective practices, suggesting, “[Feedback] helps candidates be open-minded and honest with themselves

regarding their areas for improvement within their reflections” (CEd16). In turn, it was proposed that informed, critical reflective practice helps learner coaches to foster a “growth mindset ... to maximise opportunities to learn from mistakes and take on board the views of others, which may be different from what I believe ... to become a better coach” (C4). Therefore, effective coach educators are thought to create an environment where coaches were motivated to reflect on and learn from their experiences, as they viewed this process as a fundamental part of their ongoing growth and development as human beings.

6. Evaluate their own coach education effectiveness. Participants detailed how coach educators should also engage in their own evaluative procedures at the end of each qualification delivery block to assess the impact of their practices, “It’s vital that if we’re [coach educators] going to be effective, then we must constantly consider our own practices and look to make improvements where needed. We have to be open-minded and committed to that” (CEd4). At an individual level, effective coach educators were thought to engage in reflective practice to purposefully examine their actions, the meaning behind these actions, and to identify areas of their coach education practice that could be enhanced for future delivery, “We [coach educators] ask candidates to reflect and reflect critically, so we have to buy into that process too. This helps us to make sure we’re current and effective” (CEd11). To assist with these improvements, participants suggested that effective coach educators regularly engage in their own CPD to stay informed about the latest coach education methodologies, research, and practice, and how this knowledge could positively influence their own delivery process, “On the Pro Licence it was clear that they [coach educators] were well versed in modern trends. It was also great that they [National Association] brought in experts in the content areas. It just gave you that sense of quality, which really engaged me” (C12).

At an inter-individual level, it was proposed that to improve their effectiveness, coach educators should regularly meet as a group at the completion of a delivery block to review and update session plans and presentation materials to ensure they are aligned with the latest coaching trends, knowledge and international standards of educational practices, “We [coach education team] at the end of each day to discuss what’s worked, what’s landed, and what’s not really gone too well and then make adjustments for the following day or note it ready to be discussed before the next contact” (CEd2). Finally, participants identified that coach educators should regularly observe their fellow coach educators in

action, both to provide that individual with constructive feedback and to enhance their own coach education practice, “I think we could all [National Associations] be more effective if we worked together a little more ... if we observed others’ practices and processes” (CEd9).

MAKING SENSE OF THE LEVEL 4 AND 5 COACH EDUCATOR ROLE (Objective 2).

While participants from different National Associations attributed different responsibilities to coach educators, collectively, participant responses attested to three main roles: (1) educator and developer; (2) mentor; and (3) assessor (see Table 2). Within certain National Associations, typically those that have smaller coach education resources, these roles were seldom reported as being mutually exclusive, meaning that coach educators often must fulfil the requirements, and adapt to the contextual demands, of each role.

Educator and Developer. The educator role primarily involves designing a coach education curriculum that aligns with the coaching philosophy of the educator’s National Association. Educators deliver this content in a manner that assists coach candidates to achieve their individual learning objectives and to meet each coach’s learning needs, using various delivery methods (e.g., case studies, group work, practical sessions) and technological tools (e.g., video analysis to review coaches’ session delivery). The primary role of the coach educator is to provide coaching knowledge for the coach and to ensure each coaching candidate assimilates this knowledge appropriately to achieve their own learning objectives. Recently, there has been a shift in terminology within certain UEFA National Associations away from the term *educator* to the term *developer*. This change in language reflects a paradigm shift in educational learning principles from a pedagogical approach to an andragogical approach. Within this flattened hierarchy, the coach developer is focused on the holistic development of each coach (i.e., professional and personal competencies), recognising that learning and development does not cease at the end of a coaching qualification, but continues into coaches’ wider lives through their translation of acquired knowledge into their own coaching practice, and engagement in lifelong learning.

Mentor. The mentor role focuses on the personal growth and long-term development of coaches outside of their formal coach education contact. Within this role, mentors engage in regular informal “check-ins” with their coaching mentees, providing personal guidance regarding issues that coaches are facing trying to integrate their developed coaching philosophies within their own contexts.

Table 2. Making Sense of the Level 4 and 5 Coach Educator Role

Role Purpose	Description	Supporting Participant Quotes
Educator	The design and delivery of a coach education curriculum aligned to the National Association's philosophy and UEFA criteria. Provision of coaching knowledge and support for learners to assimilate knowledge into their practice and achieve the learning objectives.	<p>"When coaches come to our [coach education] course, we'll talk about our [National Association's] game model. However, that is the education part. We prioritise encouraging coaches to critically think about and decide what their philosophy is. To decide how they want to play and why they want to play that way" (CEd5).</p> <p>"An effective coach educator should be able to present coaching research in a contemporary manner. They don't have to know everything, but they should be able to gain the respect of the coaches through how they communicate and deliver" (C9).</p>
Developer	Focused on the holistic development of each coach based on individual learning needs. Recognises that learning and development extend beyond the programme and that they must support coaches in their journey.	<p>"They [coach educator] must have learner-centred principles to support candidates' learning ... to bring their own expertise and use this to challenge learners, to facilitate debate so that people are at the centre of the process and feel valued" (C3).</p> <p>"Educators are developers really. They need to be able to put themselves to the side and focus on the learner, their needs, backgrounds, experiences, and help them to understand how course content translates into their own practice" (CEd25).</p>
Mentor	Focused on the personal growth and long-term development of coaches outside of their formal coach education contact. Provision of personal guidance regarding issues that coaches are facing trying to integrate their developed coaching philosophies within their own contexts.	<p>"Coaches are not buckets to be filled, they need to be mentored and nurtured through their learning journey on the [A and Professional Licence]. It's what I expect from the educators, a mentoring relationship that helps move learning beyond the course and into my own environment where they support my sense making and practice" (C10).</p> <p>"I think being able to see them [coaches] in their own setting is a benefit to us as coach educators. We can actually see what they look like in their club environment. It just means that we need to mentor rather than educate; to pull information out of them [coach] rather than give it. It just helps [enhance their practice]" (CEd1).</p>
Assessor	Evaluating the competence of each coach against the required coaching standards as set out by UEFA.	<p>"Previously, somebody else would assess your mentees. Now we integrate the two roles. It allows the assessor and learner to develop a relationship, making the assessment experience more comfortable for both, but also allowing the assessor to challenge the learner in an open and honest manner" (CEd4).</p> <p>"Having the coach educator as your assessor has been beneficial for me because you form a relationship with them across the course, so the assessment process feels more personal" (C6).</p>

Mentoring typically takes the form of learner-centred, scaffolding, where coach mentors engage in “check and challenge” discussions with their mentees to help them reframe their problems or to consider them from a fresh perspective, using questions and prompts. Mentors also offer hands-on practical support through engaging in site visits where they observe their mentees in action and provide constructive feedback on their ongoing coaching practice. Finally, mentors also offer coach metness emotional support to discuss personal concerns, critical incidents, or the meaning of their coaching practice within their wider lives.

Assessor. The assessor role involves evaluating the competence of each coach against the required coaching standards as set out by UEFA. Evaluation is carried about by assessors through on-pitch performance evaluation (i.e., observation, assessment, feedback) and off-pitch assignments (e.g., reflective logs, case studies). These assessments are marked against objective criteria and used to assess whether coaches have met both their individual learning objectives and the required learning objectives of the coaching qualification, as well as their capacity to translate the knowledge they have acquired during their qualification into their own practice. It is also vital that assessors can provide coaches with constructive feedback, which provides an honest appraisal of the coaches’ performance (i.e., whether they have passed or failed the evaluation), as well as specific areas for improvement and actionable strategies.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE COACH EDUCATORS (Objective 3). The characteristics that participants believed were possessed by effective coach educators delivering on Level 4 and 5 programmes are divided into four key themes: (1) personal characteristics; (2) interpersonal characteristics; (3) professional characteristics; and (4) game-based characteristics. These themes are presented in Table 3, which contains: (a) the specific characteristics; (b) a description of the characteristics constructed from the participant’s views; and (c) supporting participant quotes.

Personal Characteristics. Coach educators must possess high levels of *self-awareness*; a deep understanding of the self (e.g., strengths, weaknesses, values, beliefs, preferences, knowledge, skills) and ability to communicate effectively at both an individual and group level. Effective coach educators must also have *confidence* in both their levels of coaching knowledge and their ability to create meaningful learning experiences for candidates on the

qualifications they deliver, which often contain ex-professional players who may question a coach educator's credibility. Therefore, effective coach educators must also demonstrate a high level of *resilience* to deal with potential criticism and challenging of their ideas. Finally, effective coach educators are highly *adaptable*, both in terms of their ability to cover multiple roles, and to adapt their course content to the needs of individual learners on their qualifications.

Interpersonal Characteristics. Aligned with andragogical learning principles, effective coach educators operate a learner-centred approach through *high quality communication* and *actively listening* to each learner coach's story and specific needs, demonstrating *empathy* for the coach's internal frame of reference, and consequently *building strong working relationships* with each coaching candidate. Thus, effective coach educators creating a collaborative working environment and enhancing the learning experience.

Professional Characteristics. From a professional standpoint, effective coach educators must demonstrate an *openness to evaluation*, recognising that their chosen coaching philosophy is not necessarily the 'correct' one and acknowledging that they do not have all the answers. In so doing, they demonstrate their *commitment to lifelong learning* (i.e., no coach or educator is ever the finished article) and *role model* this commitment through not being afraid of making mistakes, engaging in continual professional development and reflective practice.

Game-Based Characteristics. The effective coach educator must possess a wealth of *game knowledge*, both from their years of experience in coaching and delivering coach education, as well as their willingness to *stay up to date* with the latest coaching practice and trends. Further, effective coach educators can *translate potentially complex technical and tactical ideas into relatable content* that is appropriate for the level of coaching qualification on which they are delivering.

Table 3. Characteristics of Effective Coach Educators (Identified by: ■ Both Groups ■ Coach Educator Only ■ Coach Only)

Personal Characteristics		
Sub-Theme	Sub-Theme Description	Participant Quote
Self-Awareness	A deep understanding of the self as a coach educator (e.g., strengths, weaknesses, values, beliefs, knowledge, and skills)	"You've got to be self-aware [as a coach educator] ... To self-reflect, through watching your session delivery back on video. Sometimes, what you think you're doing when you watch it back is you're not quite aware about how you actually acted or what you did. So, if you really want to develop and be the best you can be, I think self-awareness is an important attribute."
Patient	Understanding that learners have different needs and so progress speed will differ from coach to coach.	"The coach educator needs to understand that if I've got a person at point A and I need to get them to point B, how do we do that? For a coach at a [League] club, that progress might look very different to someone who works in a [grassroots] club. So, you [coach educator] need to be patient and recognise there are different learning steps for different coaches."
Resilience	Ability to cope with potential criticism and your ideas being challenged by coaches in the classroom and on the pitch.	"Effective coach educators have that ability to accept that they only know what they know and that's at that point in time and are willing to be challenged on their views or coaching philosophy by coaches, rather than trying to bluff their way through things. I suppose they must be resilient in that sense."
Adaptable	Ability to adjust to and differentiate between the learning needs of different coaches.	"When you [coach educator] deliver on the A Licence or Pro Licence every course will be different. You're going to have a completely different set of responses, engagements, interactions based on the candidates. So, they [coach educators] have to be comfortable acknowledging that the course material and the way they interact and support the candidates will always need to be adapted; it's the flexibility of the learning environment."
Humility	A lack of arrogance and a willingness to learn from coach learners.	"We're [coach educators] not always right. Even though a lot of coach educators are ex-players or coaches and possess a lot of knowledge, they need to be humble enough to be challenged. It doesn't matter whether it's on a football pitch or in the classroom. Be humble and recognise that we're right about everything in life, even when we think we are."
Honesty	Coach educators should be transparent with coaches, both in terms of communication regarding their progress throughout the qualification, and in admitting when they do not have the answers.	"Honesty is a huge characteristic that coach educators need because the last thing you want as a coach is someone saying, 'You're doing brilliant' during the qualification and then when you're assessed at the end suddenly saying, 'By the way, you haven't passed it.' So being honest in how you deliver constructive criticism and advice to coaches on their progress throughout the course."

Table 3. Characteristics of Effective Coach Educators (Identified by: ■ Both Groups ■ Coach Educator Only ■ Coach Only) ... cont

Personal Characteristics		
Sub-Theme	Sub-Theme Description	Participant Quote
Selflessness / Self Assured	Coach educators need to be comfortable playing a more discrete role in supporting the development of coaches and having an indirect impact on their coaching environments.	"The biggest characteristic you need to have as a coach educator is your own security. Your successes are all through the successes of others (i.e., coaches) – the players they develop, the trophies they win - and a lot of people struggle with that because they don't want to detach themselves from the coaching of players. That's the passion that originally got them into coaching."
Passionate	Possessing a strong desire for supporting the holistic development of coaches as both performers and people.	"Are they [coach educators] good people as well? Are they people that genuinely care about the role of education, the role of educating coaches? Is it something they're passionate about? Is it something that they want to get better at? If you have that, then I think naturally, what you tend to have is an effective coach education programme and an effective UEFA A Licence delivery."
Willingness to Learn	Ability to recognise the limits of your knowledge and skill as a coach educator and to engage in continuous professional development.	"You need to be a continuous learner to be an effective coach educator. To recognise that you don't have all the knowledge and skills and to have that conscientiousness to keep working on your own personal development."
Open-Minded	Demonstrating a willingness to be questioned and to take on board different viewpoints, rather than a dogmatic approach to coach education delivery.	"Coach educators need to have an openness to being questioned, to taking other perspectives on board and recognising that while this is my way of coaching or my coaching principles, they are not necessarily the only way or the only correct way."
Emotional Intelligence	The ability to understand and manage one's own emotions and have a positive impact on the emotional management of others.	"I think emotional intelligence is really important [for coach educators]. Knowing when the time is to intervene [during session delivery]? Because sometimes, even though there might be a teachable moment, it might not be the right time because you can recognise that maybe the candidate isn't having the best of times and so is not in the right headspace to take that feedback on board. So, knowing when to talk, when to listen, and how to support each coach, who are all very different characters."

Table 3. Characteristics of Effective Coach Educators (Identified by: ■ Both Groups ■ Coach Educator Only ■ Coach Only) ... cont

Interpersonal Characteristics		
Sub-Theme	Sub-Theme Description	Participant Quote
Effective Communicator	Ability to convey information in a clear, coherent manner to different levels of coach in different settings and different formats.	"Your [coach educator] ability to communicate effectively with a wide variety of different audiences ... If you're in the room and try to address all the coaches in the same way, you're going to fall short. So being able to communicate to and relate to both coaches working in the senior game, coaches working in the female game, coaches working at youth level. You need to relate to all of them through how you communicate."
Active Listening	Listening to understand candidates' needs rather than to responding to coaches' queries without consideration.	"It's very important that coach educators ensure every [coach] voice is heard on the course, that all coaches are encouraged to get involved in group discussions and to get the most meaningful learning out of the qualification. Coach educators in general have a strong ability to talk, but not always to listen."
Engaging	Ability to deliver information in a way that captures and holds coach learner's attention to augment the learning process.	"Coach educators need to be able to take their knowledge and experiences, and deliver them across in a way that's engaging and relevant to their coach learners ... They've got to make it a personal experience."
Empathy	Ability to understand and share the feelings of coach learners of different abilities, to form a working alliance and support them effectively through the qualification journey.	"You [coach educator] must have empathy for where coaches are on their journey. Some coaches come on the qualification because they wanna challenge themselves, then there's others who know they're competent and just want to get through the award. So, it's about having empathy to think, 'How do I build a relationship with this person, so that I can challenge them appropriately?'"
Rapport Building	Creating an environment where coaches feel understood on a personal level and that their opinions are highly valued.	"I felt like I was valued and could actually have an opinion and speak up, rather than on other courses I've been on where you've had three or four people speaking and the rest of the group is completely silent. So, I think the educators did well in gaining that trust with the whole group to actually feel that they could take part and actually have a voice."
Trustworthy	Creating a psychologically safe environment where coach learners are assured that their mistakes and vulnerabilities will be handled with discretion.	"You [coach educator] create a safe environment for them [coaches]. You need to make this clear at the outset of a qualification, 'This is a safe space, and that everything we say in here that will stay between us'. This also allows the coach educator to open themselves up to constructive criticism or feedback."

Table 3. Characteristics of Effective Coach Educators (Identified by: ■ Both Groups ■ Coach Educator Only ■ Coach Only) ... cont

Interpersonal Characteristics		
Sub-Theme	Sub-Theme Description	Participant Quote
Respectful	Treating all candidates equally in terms of time and resources, regardless of their background or experience.	"Be understanding and respectful of all candidates, not just those with her high-profile name or career. You're there to support each individual on their unique coach development journey. If you don't show respect, then you can't expect respect back."
Accessible	Creating a psychologically safe environment, where coaches feel comfortable to ask questions and seek support.	"I think coach educators have to be approachable, they have to be accessible because I [coach] don't want to think, 'I've got to ring him/her again, and I know they're going to be quite annoyed about it because I'm calling again'. If you're paying money for a course and you've been allocated a tutor, they've got to be approachable and be present."
Motivating	Coach educators should be able to inspire coach learners to engage in self-determined learning through delivering a high standard of coach education and support.	"You [coach educator] have to motivate certain coaches in different ways. Recently, I was mentoring two different types of coaches. The support I provided wasn't the same thing for both and it's important to recognise where they need that extra little push to get them to be self-motivated or to start driving their own development."
Facilitator of Learning	Engaging in open, Socratic questioning to facilitate coach learners in creating their own solutions to coaching problems.	"[Effective coach educators] kind of guide you [coach] towards getting the answer yourself as opposed to just saying, 'Here is the answer. This is what you need to do.' Instead, they say, 'Have a think about it now. If they [opposition] did this now, what would you do?' They almost want you to give them the answer back, which I thought was good, rather than just ticking the box and off you go."
Openness / Vulnerability	Coach educators should be open and transparent with coach learners, willing to share their own experiences and mistakes they have made to develop rapport.	"Coach educators need to be able to talk about their own experiences [as a coach]. If they're willing to be open and talk about times when they've messed up or things that didn't work for them, it just connects you to the learners. You gain people's respect, and it helps to develop that rapport between educator and coach."
Fostering Curiosity	Effective coach educators are those who create a desire for ongoing learning in their learners, to ensure their ongoing development post-qualification.	"The best practitioners in any industry, they're obsessed and continually curious about learning, solving problems, finding new information, connecting with other people that are going to help them on their journey. For me, that is the most valuable thing that coach education can do - challenge people to be curious and foster an attitude or hunger for ongoing learning post-qualification."

Table 3. Characteristics of Effective Coach Educators (Identified by: ■ Both Groups ■ Coach Educator Only ■ Coach Only) ... cont

Professional Characteristics		
Sub-Theme	Sub-Theme Description	Participant Quote
Open to Ongoing Learning	Coach educators must be willing to receive feedback from coach learners to improve their own practice in a continuous manner – constantly considering their own effectiveness.	“As a coach educator you are never the finished article. You can always learn something new. So, you need to go onto each course prepared to create an environment where educators and learners share their experiences, both good and bad, and learn from the people around you. That also comes from the candidates’ evaluation of you and your practice.”
Knowledge of Coaching	Coach educators must demonstrate expertise in their theoretical knowledge and practical application of coaching and learning principles.	“I think being knowledgeable [as a coach educator] is important. I'm not saying that we as coach educators have all the answers, but effective coach educators are able to demonstrate their knowledge. Not necessarily of the game all the time, but also of coaching, of learning, of performance. It's the wider knowledge associated with coaching that's as important as other types of knowledge.”
Experienced	Coach educators who can draw upon their own experiences of coaching can bring course material to life and better engage learners.	“At A Licence and Pro Licence level, coach educators do not necessarily need to have a strong playing background but must have a strong coaching background. You need to have walked a mile in a lot of shoes, and you need to have experience in dealing with players, coaches, staff, agents, and even with those working at board level, in order to be effective.”
Moderator	Coach educators must be able to facilitate critical discussions and the cross-pollination of ideas between coach learners, thus creating opportunities for coaches to learn from each other.	“We [coach educators] put coach learners into micro-groups with a flip chart and then provide them with a topic to discuss and feedback to the wider group, such as effective problem solving. An effective coach educator is then able to moderate and develop these discussions. They allow as many voices as possible to be heard and ‘connect the dots’ between the differing observations and opinions of coach learners, summarising these discussions into key takeaway points at the end.”
Willingness to Challenge Learners	Coach educators know the right questions to ask and when to stimulate coach learner thinking and solidify understanding.	“Effective coach educators at A and Pro Licence level need to have the ability to question their coaches effectively. If I spoke to a coach educator that didn't have that ability, they are just going to nod along, and the learning experience would be lost. It's the questions and the challenge that really drive good coach ed practice.”
Organised	Coach educators must have a clear, structured approach in how they deliver coach education and be able to manage resources effectively.	“Effective coach education is about being with the candidates all of the journey. To do that, you have to be organised, set clear objectives with coach learners, communicate clearly with their micro groups, and engage in regular support meetings with their mentees.”

Table 3. Characteristics of Effective Coach Educators (Identified by: ■ Both Groups ■ Coach Educator Only ■ Coach Only) ... cont

Professional Characteristics		
Sub-Theme	Sub-Theme Description	Participant Quote
Knowledge of Andragogy	Coach educators must possess a clear understanding of how adults learn most effectively and be able to adapt to different learning styles and needs.	"You [coach educator] have to understand how people absorb and take on board information, and how they learn most effectively through those andragogical principles of learning. Effective coach education is not about giving coaches lessons or passively providing them with information. It is about ensuring they are actively involved in the learning process."
Reflective Practitioner	Coach educators must be capable of critically reflecting on their own practice, while also facilitating their coach learners to do likewise.	"Reflective practice is hugely important to translate meaningful experiences into knowledge and learning. If a coach educator isn't reflecting on their own delivery, they'll become stagnant."
Game-Based Characteristics		
Game Knowledge: Performance	Coach educators must demonstrate a deep level understanding of football and associated technical, tactical, physical, psychological, and social demands.	"To be effective a coach educator needs to have credibility, somebody the group can respect and receive education from. When I did my A Licence, the coach educators had been coaches in the professional game. So, they have great knowledge of the game. That game knowledge really helps because it's easier to buy-in to what they're [coach educators] are saying; it's more relevant."
Game Knowledge: Context	Coach educators must demonstrate understanding of the micro-political and contested nature of the governance of the game.	"There's more to being a coach or a manager than team or player performance. So, at the Advanced or Professional Licence levels, coach educators have to know some of the wider factors about what it's like operating at more elite levels of the game, like player management, managing the board, managing the fans and things like that."
High Standard of Session Delivery	Coach educators are able to demonstrate what a high level, effective session delivery looks like as a model for others.	"I think when you step out on the grass, it is really important that the coach educators deliver at the start [of the qualification] to 'paint a picture' for the learners of the standards that are expected. So, the coach educator models practice while giving some insights into different options, different approaches ... the learners straight away get a visualisation of what high level session delivery looks like and something to challenge themselves with."
Context-Specific Guidance	Coach educators should be able to assist coach learners to apply learning (theoretical and practical) into their own practice contexts.	"Effective coach education is about delivering the relevant material, but then turning around to each coach learner and saying, 'how are you going to bring what we've learned back round to your own context? Where would that fit in within your context?' At A Licence level, coach educators need to have that flexibility to meet each learner's needs."

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COACH EDUCATION PROVISION (Objective 4).

Participants discussed several barriers that prevent Level 4 and/or 5 coach educators from operating effectively. These included: (1) a lack of resources; (2) philosophical differences; (3) conforming to meet qualification requirements; and (4) evaluating impact.

Lack of Resources. Participants reported that coach educators' abilities to deliver effectively are often inhibited by a lack of access to appropriate resources. For example, coach educators from smaller National Associations detailed how they operate off limited budgets, meaning they can only afford to employ a small number of full-time or part-time staff, "Here in [National Association] we're very limited in resources ... we have the same people, who have to do multiple roles – educator, mentor, assessor" (CEd17). Coach educators with limited resources highlighted how due to delivering across a wider number of courses and adopting a broader range of roles, the meaningful contact time they have with learner coaches is diluted and their time to design and review the quality of their course content reduced, "Conducting multiple roles takes up a lot of time. It leaves me with little opportunity to stop and evaluate what I delivered, how it went, or to engage in reading and CPD opportunities" (CEd25). Coaches who undertook qualifications at smaller National Associations echoed these sentiments, outlining the knock-on effects of having limited time on coach educators' long-term development, "The dual role is a challenge for coach educators in smaller National Associations. Having to do several jobs leaves them limited time to prepare for courses and limited time to stay updated on the latest coaching knowledge, which in turn restricts their delivery and the quality of the qualification" (C11).

Participants highlighted that coach education is also still in its infancy in certain National Associations, meaning coaches are often reluctant to move away from their passion for coaching to become a coach educator, as they are unsure what the role entails, "We need more educators on our courses and mentors out there at clubs, keeping coaches accountable for what they're doing. But a lot of coach educators end up moving back into club jobs, and we [National Association] have to train new staff. We need to create environments where coach educator is seen as a fantastic job and rewarded accordingly" (CEd19). Further, coach educators from smaller National Associations illustrated how they have limited access to facilities such as pitches and elite level players, which further inhibits the quality of the coach education process, "Another issue for us is infrastructure.

Sometimes the coaches have to deliver session on a quarter of a pitch, due to lack of available space. You can understand how hard it is to work tactically when you have only a quarter pitch” (CEd23). Therefore, National Associations must provide both the necessary individual (i.e., andragogical principles) and environmental resources (i.e., infrastructure) to deliver effective coach education and support coaches’ growth and development.

Philosophical Differences. National Associations typically situate their coach education qualifications within their own coaching and game models yet strive to help individual coaches to develop their own coaching philosophies. However, participants reported that striking the balance between being philosophically driven and being open to alternatives based on the learner coach’s beliefs and contextual demands is problematic, “At UEFA A and Pro Level, the coaches have more experience [than those on other qualifications], they have more knowledge and more competence in football, so if they decide they want to play differently [to National Association game model], that’s not a problem. But they must explain why they have decided to do that and how they can get results playing like that” (CEd14). However, participants surmised that the disparity between learner coaches’ philosophies and the Association’s ideology can have a detrimental effect on coach development, with some participants expressing concerns that certain assessors “coerce coaches to behave in line with their [National Association’s] coaching identity” (C1) rather than evaluating their individual competence. Such an approach was suggested to inhibit a learner coach’s autonomy over their own learning and development, instead promoting an environment of “passive, robotic coaches” (C13) who adhere to the immutable dogma’s advocated by the National Association.

While National Associations typically have standardised methods for delivering coach education, including session design, communication, and feedback, participants discussed how in certain instances there was a disparity between an educator’s skillset and the Association’s delivery expectation, “Some of our [National Association] coach educators struggle to understand our game model – how to deliver knowledge and feedback effectively, to provide coaches with the opportunity to reflect on what they’ve learned. We need a higher standard of coach educators to choose from” (CEd28). This misalignment in how coach education should be delivered was reported to often lead to disagreements and a high turnover of staff, thus inhibiting the delivery of effective coach education.

Conforming to Meet Qualification Requirements. Participants were adamant that effective coach educators utilise andragogical approaches to learning, actively collaborating with the coach learner in all aspects of course delivery to meet their individual learning needs. Nevertheless, given the large cohorts that a limited number of coach educators must support and the time-limited context in which coach education takes place, participants discussed how they often come under pressure to prioritise the delivery of pre-determined course content rather than allow coaches to have autonomy over their learning experience (i.e., self-regulated and self-determined learning), “Effective coach education is messy, time consuming and resource heavy. When you're trying to individualise that process, sometimes you're trying to be too many things to too many people. You end up diluting your quality and not focusing on the course objectives” (CEd12). This position was supported by participating Coaches, who acknowledged feeling “limited in expressing my own coaching identity at times, due to the course structure” (C3). In so doing, participants alluded to the idea that coach educators shift towards a pedagogical approach to learning and inhibit the meaning and value of the learning experience for coaches, “You can see that they [coach educators] want to engage the candidates and really drive critical discussions, but time is always an issue because there's too many candidates on the course” (C3). Thus, participants indicated that coach education courses that prioritise the delivery and assessment of content over the experiences of the individual are not conducive to development.

Evaluating Impact. Participants reported that it is extremely challenging to measure the tangible long-term impact of coach education on coaching practice and subsequent player development, “The ultimate situation is where you're able to identify the change that's occurred in the coach and then the impact that's had on their players and whether those things are attributable to the programme” (CEd2). This challenge was reflected in the responses provided by participants, who largely focused on the short-term self-evaluations of coach learners, “It's important we get anonymous feedback from the learners to understand how they perceived the course and what we can improve as a way of evaluating what we do” (CEd26), and frequent reviews of coach education programmes by those involved in their delivery to assess impact, “It's important that the course is evaluated after each delivery block, and that the educators evaluate each other after each module, ‘What went well? What did you do? How about you do this in future?’ It's uncomfortable for coach

educators, but it's very necessary" (CEd14). From a broader perspective, participants discussed the need for National Associations to foster healthier environments in which both coach educators and coaches can reflect on and make sense of the impact of coach education and make alterations to programmes where necessary, "National Associations need to create an effective environment for their coach educators to develop their courses. Certain Associations deliver 60 courses a year. You need to create time in between these courses for educators to work on their own development, to reflect on how they can improve the course, and to rest to avoid burning out, and negatively impacting coach's development" (CEd19). Therefore, participants suggested that coach education impact should not solely be measured by "short-term wins", such as the number of coaches completing qualifications, but via longer-term measures that include creating collaborative, functioning coach education cultures within National Associations, where priority is given to the individual growth and development of all stakeholders.

LIMITATIONS AND ISSUES

The main issue encountered throughout this research project has been in relation to sampling. Specifically, the purposive sample being recruited – elite level coach educators and coaching candidates – operate extremely busy schedules and so it has proven challenging to contact and recruit these individuals to participate in interviews. Nevertheless, the research team managed to exceed expectations regarding sample size and ensure that many of the varied geographical and cultural areas of Europe were covered. The research team would like to thank the supporting National Association (FAW) for helping to provide contacts and make introductions, as well as Jozef Zahorsky, Technical Education Manager at UEFA, who supported us throughout the sampling process.

To demonstrate the reflexivity of the research team, there are several limitations of the research presented in this report worthy of mention. First, given that the research team are native English speakers, all interviews have taken place in English. While most participants demonstrated proficiency to converse in English, this language barrier may have potentially prevented certain individuals from providing a rich, fully detailed account of their perceptions of effective coach education. In some circumstances, we attempted to overcome this issue through the use of translators, but the meaning and inference of certain technical and academic terms are not easily interpreted. Second, our sample

covered 16 UEFA National Associations. While we attempted to sample participants from across the continent, we appreciate that UEFA has 55 member Associations and so there is a possibility that other views, not considered in this study, may add to or contrast with our current findings. To mitigate this, we have sampled Associations with varied geographical and cultural heritage and used a stringent set of criteria to ensure the gathering of a diverse, yet information rich sample. Third, we appreciate that our sample is dominated by participants identifying as male. While we did sample some female Coach Educators and Coaches, we appreciate that a more gender representative sample may have provided different insights. However, the lack of female Coach Educators across UEFA National Associations made the pursuit of a balanced sample difficult. Finally, given the philosophical position and methodological approach taken to conduct this research, we do not feel as though the findings of this research should be generalised across coach education settings. Instead, we encourage UEFA National Associations to consider what these findings might mean for them and their coach education provision at Levels 4 and 5. Thus, we advise those responsible for coach education delivery to engage with our research in a way that is meaningful to them.

IMPACT: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings presented in this report, there are several practical implications for European Football regarding effective coach education at Levels 4 and 5.

1. **UEFA National Associations need to prioritise building coach education programmes around andragogical principles of learning.** This means shifting away from purely pedagogical approaches towards adult-centred learning where coach educators work collaboratively with coaches, recognising their experiences and ensuring their active participation in the learning process. This also means that coach education providers should seek to facilitate reality-based problem-solving on Level 4 and 5 coach education programmes. This involves creating learning tasks that are relevant to the coaches' own unique experiences and contexts, bridging the gap between theory and practice on the football pitch and other related contexts.
2. Linked to andragogical principles, at Levels 4 and 5, **coach educators need to adopt a flattened hierarchy, working collaboratively with learners to co-construct individual development plans, context-relevant learning tasks, and**

provide support through mentoring. This highlights the importance of personalised learning experiences tailored to the individual needs and objectives of each coach. Thus, the focus of **coach education should move beyond solely qualification outcomes to a process-oriented approach** that facilitates the learner's growth, prioritises individual development, and is facilitated by the creation of environments where coaches feel safe to explore, question, and evolve, rather than just focusing on passing the qualification.

3. **Effective coach education (at Advanced and Professional Levels) should focus on the holistic development of coaches, encompassing both their professional and personal competencies.** This implies that programmes should extend beyond knowledge of the game to also focus on the coach as a performer and thus seek to develop coaches' self-awareness, decision-making, self-regulation, ability to adapt to demands, ability to thrive in challenging environments, and emotional management (amongst other factors). Indeed, through their Level 4 and 5 coach education programmes, **UEFA National Associations should emphasise experiential / craft knowledge, critical reflection, and self-awareness.** This suggests the need for learning activities that enable coaches to apply learning meaningfully within their own contexts, encouraging them to reflect on their practice and develop a deeper understanding of themselves as coaches.
4. **Effective Level 4 and 5 coach education aims to create lasting and meaningful behavioural change in coaches,** enhancing their ability to positively impact their players and learning environments, as well as improving the longevity of their coaching careers. This requires coach educators to support the translation of meaningful experiences during the qualification into purposeful action in the coaches' own environments. Thus, **coach educators play crucial roles as educators and developers.** UEFA National Associations must consider the transition of the coach educator role to ensure that they are appropriately equipped philosophically, physically, and cognitively to be able to integrate principles of coach development (e.g., facilitating holistic growth; ongoing mentoring; facilitating the transfer of learning) into formal education programmes.
5. Given the evolving role of the coach educator, **to be effective, Level 4 and 5 coach educators need to possess a range of personal, interpersonal, professional, and**

game-based characteristics. These include (but are not limited to) self-awareness, patience, resilience, adaptability, strong communication skills, active listening, empathy, openness to learning, and a deep understanding of football. **UEFA National Associations should consider these characteristics when selecting and training coach educators.** Indeed, the findings presented in this report can be used to: (a) support the development of more focused coach educator training programmes that support the development of a more expert coach education workforce; (b) profile existing coach educators to identify strengths and areas for development; (c) provide a frame to support coach educators' reflective practices as a way of focusing ongoing learning and development; and (d) match coach educators with learner coaches based on compatibility.

6. **Barriers to effective coach education, such as a lack of resources, philosophical differences between UEFA National Associations and coaches, pressure to conform to qualification requirements, and challenges in evaluating long-term impact, need to be addressed.** Providing adequate resources, fostering open dialogue about coaching philosophies, balancing content delivery with individual learning needs, and developing better methods for evaluating the impact of coach education are all important considerations for UEFA National Associations delivering, or seeking to deliver, Level 4 and 5 qualifications.
7. Finally, and in summary, UEFA National Associations should seek to consider their coach education offering based on the findings of this study, which highlight that effective coach education at Levels 4 and 5 is centred around personalised, immersive, and reflective learning. Coaches begin with tailored development plans created through intake interviews, setting the stage for ongoing mentor support and collaborative, trust-based relationships. The learning environment is learner-led, grounded in real-world coaching scenarios, and encourages peer interaction and continuous reflection. Practical, context-specific experiences help coaches translate theory into action, while regular, constructive feedback promotes growth and self-awareness. Equally, coach educators engage in ongoing self-evaluation and professional development to ensure high-quality, relevant support.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDES

**‘WHAT DOES A WORLD-CLASS COACH EDUCATOR LOOK LIKE?’
EXPLORING EFFECTIVE COACH EDUCATION WITHIN A EUROPEAN
CONTEXT**

INTERVIEW GUIDE: COACH EDUCATORS

Participant Number:

Gender:

Age:

UEFA Association:

Current Role:

Number of Years of Coach Education Experience:

Highest Qualification (Coaching):

Highest Educational Qualification (e.g., School; College; Degree; MSc; PhD):

Interview Date:

Interview Start Time:

Interview End Time:

Introduction

- Welcome the participants and thank them for agreeing to take part
- Remind them of the background and aims of the study... to:
 1. Explore what the process of effective Level 4-5 coach education looks like within the international (European) football environment.
 2. Examine the roles and responsibilities of coach educators delivering Level 4-5 UEFA qualifications from the perspectives of different UEFA National Associations.
 3. Identify the characteristics of effective coach educators delivering Level 4-5 UEFA qualifications from the perspectives of different UEFA National Associations.
 4. Consider the barriers that prevent effective Level 4-5 coach education within the international (European) football environment and how these might be navigated.
- Remind them of their rights
 - Right to withdraw at any time without consequence
 - Right to refuse to answer a particular question
 - Right to confidentiality – data protection
 - Right to anonymity – *make this explicit and make sure that the participants are comfortable with what will happen*
 - Participants will be sent their transcripts for checking (accuracy) and a copy of the final results to confirm that they are happy that their identities have been protected
- Request for honest answers as a result of the above
- Remind the participants that the interview is being audio recorded for transcription purposes
- Interview will be conducted in four main sections: (1) introductory questions around the nature of coach education; (2) consideration of what 'effective' coach education looks like, within the context of adult learning; (3) characteristics of effective coach educators; and (4) factors impacting on coach education effectiveness.

BEFORE WE BEGIN DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

Introductory Questions

So before we get into discussing the concept of effective coach education in international football, I'd like to ask you some questions about your background in coach education ...

1. Can you start by giving me a brief overview of your coach education career so far and how you ended up in your current role?
 - What is your specific role as a coach educator (i.e., mentor, educator, assessor, combination of the above)? What responsibilities does your role involve?
 - What coaching qualifications do you currently support? Have you worked on other levels of qualification previously? If so, how does your role differ across qualifications and with different levels of learners?
2. Why did you want to be a coach educator?
 - What are your motivations for doing this job?
 - What do you enjoy / value most about your current coach education role?
 - What do you get out of the role – personally / professionally?
3. In general, what is the purpose of coach education?
 - What are the main aims of coach education?
 - In your view, should coach education focus on anything else that it currently does not?
 - What would the impact of these changes / developments be on coach learning?
4. Focusing on the UEFA A/Pro Licence specifically, what should a coach who completes the qualification: (a) know; and (b) be able to do?
 - What impact should the UEFA A/Pro Licence have on a coach – their philosophy, behaviours, practice, expertise?

Main Questions

COACH EDUCATION PROCESS

Thank you for your answers in that first section. Hopefully those questions have provided you with an idea of the topics we will be discussing within this interview. I'd now like to discuss more specifically your perceptions surrounding the process of effective coach education.

5. What does the term “effective coach education” mean to you?
 - How might “effective coach education” differ from what might be classified as “successful coach education”?
 - What are the differences between effective and successful?
6. In relation to the UEFA A/Pro Licence specifically, what, in your opinion, does effective coach education look like?
 - How would you know if an A/Pro Licence programme has been “effective”?
 - What differentiates those A Licence programmes that are effective from those

that are ineffective?

- What does an effective process involve at A/Pro Licence level?
 - Processes
 - Learner-led process versus educator-led process?
 - Problem-based / scenario-based learning versus content delivery?
 - Types of learning activity (e.g., lectures/seminars, learner-led tasks, discussions, Q&A)
 - Online, face-to-face, blended approach ... impact of these?
 - In your experiences, how are the learner coaches' current knowledge and experiences used to facilitate an effective education process on the A/Pro Licence?
- 7. Thinking about effective A/Pro Licence processes ... how, if at all, do you differentiate between the needs of adult learners within your coach education groups?
 - What impact does differentiating learner needs have on learner engagement and development?
 - How important is differentiation for improving learning?
 - What are the barriers to differentiation?
- 8. How might the process of effective coach education at A/Pro Licence level differ from that at other levels of coach education (C Certificate; B Licence)?
 - Why are these differences needed?
- 9. Considering the A/Pro Licence specifically, what role does the coach educator play in achieving an effective coach education process?
 - What do coach educators need to know at this level?
 - What do coach educators need to be able to do at this level?
 - What works for you as a coach educator (on the A/Pro Licence)
 - Why do you deliver practice this way?
 - How do you evaluate your practice?
- 10. What do you do as a coach educator, or what should coach educators do, to create the most meaningful change in those on an A/Pro Licence programme?
 - How do you attempt to make sure that the changes (or developments) that occur are lasting (i.e., when the coach completes the A/Pro Licence programme that they don't regress back to their pre-course type?)

CHARACTERISTICS

Great, let's move on. I would now like you to consider the characteristics of the effective coach educator.

APPENDIX

11. If you were to think about the “ideally” effective A/Pro Licence coach educator, what characteristics would they possess – personally, professionally, socially, emotionally, psychologically?

- Why these characteristics? Examples of their importance.
- How, if at all, do these characteristics differ from those you currently possess? Please provide examples.
- How, if at all, do these characteristics differ within different coach education roles (i.e., mentor, educator, assessor)?

CONSTRAINTS

OK, again, thank you for your responses. Lastly, I'd like to ask you about the factors that might impact on a coach educator being effective (considering the definition and characteristics that you've mentioned).

12. What, if any, barriers prevent you from being an effective coach educator (thinking about the A/Pro Licence specifically)?

- How, in your opinion, might we remove these barriers to better support you?
- As a coach educator, do you engage in any continuing professional development (CPD) to stay up to date on current best practice?
- Are there any CPD activities you think coach educators should undertake to stay up to date on current best practice?

Conclusion

13. What advice would you give to coach educators working on UEFA A/Pro Licences in order to help them be most effective in their role?

14. What training do A/Pro Licence coach educators need in order to be effective in their role?

- What would this training give the educator?

Thank you for your answers. Before we finish, is there anything that you'd like to add to any of your answers, or is there anything that you think we've failed to discuss?

Final Section: Trustworthiness

1. **How do you think that the interview went?**
2. **Do you feel as though you were led or influenced in any way whilst answering the questions?**
3. **Were you able to tell your full story?**
4. **Did we/l miss anything out?**

Thanks for your time and help with our study.

**‘WHAT DOES A WORLD-CLASS COACH EDUCATOR LOOK LIKE?’
EXPLORING EFFECTIVE COACH EDUCATION WITHIN A EUROPEAN
CONTEXT**

INTERVIEW GUIDE: COACHES

Participant Number:

Gender:

Age:

Club and Level:

Highest Coaching Qualification:

Number of Years Coaching:

Interview Date:

Interview Start Time:

Interview End Time:

Introduction

- Welcome the participants and thank them for agreeing to take part
- Remind them of the background and aims of the study... to:
 1. Explore what the process of effective Level 4-5 coach education looks like within the international (European) football environment.
 2. Examine the roles and responsibilities of coach educators delivering Level 4-5 UEFA qualifications from the perspectives of different UEFA National Associations.
 3. Identify the characteristics of effective coach educators delivering Level 4-5 UEFA qualifications from the perspectives of different UEFA National Associations.
 4. Consider the barriers that prevent effective Level 4-5 coach education within the international (European) football environment and how these might be navigated.
- Remind them of their rights
 - Right to withdraw at any time without consequence
 - Right to refuse to answer a particular question
 - Right to confidentiality – data protection
 - Right to anonymity – *make this explicit and make sure that the participants are comfortable with what will happen*
 - Participants will be sent their transcripts for checking (accuracy) and a copy of the final results to confirm that they are happy that their identities have been protected
- Request for honest answers as a result of the above
- Remind the participants that the interview is being audio recorded for transcription purposes
- Interview will be conducted in four main sections: (1) introductory questions around the nature of coach education; (2) consideration of what 'effective' coach education looks like, within the context of adult learning; (3) characteristics of effective coach educators; and (4) factors impacting on coach education effectiveness.

BEFORE WE BEGIN DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

Introductory Questions

So before we get into discussing the concept of effective coach education in football, I'd like to ask you some questions about your background in coaching...

1. Can you start by giving me some insights into what you think the purpose of coach education is?
 - What should coach education be about?
 - What place does it have in helping to develop a trained coaching workforce?
2. That's great, can you now give me a brief overview of your experiences of coach education so far?
 - How have the coach education courses you've been on helped you to develop / progress?
 - What have you found really beneficial? (get examples)
 - Content
 - Processes (e.g., practicals, networking, mentoring)
 - Format
3. Thinking about the A/Pro Licence course you completed specifically, why did you enrol on the course?
 - What were your motivations to learn?
 - What were you expecting from the course?
 - Did the course meet those expectations? How? Why not?
4. Thinking about the A/Pro Licence course you completed specifically, do you feel as though it helped you to become a better coach?
 - If so, how / why?
 - If not, why?
 - What would have helped the course to be more beneficial to you personally?
 - Since completing the UEFA A/Pro Licence course, on a scale of 1 – 10, with 10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest, how much of a positive effect would you say it has had on your behaviour as a coach and on your coaching practice?

Main Questions

COACH EDUCATION PROCESS

Thank you for your answers in that first section. Hopefully those questions have provided you with an idea of the topics we will be discussing within this interview. I'd now like to discuss more specifically your perceptions surrounding the process of effective coach education.

15. In general, what does the term "effective coach education" mean to you?
 - How might this differ from what the National Association delivering the course might think?
 - What, in your opinion, does effective coach education look like?
 - What does this process involve?

APPENDIX

- What does effective coach education include? (content, processes, format)
- Distinguish between Effective and Successful coach education
 - Success = achieving the qualification

16. Thinking about the A/Pro Licence specifically, what does an effective A/Pro Licence programme look like?

- On your A/Pro Licence did you feel compelled to do things within your coaching practice in a certain way which differ from what you would normally do in order to pass the course?
 - How did this influence your opinion of the course?
 - How did this influence your learning and development?
 - To what extent did you feel as though you could be yourself on the A/Pro Licence?
- Did you feel valued on the A/Pro Licence (were you able to use your own knowledge, experiences, and ideas throughout the course)?
 - How did this influence your learning / experience of the course?

17. Considering the concept of effective coach education, what do the coach educators need to do in order to make the process an effective one?

- What is their role / what should their role be?
- Does this, or should this differ between levels of coaching qualification?
 - How? In what ways?
 - What's the role of an A/Pro Licence coach educator?
- Based on your experiences of the A/Pro Licence, what would you like more of from the coach educators you worked with?
- Based on your experiences of the A/Pro Licence, what would you like less of from the coach educators you worked with?

18. Again, thinking about your experiences on the A/Pro Licence, what was your relationship like with the coach educators?

- How important is it that coach educators build relationships with the candidates on the course?
 - What should a coach educator – coach candidate relationship look like?
 - What impact does this relationship have on coach learning?

19. What role does the candidate themselves play in making coach education effective or not?

- What do candidates need to do to help facilitate effective coach education?
 - What facilities / resources / opportunities do they need to make these things happen?

CHARACTERISTICS

Great, let's move on. I would now like you to consider the characteristics of the effective coach educator.

APPENDIX

20. If you were to think about the “ideally” effective coach educator, what characteristics would they possess – personally, professionally, socially, emotionally, psychologically?

- Why these characteristics? Examples of their importance.
- To what extent/level do you feel the educators on your UEFA A/Pro Licence course portray any of these characteristics?
- How, if at all, do these characteristics differ within different coach education roles (i.e., mentor, educator, assessor)?

CONSTRAINTS

OK, again, thank you for your responses. Lastly, I'd like to ask you about the factors that might impact on a coach educator being effective (considering the definition and characteristics that you've mentioned).

21. What, if any, barriers do you think prevents individuals from being an effective coach educator?

22. If you could recommend two things to coach educators working on A/Pro Licence programmes that would make them more effective in supporting your learning and development, what would they be?

- How would these things impact candidates' experiences of coach education?

Conclusion

Thank you for your answers. Before we finish, is there anything that you'd like to add to any of your answers, or is there anything that you think we've failed to discuss?

Final Section: Trustworthiness

5. **How do you think that the interview went?**
6. **Do you feel as though you were led or influenced in any way whilst answering the questions?**
7. **Were you able to tell your full story?**
8. **Did we/I miss anything out?**

Thanks for your time and help with our study.

