Decision making in coaching: derivations for conceptual foundations in sport coaching and in coach education

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Vielen Dank für die Einladung, vielen Dank, dass ich bei diesem wichtigen Anlass zu Ihnen sprechen darf!

Coaches' decision making

- Focus on the conceptual questions underpinning research and education
- Not an aggregation of research papers
- Perhaps more questions than answers
- I invite you to disagree!

Approach

Decision making is the most important part of sport coaching (Abraham)

→

This position is criticised - <u>but</u>

→

It is not just the most important part of 'coaching intervention'

→

- it <u>is</u> coaching intervention

→

… and should be the essential element of coaching education

My position

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Micro-management of the flow of intervention

My position

- The nature of coaching
  - Coaching expertise
- What we make decisions about
- How we conceptualise decision making
- Appropriate research paradigms
- Developing decision making

Conceptual issues

How do we conceptualise coaching? Some issues:-

1. Sport coaching is a family term, coaching is **domain specific**
2. Complex, dynamic, conflicting goals, serial, no correct answer, limited information available, contested
3. Expert coaches have a rich repertoire of **instructional scripts.** The key elements of the intervention are available as **mental notes.**
4. Complex coaching judgements are made more or less instantaneously, they are made tacitly, and they are made by different coaches according to their own distinctively **personal 'images'** of coaching.
5. "Sport coaching is too complex and decisions so subtle that it cannot be understood in terms of generalisations from research; it must be appreciated and understood at the **level of the particular**." Coaching is situationally specific.

The nature of coaching

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Implications for theory building

How do coaches cope with this demanding role –
Efficient and effective decision making

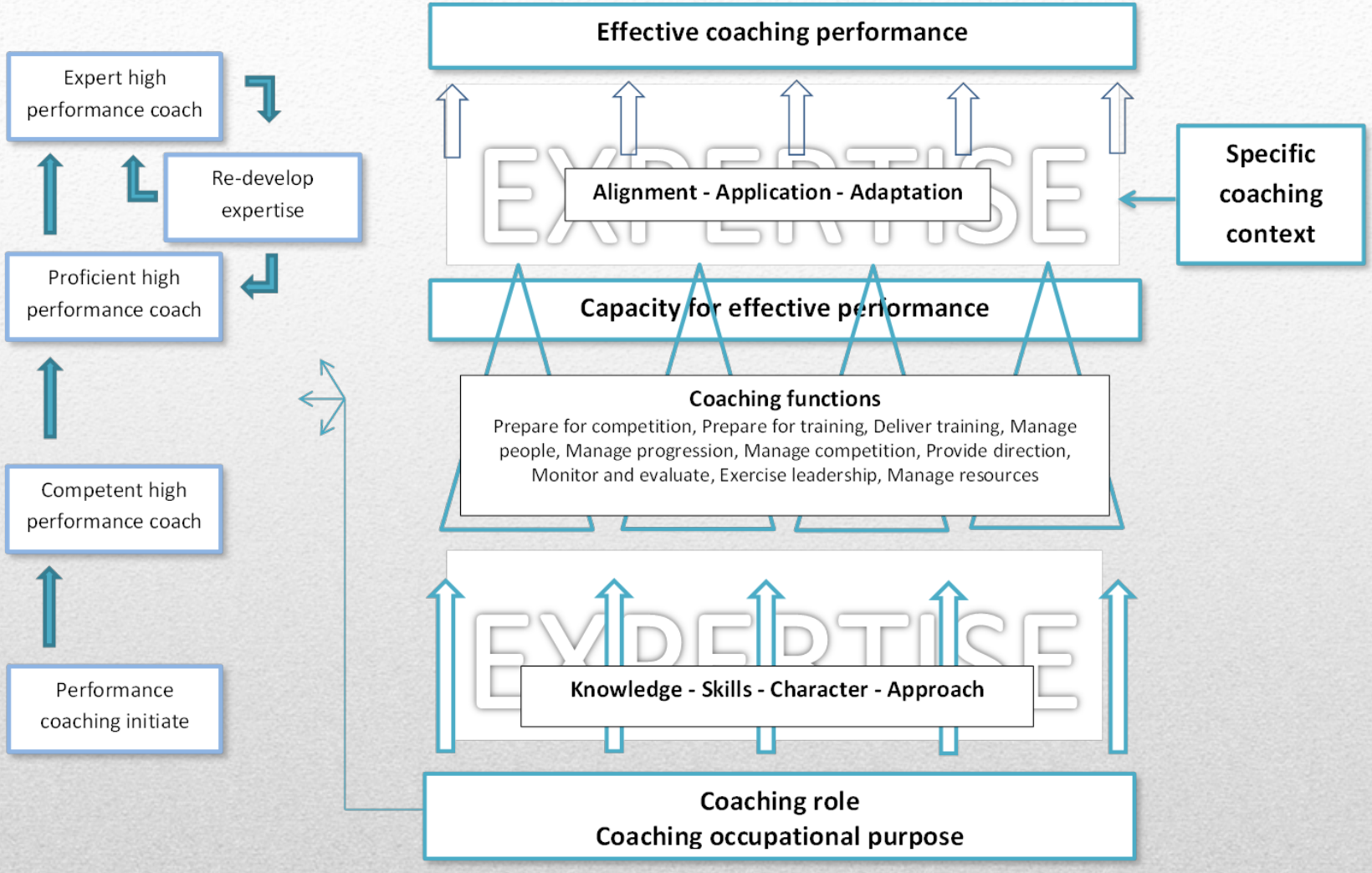
The nature of coaching

(Coaching) expertise is so subtle, so complex, so individual and so context-related that it can only adequately be understood in relation to particular practice, not in general. The core of expert practice is the need to make subtle judgements. (after Hagger & McIntyre, 2006)

Sports (a): Subtlety is the manipulation of training loadings

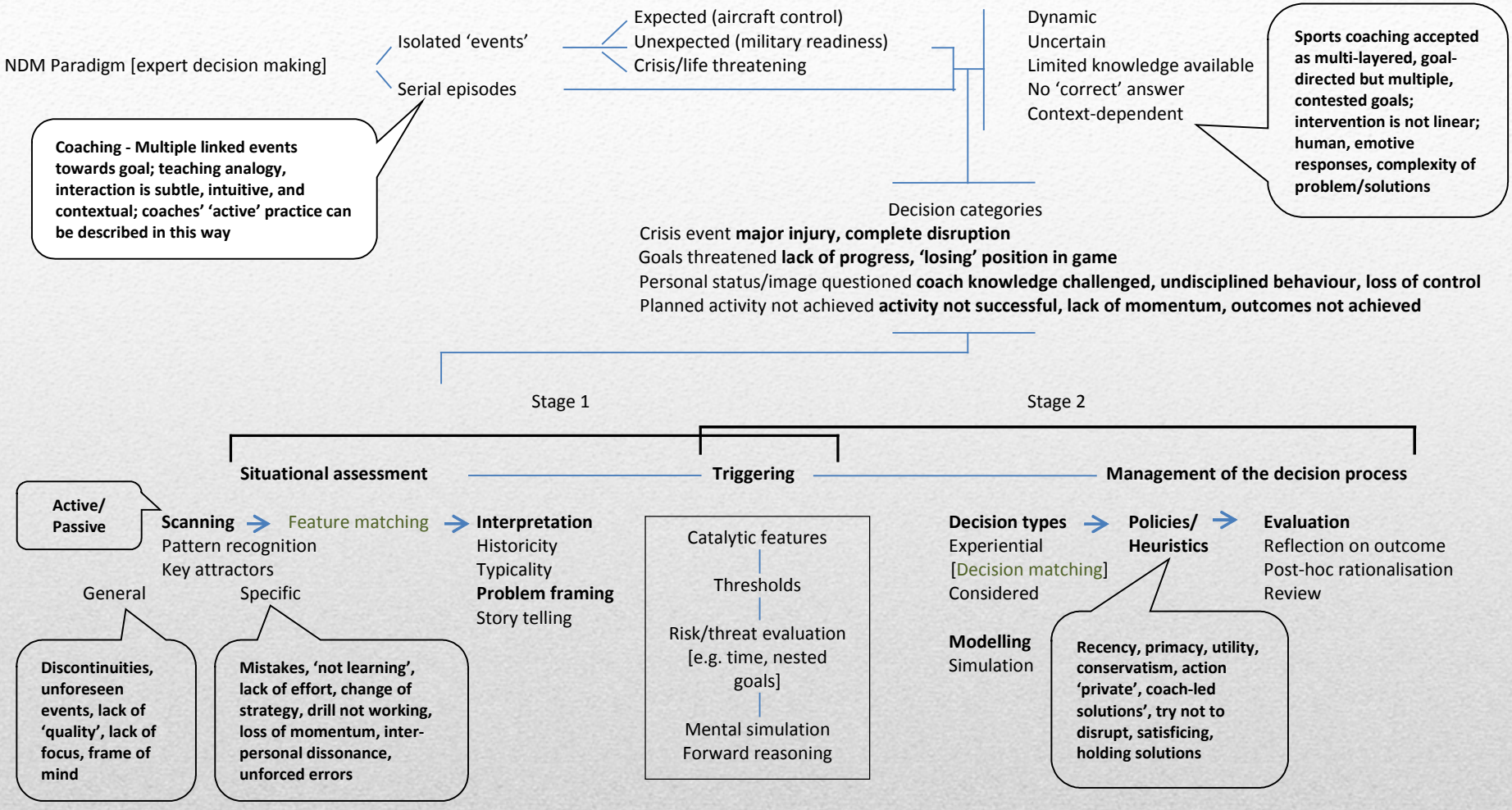
Sports (b): Subtlety is in the management of the intervention (particularly progression and feedback)

The nature of coaching



Coaching expertise

Conceptual framework of coaches' decision making behaviour



Decision making in the coaching intervention

Rational choice

Range of options; assess how each meets the objective; takes time; needs information

Intuitive approach

Rely on gut feeling; be open to preferences; Intuitive surgeons? Intuitive accountants? Intuition isn't enough; relies on knowledge and experience

Experiential approach

Relies on memory and recognition to make sense of what is happening; think of single option

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NDM paradigm – but coaching is:

- Serial
- 'Course of action'
- Aggregative

Slower deliberative decision making

– Planning, regulating programmes, selection

Semi-deliberative decision making

– Drills/scrimmage control, inter-personal interaction

Speedy non-deliberative decision making

– Drills/scrimmage control, match coaching, crisis management

Decision making

- Dealing with tacit knowledge and expertise (verbalise – yes, but limitations)
- Contextual (how to capture and replicate)
- ‘Instance’ versus ‘course of action’
- Reductionalist paradigms lose context
- Controllable situation attract researcher – match coaching
- Difficulty of operationalising cognitive organisation

Research issues

"(Coaching) expertise must be understood as it is found, embedded in the practice of individual (coaches)"

- *In situ*, naturalistic
- Matching coaching
- Reductionist paradigms are inappropriate
- Issue is operationalising cognitive behaviour

However, in exploring the subtlety of decision making, and the 'what works, when, and why' we may be able to find some regularities that will help coach education

Research paradigms

Thierry Debanne

Positives:

- Attempt to incorporate theoretical stance [proactive control modes/reactive control modes]
- Operationalisation [process tracing; stimulated recall; correlated running score with 9 interpretations of coaches' communications]

Issues:

- Difficulty of identifying subsymbolic (routine) and symbolic (attending to data) activity
- 1-way communication; defensive situations only

Result:

- Balance of rigour versus subtlety of decision making

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Research exemplar

(Shadrick & Lussier, 2009)

Approach

1. Break the role into (problematic) functions
2. Construct model themes
3. Series of highly complex and unpredictable (tactical) situations or vignettes (typical and challenging)
4. Develop ‘thought habits with complex structures’
   a. Attend to ‘triggers’
   b. Balance general and specific behaviour

Training (adaptive) decision making

Training programme

Repetition

Focused feedback

Immediacy of performance

Stop and start

Emphasis on difficult aspects

Focus on areas of weakness

Conscious focus

Work versus play

Active coaching

→

Adherence to themes

Reduce time

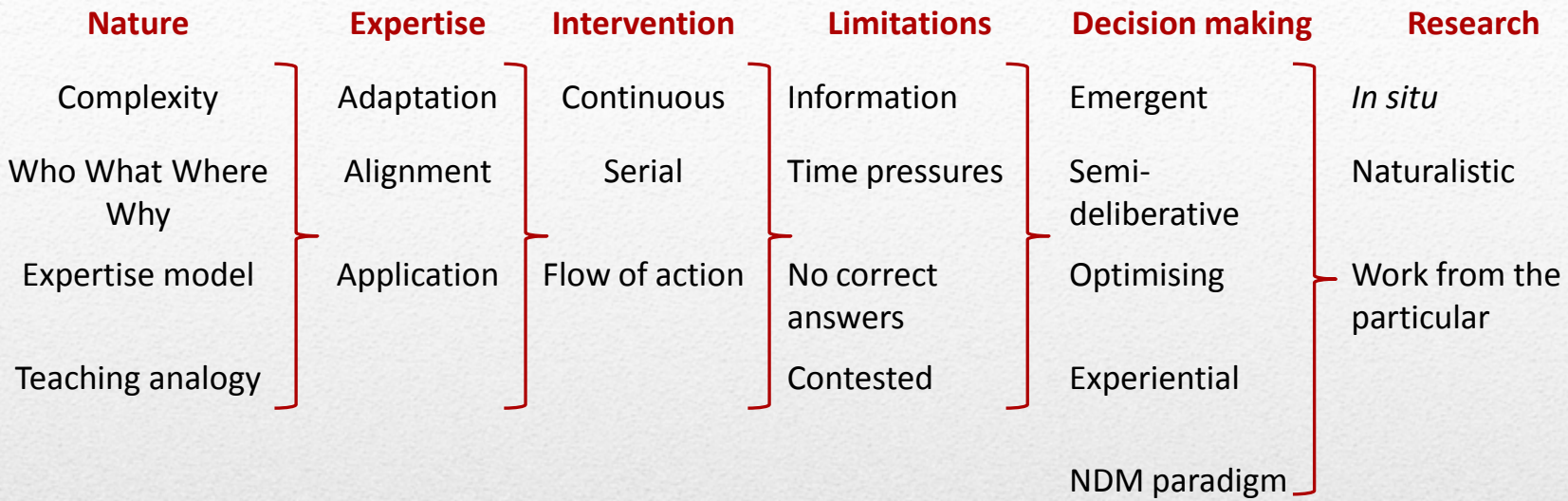
Implications discussed

Decisions defended

What questions would be useful prompts to a coach during a game?

Why did the other coach do that?
Why are they playing like that?
Are my players performing as expected?
Is this (action) helping to achieve my goal?
What is the balance of strengths and weaknesses on each side?
Are we still on course for achieving our goal/target
What is the current balance of momentum?
What is the big strategic picture?

Training prompts



- Emphasise the micro-management of the flow of intervention
- Establish a concepts-orientated vocabulary
- Acknowledge sport-specific differences

Summary

Thank you for listening