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# A hermeneutic-phenomenological analysis of teachers' learning experiences through the observation of a professional basketball coach's coaching session

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**ABSTRACT:** In this study, the learning experiences of four elementary school teachers who were basketball coaches were explored. Specifically, the learning experiences gained through observing professional basketball coaches' sessions were examined by employing van Manen's hermeneutic-phenomenological approach, which focuses on the thematic analysis of lived experiences. Previous coaching studies that have focused on the professional development of coaches have revealed that observing elite coaching sessions could be a major source of practical coaching knowledge because coaches could learn from experienced coaches. Quantitative studies of this learning effect have revealed that observers learn new coaching methods from a general perspective. However, this study revealed that teachers give specific meaning and value to observed phenomena from the perspective of personal interest based on their coaching or teaching beliefs. This learning was interpreted from a multifaceted perspective, which was evident from their coaching interests and questions. This study disclosed that teachers reflect on their coaching philosophy, methods and attitude. Furthermore, even if teachers generally tend to highlight their coaching methods, this has a qualitatively complex nature because the meaning and value given to coaching methods varied in each teacher's reflection. The perspective of problem-solving highlighted how to answer their personal questions based on practical coaching problems by observing a coaching session. Discovering the methodological differences between the observation session and the daily coaching session were highlighted.

**Keywords:** basketball clinic; empirical research; lived experience; professional development

## Introduction

In this study, light was shed on a basketball clinic conducted by a professional basketball team at an elementary school in Japan. Teachers' observed experiences as lived experiences from a professional development (PD)<sup>1</sup> perspective were explored. Although previous studies that have employed questionnaires have clarified the learning effects of teachers learning new methods in physical education (PE), in this study, thematic aspects of the phenomenon were explored by conducting group interviews by employing van Manen's hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (van Manen, 2011).

Professional basketball teams often host basketball clinics for school students as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) as an ethical and charitable activity for the local community in a team's home town (Carroll, 1999; Japan Professional Basketball League, n.d.a). For instance, Japan Professional Basketball League (B.LEAGUE) (n.d.b) noted that this activity had been conducted in Japan approximately 365 times by 2016. Further, this activity is also used as a strategical promotion tool (Walker & Kent, 2009) to enhance loyalty in the local community (Scheinbaum & Lacey, 2015) and expand the audience in home

games (Yoshida et al., 2015). Therefore, enhancing loyalty is mainly highlighted in the research field (e.g. Ailawadi et al., 2014; Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013; Walker & Kent, 2012; Walsh & Bartkowski, 2013).

Recently, this activity is furthermore discussed from a new angle of learning opportunity for teachers who are coaches in after-school sport activity.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (n.d.) in Japan recently noted that teachers learned new coaching methods by observing elite athletes and coaches conduct PE lessons. This is because observing elite or experienced coaching sessions could be a major source of practical coaching knowledge (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001) as the coaches could learn from the actions of the experienced coaches (Cushion et al., 2003; Cushion et al., 2010). To deeply interpret this phenomenon, McMaster et al. (2012) researched coaches' learning experience through observation from a qualitative standpoint. Teacher's learning through observation, however, may be regarded as fragmented because what teachers experienced in their observation has yet to be clarified in previous research. Therefore, this study highlights teachers' specifically learning experience through observation in this activity and answers this question.

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To interpret learning with observation, it is imperative to explore teachers' learning experiences (Cropley et al., 2011; Cushion et al., 2010; Hanton et al., 2007; Newman, 1999) from their lived experiences within human consciousness and seeking meaning from the experiences of being in the world. Teachers give specific meaning and value to observed phenomena from the perspective of their coaching experience and teaching beliefs (Akita, 2009; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Shimada, 2009). In other words, while the observer's awareness and insights, based on his/her coaching or teaching experience, can significantly add to their coaching or teaching knowledge (Asakura, 2016; Cropley & Hanton, 2011; Nespor, 1987; Schön, 2001). This implies that it is not sufficient to merely conduct research on learning effects from a general and objective perspective because meaning and value in learning with observation is created from each person's individual problem consciousness, which is in turn based on previous coaching, teaching experience and social backgrounds. Therefore, to acquire a clear understanding of the experience, it is valuable to examine the phenomenon through other lenses, which highlight an empirical perspective (Garner, 2016). However, it is difficult to clarify empirical data of learning experiences and reflections (Gilbert & Trudel, 2006).

Recently, the embodiment of lived experience became a key concept in cognitive sciences, sociology and philosophy, as well as sport science and PE (Standal & Engelsrud, 2013). Accordingly, van Manen's hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (2011), which focuses on the thematic analysis of lived experience, is a method that embodies the thematic aspects of lived experience in various social contexts as being-in-the-world. Consequently, this approach was employed to examine teachers' lived experiences of observing an elite coach's session.

## Method

### Research approach and standpoint

In psychology, a wide range of teachers' experiences has generally been studied by means of questionnaires. Experiments that have employed inductive analysis have allowed concepts and categories to be generalised. Ones that use the hypothetical-deductive approach validate general rules, which are generalised from inductive analysis, through specific individual or group tests. However, several research problems are associated with interpreting teachers' learning experiences. In the former, questions are formulated by researchers who we may assume to have an understanding of practical teaching issues and teachers' perspectives thereof. Thus, it is limited in researchers' hypotheses. Even if it focuses on a specific population in the latter, questions are highlighted to validate general rules. Consequently, it may be difficult to explore potential coaching issues from teachers' personal experiences. Teachers may talk about practical teaching issues, which researchers have never previously considered when uncovering rules. Furthermore, teachers' answers are generalised in an analytic model in natural science. By employing such an approach, researchers can focus on eventual objectivity but cannot arrive at an in-depth experience of what and why teachers learn in their lived experiences (Keen, 1989). However, hermeneutic phenomenology allows one to shed light on teachers' lived experiences of being-in-the-world and affords an understanding of how they interpret elite coaching sessions from which personal meaning and value from each teacher's

viewpoint in social and historical contexts can be gleaned from a thematic perspective (van Manen, 2011). Furthermore, the approach does not focus on generalisations, but on interpreting an experienced-personal-world yet to be generalised. The purpose of this approach is to highlight and interpret distinctive experiences (*ibid.*) and further clarify experimental possibility and diversity (*ibid.*). Accordingly, this study explored teachers' learning experiences as lived experience.

### Coaching clinic and participants

I was the project manager in the sports promotion section of a professional basketball team and the U/15 team's physical coach. I arranged a one-day basketball clinic at an elementary school on 12 July 2017 at which a professional coach, who had been a professional assistant coach for over a year, coached at an extracurricular basketball club for two hours, during which time the normal teachers assisted and observed. Specifically, the lived experiences of four teachers as they observed the professional coach were explored in this study. The four teachers consisted of one experienced teacher and three young teachers (Young teachers A, B and C) who attended the elementary school basketball clinic. Each teacher regularly deals with a team of 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> graders (9 to 12 years old) five times a week.

The experienced teacher (ET), who requested the clinic, had 20 years of basketball experience as a player and coach. The professional coach and I preliminarily interviewed him about the desire to hold the clinic. The teacher particularly noted that this clinic would benefit both the students and the teachers as he believed that the observation opportunity could give them new coaching ideas for more effective coaching. He also referred to the benefit of young teachers' PD because of the few training opportunities available for them.

Three of the teachers had no basketball playing experience and had worked for less than eight years. Young teacher A (YTA) had belonged to a drama club and did not do any sport; thus, coaching basketball was a new challenge. Young teacher B (YTB) did swimming as a student. She hoped the clinic would expand her coaching abilities. Young teacher C (YTC) played baseball when he was a student. Although this teacher likes sports in general, he struggles when coaching basketball as the coaching perspective is different from that in baseball.

### Phenomenological theory as base concept

In phenomenological research, which deals with personal experience, it is inevitable that the researcher's subjectivity influences the interpretation of the descriptions, allowing the meanings inherent in the subjective beliefs of the others to be assessed (Langridge, 2016; Matsuyama, 2018). In this case, "others" refers to the teachers. Hermeneutic phenomenology, including van Manen's approach, can be used to deal with a researcher's previous understanding, knowledge and assumptions, allowing the descriptions to be explored from social and individual perspectives (Halling et al., 2006). For this reason, there is an interpretative assumption related to a person's experience of a phenomenon and the historical and cultural contexts associated with the phenomenon (Gadamer, 1996). Therefore, interpretation is an action that has an effect on the researcher's previous understanding of the life-world of teachers' lived experiences and allows us to amalgamate researchers and teachers' life-world. This action is referred to as a *fusion of horizons* (Gadamer, 1996). Therefore, based on

these horizons, researchers can explore the first-person inner meanings and values of experiential phenomenon (Risser, 1996) and can derive descriptions at the hermeneutic horizon to verify and interpret the life experiences (Wierinski, 2009).

Furthermore, analysing descriptions is conducted from two perspectives: phenomenological understanding and interpretation (Gadamer, 1986; van Manen, 2011). While the former is employed to understand surface-level meaning and value against texts, the latter is used to arrive at in-depth interpretations of the meaning and value of the lived experience. This process is a dialectical search for meaning, a circular process in which new meanings are always found out of contradictions to the interpreters' expectations. This process has been referred to as the hermeneutic circle (Heidegger, 1962). The dialectical nature and process of the hermeneutic circulation process is central to the study of the meaning and value of phenomena (Polkinghorne, 1983). In these processes, researchers must also explore the social meanings inherent in the intersubjective relationships that exist between the researcher and the research subjects (Gadamer, 1996). Researchers, then, must empathically deal with the description of the phenomenon and then switch between their own subjectivity and the subject's descriptions (ibid.). Interview texts and teachers' observation experiences from my perspective based on previous research related to physical education and basketball coaching were interpreted in this study.

### **Theoretical backgrounds to elucidate teachers' experiences**

Even if philosophical and phenomenological underpinning is the base concept, it does not become the methodological underpinning in research focusing on lived experience (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008). It means both are distinguished into different research theories (Kerry & Armour, 2000). For instance, although the former is possible to interpret human consciousness and thinking in the life world, this consciousness and thinking are not lived experience itself (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012). Therefore, those who focus on lived experience need to consider phenomenological and methodological underpinnings.

In this case, consideration of the interview method in phenomenology is one of the popular ways, and each method highlights a standpoint with questions and interpretation to explore lived experience (Standal & Engelsrud, 2013). Likewise, van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenology indicated the importance of constructed questions which allow the interviewee to respond to specific experiences and standpoints for interpretation. In addition, it needs to take into account the temporal range of experience which research focuses on (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012).

In the case of the research highlighting teachers' observing experience in an elite coaching session, it is captured from the perspective of "short-term experience/open question" (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012, p. 5). To explore teachers' short-term experience, it is an effective way to ask how the experience was for each teacher. However, it is difficult to interpret experiential meaning and value from the limited short-term experience because those meanings and values are found with past experience. Therefore, open questions including past experience are to allow teachers to give a broader sense of their own experience with reference to his or her life (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012). For instance, a teacher

might find that the elite coach gave friendly advice to students as observing experience, because the teacher, in contrast, always gives strict advice. In van Manen's (1990) approach to a deeper understanding of lived experience, it is pointed out that the interpretation of experience is more important than the description of the former experience itself.

### **Interview process**

Data collection in hermeneutic phenomenology lies in the collection of interview texts of lived experience. Group interviews that explored cooperative coaching relations among teachers were conducted, and which I facilitated. This approach is often applied in phenomenological nursing science. Originally, nursing science focused on disease and nursing experiences in which objective knowledge was explored by employing a nomothetic approach. However, practical nurses treat each patient in accordance with their first-person experiences as well as the individual patient's background (Takazaki, 1993). Further care for the patient is conducted through multilateral care in a cooperative relation among nurses (Nishimura, 2016). Therefore, to explore nursing experiences, phenomenological nursing science focuses on the cooperative relation as an incident-and-care experience among nurses by employing group interviews.

The teachers in this school regularly and cooperatively coached their groups and often coached a number of groups cooperatively. Thus, their coaching experience was formed from the relationship with their students as well as from the cooperative relationship among the four teachers. Thus, their coaching experience is based on these relationships.

As a concrete group interview process, a thirty-minute group interview was held with the four teachers in the school library, two hours after the basketball clinic. To share teachers' experiences from a phenomenological perspective, I facilitated the discussion and preliminarily explained that "[t]his interview asks about your personal experience regarding education and observing the lesson. Please answer this based on your practical experience." I further stated that "[i]f the conversation moves into general topics, which are not part of your experience, please rather concentrate on your personal experience" (van Manen, 2011).

In accordance with van Manen's (2011) suggestions, teachers were encouraged to elaborate on what they found or learned from their observational experiences. Questions that sought to answer the fundamental questions of what the experience itself was actually like and the meaning and value of the experience were posed during the interviews. Furthermore, we endeavoured to be as specific as possible and encouraged participants to recall specific situations and stories that affected them. Furthermore, the structure of the interview was as follows: an initial semi-structured question, followed by several unstructured questions and general conversation. The first question was "What are your thoughts after observing the elite coaching?". This is related to each teacher's experience. Additional questions were asked if needed to interpret the specific experience as "funnelled" (Langridge, 2016, p. 93). After which the research moved into a discussion with the teachers. This study collected their dialogue in the discussion with voice recording using Apple iPhone 6S. Further, this study transcribed the interviews from the recorded data and analysed it thematically.

Following van Manen's detailing reading process (van Manen, 2011), thematic analysis comprised reading through the text,

line by line, to examine how the descriptions and episodes of the teacher's experiences could be thematically stated in response to the questions in this study. Thereafter, I wrote drafts of each theme. Accordingly, the descriptions of the experiences were rewritten to examine the meaning and value given to the thematic experiences and the internal meaning of the experiences. The theme indicated is the explanation of some aspect of lived experience. It does not aim to formulate or conceptualise itself, but to adequately describe the structure of experience lived from that theme (van Manen, 2011). Moreover, the goal was not to identify objective factors in the experience, but to clarify the meaning and value of the experience by considering the background of the experience that led to the individual's learning. On the contrary, multifaceted meanings are assigned to the experienced phenomenon from the subject's perspective in a complex way. In response to this complexity, research needs to distinguish between essential themes and themes that complement the essence of the phenomenon (Lydall et al., 2005). Through the above process, three themes were identified: the multifaceted nature in learning experience, the qualitative complex nature and reflective learning through group interviews.

### **Ethical considerations**

I worked for a professional basketball team in a general company, not a university research institution. The team does not have an ethics committee like a research institution does. Therefore, I explained the ethical considerations to the teachers carefully. Only those who gave their consent before the interviews were included in the study. Furthermore, prior to the interviews, the purpose of the study and the ethical considerations were explained to the principal of the elementary school before obtaining permission to conduct the study. My explanation included the methods, duration and handling of personal information as a concept of informed consent. I further explained that the questionnaire could be answered voluntarily and that personal details would be omitted from the results, including text descriptions, when published.

### **Interview**

In this study, to analyse the data using van Manen's detailed reading process, the verbatim data are first disclosed in the sections that follow. In the discussion, the texts that influenced the interpretation of the three themes derived from this study are indicated by using the response numbers of the texts. Accordingly, the horizon of the teachers' lived experience in the form of verbatim data is disclosed. The aim of the thematic analysis was to illustrate the process by which my horizon merged with the teacher's horizon.

### **Verbatim data**

The interviews focused on what teachers learned during the observation. The first interview question was "What are your thoughts about observing the elite coach's coaching?"<sup>3</sup> ET explained: Answer 1: "*In this clinic, he [the elite coach] coached with a focus on fundamentals and individual skills. This reaffirmed that my coaching philosophy direction was correct because I also focus on the importance of fundamentals and individual skills.*"

Further, when ET was asked why his philosophy focused on fundamentals and individual skills, he said:

*Answer 2: I have seen several teachers that coach using numbered plays and set plays; however, if an opposing team breaks this pattern, the team becomes confused. Of course, such a team is powerful, but this does not mean that they can develop further. If I observe their play two or three times and understand the strategy, I can easily give advice to break this strategy in the game. Therefore, rather than focusing on numbered plays and set plays, I focus on fundamentals such as dribbling. I think that fundamental and individual skills should be the primary focus for coaching elementary school students rather than numbered plays or set play.*

When ET was asked about fundamental skills coaching in daily coaching, he related:

*Answer 3: My students tend to look at the ball while dribbling. Even if I ask them not to, they still look at the ball. This is my coaching problem. Today I observed that he controlled the students' viewpoints by altering the environmental practice setting. I discovered it is important to set the proper environmental setting when coaching rather than saying, "don't look at the ball while dribbling." Now, I'm interested in the environmental setting and applications for the game. For instance, if he dealt only with sixth graders, I think that he would set a higher environmental setting to connect the fundamental skills to the practical game skills. If it is possible to have extra opportunities, I would like to observe his coaching more.*

When asked if he was interested in practice to connect fundamental skills to practical skills, he explained:

*Answer 4: Yes, this is the most difficult process in my coaching. I always teach fundamentals and individual skill utilities through particular game situations using coordination training. However, it is difficult to connect fundamentals and individual skills to the practical skills needed during a game. Therefore, I pay attention to this process and the environmental practice setting. I have always improved my coaching by implementing knowledge from coaching books into my practical coaching. However, I brushed up on my coaching ideas through the live coaching observation.*

YTC related his experiences as follows:

*Answer 5: I also think it is important to develop practical situations. Our students do not have good judgment about game situations as they are still elementary school children. One idea I learned is that one-on-one training requires judgment of skills in relation to the practical situation. As I have only just thought about it, I could do this in a practical game. While it may look like a superficial fundamental practice, it includes judgment and play to adapt to the various game situations.*

ET thus sympathised with YTC's experience:

*Answer 6: I also feel our students lack judgment skills. Students who have participated in extra training or with*

other mini-basketball clubs are able to make judgments in various situations. However, students who have only participated in our club have no idea about judgment. If we harshly question them by asking, "Why did you pass in that situation?", they do not know. However, when we slow down and consider their viewpoint, we could surmise that they might be thinking; "Because I can do it." Another situation could be, "Why did you take that shot now?" with the answer "Because the hoop is in my sight." Even if we tell them "It is an erroneous judgment in this situation," they still may not be able to reach the correct judgment. In this case, we need to consider our students. If a student has no ideal judgments about a situation, he or she cannot reflect on the judgment from the ideal point of view. We struggle with this coaching problem. If possible, we hope to ask you to regularly hold such clinics, as we can learn coaching ideas and enhance our students' motivation.

Furthermore, when asked about another of his learning viewpoints, YTC said:

*Answer 7: My discovery was that he [the elite coach] did not focus on precise motions but on challenges. I always focus on precise motions such as dribbling, passing and shooting. However, I found that even if students are not given tips for motion, they can improve their motion through the challenges presented in this session.*

Likewise, YTA related the following when asked for her opinion:

*Answer 8: I always coach my students strictly as a team. I often impose tough coaching on my students in the basketball club when they do not meet my expectations. However, he was friendly in his coaching, which was really impressive. I learned about the importance of coaching attitude. Further, the coach focused on fundamentals and individual skills. We also focus on this in our daily coaching. I learned a lot through this opportunity and hope to integrate it into my coaching.*

Subsequently, when YTA was asked what tangible things she had learned, she was unable to give an in-depth explanation. However, when asked for her opinion, teacher B shared:

*Answer 9: I do not have basketball experience as a player. In fact, I have no sporting experience. When a teacher has sporting experience, I think that she [Teacher B] can integrate this experience into their basketball coaching. However, I cannot. Similarly, I was not able to deeply interpret the elite coach's perspective from the coaching session observation. However, I did learn an idea about setting the practice environment from a similar viewpoint as my students. In addition, the coach used a ladder in this session. I intend to use this technique in my coaching.*

In addition, YTA, YTB and YTC were asked what they would like to learn if given another opportunity. Teachers A and B related they did not know and Teacher C added:

*Answer 10: "Hmm. I don't really know what I would like to know. Of course, if I have an opportunity like this clinic, I think I would always make discoveries from observations but I have no idea."*

### **Elite coach's perspective for the session and teachers' PD**

At a later date, I asked the elite coach about his coaching in this clinic to have an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences and to discuss their professional development (PD). He explained his experience and thoughts thus:

*Answer 11: I always coach top Japanese players and observe match games in the B. LEAGUE. Of course, top Japanese players possess good skills and physical talent. But I often wonder why they make an error of judgment in practical game situations. For instance, when a forward with a ball in the other team overtakes a defender from the other team, they judge intuitively whether to stop this defender or another defender. Many players remain ambivalent about their judgment.*

He further explained the PD problem related to Answer 11.

*Answer 12: However, in Japan, mini-basketball teams and coaches still cannot deal with this training. Currently, if students stumble across a good coach in junior high school or high school, training has begun. I believe it is important for future players to coach fundamentals by examining a situation and judgment from an elementary student level.*

## **Discussion**

First, to disclose the horizons that I acquired through the detailed reading process, my understanding of the verbatim data is subsequently illustrated. Furthermore, as noted above, analysis has two forms of understanding and interpretation: the understanding of superficial experience and the interpretation of deeper meaning or the value bearing on the experience. The understanding of the latter is described from three themes in their experience. On the other hand, the understanding of meaning and value in experience is described from the researcher's horizon.

### **Themes in learning experience**

From the verbatim transcripts, this research focused on three themes related to their learning experience. Specifically, the three themes are: "reaffirmation of a coaching philosophy", "discovering new training methods" and "the coach's attitude during coaching".

Firstly, in Answer 1, ET explained his learning by examining two topics: "reaffirming a coaching philosophy" and "discovering new training methods". He reaffirmed his coaching philosophy by highlighting fundamental skills coaching. In Answer 2, he noted that he questioned game strategy coaching at an elementary school level from a developmental perspective. His questions and elite coach session were reflected in the observation. Similarly, he explained that he learned a new training method, which controls the students' perspectives during dribbling. He explained that his students tended to look at the ball while

dribbling even if he asked them not to. He added that he found this problematic. This was reflected in the observation. Further, in a similar way, YTC's reflection was also highlighted in a training method, which ensured that acquired fundamental skills were transferred to practical skills in game situations (Answer 6).

YTA and YTB also noted that they had learned new training methods and coaching attitudes. However, their reflections appeared to be superficial. YTA said, "...he was friendly in his coaching, which was really impressive. I learned about the importance of coaching attitude". He thus explained his reasons, "I always coach my students strictly as a team". However, when asked why strict coaching is problematic and for the merits associated with friendly coaching, he was unable to explain this. YTA also sympathised with ET and YTC's opinion to discover new training methods. She said, "I learned a lot through this opportunity and hope to integrate it into my coaching". She added, "we also focus on this in our daily coaching". However, YTA could not explain the reason underlying her reflections from her practical coaching experience and problems. YTB's explanation of his reflection was also superficial.

Therefore, teachers reflected on their observation through their interests including their coaching philosophy, methods, and attitude.

### **Meaning and value in three themes**

Second, based on the three themes as lived experience, my interpretation of the deeper meaning and value of this lived experience from my horizon are discussed.

ET reflected his experience from the perspective of a personal coaching philosophy and practical problems (Answers 1 and 2). He further explained meaning and value in the learning from this perspective. In particular, he highlighted how to solve his personal questions about coaching philosophy and practical coaching problems with newly acquired coaching knowledge. Similarly, YTC imparted an in-depth insight into the relevance of his learned knowledge and his practical coaching problems (Answers 6 and 7). In the answers, he also explained the meaning and value of solving personal problems. Therefore, their learning knowledge as coaching methods was qualitatively prominent from the perspective of problem-solving.

YTA and YTB also reflected on coaching methods from the relative perspective of personal coaching experience. However, their explanations remained in methodological differences, which were prevalent in the observation session and their daily coaching sessions. In their reflections, they explained the differences between what they discovered in the observation session and daily coaching session.<sup>4</sup> However, they could not understand what helped their coaching. Even if their viewpoint of learning and reflection was revealed in their coaching experience, it was not prominent in their coaching problems.<sup>5</sup>

### **Discussion of ET's and YTC's experience with existing coaching methods**

ET's and YTC's reflections about the relevance of their practical coaching problems and problem-solving were explored. The kind of knowledge learned as methodology in their experience was discussed.

The teachers stated that their coaching problems were related to transferring acquired fundamental skills to skills that required judgment in practical game situations (Answers 3 to 6). ET also explained his problem of coaching players' judging

abilities from the perspective of giving commands (Answer 6). They highlighted a demonstrated training method by employing the discovery learning approach (Bruner, 1960; 1966), with one-on-one training required in skills judgment related to practical situations in coaching sessions.

The command approach is direct coaching; that is, categorically explaining the correct skill or strategy in a certain training situation (Mosston & Ashworth, 1994). Coaches generally demonstrate the expected performance and important points (Nichols, 1994); therefore, while this approach is useful when explaining a particular skill and strategy to an individual or the team, it does not give the players the room to use their own judgment or to make their own decisions in a game situation. Therefore, this approach benefits skilled players who have already gained decision-making skills. In Answer 6, the teachers indicated that the command approach does not work well in their coaching of young elementary school players as the students would not learn how to make decisions based on the situation.

On the other hand, the elite coach demonstrated one-on-one judgment training with a practical situation. Discovery learning is focused on player self-discovery, when to implement a certain play, and the connections between individual strategy decisions and team strategy decisions in practical game situations. Player self-discovery learning is generally based on a "working hypothesis" of a certain situation and then making modifications based on feedback from the coach (Vereijken & Whiting, 1990). In basketball coaching, the discovery learning approach can be either guided discovery or problem-solving. In the guided approach, coaches provide implicit knowledge of a skill or strategy for practical gameplay but do not provide a comprehensive answer, which encourages the players to determine the answer through discovery at training and from the coach's feedback. When the player finds themselves in either of these situations, they then need to apply this knowledge and adjust when necessary. Coaches can give players a range of skills or strategy options as implicit knowledge and can highlight the most effective approach based on player discovery during training. In one-on-one training, implicit knowledge was required if the defence closed in on the forwards at the three-point line. The forwards needed to move toward the goals. If not, they would have to shoot from the three-point line. Through observation, the teachers realised the value of using guided discovery to link the skills acquired in training to the players' decisions in the game by comparing the insight of their coaching with the command approach and discovery learning approach.

Further, ET noted, "we need to consider our students. If a student has no ideal judgments about a situation, he or she cannot reflect on the judgment from the ideal point of view" in Answer 6. Therefore, they learned specific knowledge through the discovery learning approach throughout the session to solve their coaching problems with the command approach.

### **Learning phenomenon through group discussion**

The results of this study suggest that a combination of clinics and group discussions is one of the effective learning methods for professional development because the group interview enhanced teachers' learning more than a clinic only. This combination offers one a reflective learning opportunity of their lived experience. Reflective learning has previously been interpreted from four processes: concrete experience by

observing coaching sessions; reflective observations to verbalise concrete experience from each teacher's perspective; abstract conceptualisation to summarise meaning and value through the experience; and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). The group discussion was captured through the processes of reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation because each teacher reflected and discussed their learning experience and shared coaching experience on cooperative coaching relations resonantly. Accordingly, they further interactively rediscovered new insights through group discussions through their reflections of others' perspectives and opinions (Langridge, 2016). ET and YTC highlighted the meaning and value of problem-solving during the coaching session they observed. YTA and YTB understood the viewpoint of the relations. However, it was not a real experience of the phenomenon but reflected meaning and value from the present (van Manen, 2011). Therefore, their learning is interpreted from a reflective learning perspective.

Furthermore, to enhance teachers' learning, it is imperative for facilitators such as myself and the ET to take proper phenomenological and idiographic care of each teacher's individual experience (Moon, 2004; Rogers, 2001). Accordingly, the facilitator needs to ask them about their experience in an open dialogue. To enhance their mutual understanding of experience, the facilitator's questions and focus on individual experience are of vital importance (Fleurance & Cotteaux, 1999, cited in Wright et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2004). Accordingly, what a teacher learned, and why, were examined from each teacher's perspective.

Based on the above discussion, this study suggests that a combination of clinics and group discussions that focus on cooperative coaching relations will help young teachers to understand the meaning and value of observed phenomena from their daily coaching experiences.

## Conclusion

The quantitative studies mentioned in the introduction have revealed learning effects by observing elite coaches' sessions to learn new coaching methods. However, this study noted that such an understanding is superficial. To understand this learning fully, it is imperative to explore an individual's first learning experience as lived experience in depth. To interpret this experience, the learning experiences of teachers who coach basketball in an elementary school were examined by observing an elite basketball coaching session. Van Manen's hermeneutic-phenomenological approach, which focuses on thematic analysis of lived experience, was employed.

### ***Understanding of learning phenomenon***

The findings revealed that the themes of teachers' lived experiences are not simple phenomena which may be generalised by the learning coaching method. In the group interview, they reflected on their learning experiences from a personal interest perspective and based on their daily coaching experiences. The topics they reflected on could be summarised as coaching philosophy, methods and attitude. Thus, learning is not only confined to coaching methods.

The research further explored the meaning and value of the learning by reflecting on the contexts in which themes were learned as experiences for each teacher. As a result, two perspectives were identified in this research. The first was the

perspective of problem-solving. In this viewpoint, the learners highlighted how to solve their personal questions based on their practical coaching problems in the coaching session they observed. The second was the perspective of discovering methodological differences. In this viewpoint, the learner discovered the differences by observing the session and their daily coaching sessions. This could not be discerned from their coaching problems. Thus, the learners were unable to apply learned methods to their coaching.

### ***Learned coaching methodology for problem-solving***

From the perspective of problem-solving, ET and YTC related deep insight into the relevance between their learned coaching methodology and their practical coaching problems. They highlighted skill coaching with judgment in practical game situations by employing a command coaching style and coordination training. They explained that these approaches do not assist in transferring acquired fundamental skills to skills that require judgment in practical game situations.

Their reflection that was focused on guided discovery coaching was further explained as a contrast to the problem because it gives players the opportunity to use their own judgment or to make their own decisions in game situations. This study suggested that this kind of knowledge may be beneficial for teachers who struggle with the same coaching problems.

### ***Reflective learning through group interviews***

From a professional development perspective and theme 3, this study indicates that combining a clinic and group discussion enhances teachers' learning more than a clinic only because it offers a learning opportunity reflective of their lived experiences. Further discussion with teachers in cooperative coaching relations enhances their reflective learning because they can highlight specific coaching problems and problem consciousness in daily cooperative coaching contexts. Based on the above contexts, teachers will not only interactively share their coaching problems and knowledge, but also reflect on observed phenomena from other viewpoints. Furthermore, besides enhancing teachers' learning effectively, the facilitator's questions and focus on individual experience are imperative. It is hoped that this study will contribute to young teachers' professional development.

## Endnotes

1. Generally, professional development opportunities are divided into formal education at training institutions or universities that provide curricula designed to acquire basic coaching knowledge, and informal education with field experience through trial-and-error coaching after graduation from those institutions. The former offers educational theory-based classroom lectures and practical exercises. The latter offers knowledge to solve practical issues through training opportunities. Since formal education focuses on categorised knowledge, it is difficult to solve practical problems using this knowledge alone (Knight, 2002; Mallett et al., 2009). Werthner and Trudel (2009) investigated this types of effort and defined three type of learning situations: (1) mediated learning characterised by instructors presenting learning material with directed learning; (2) unmediated learning characterised by initiatives and responsibly choosing what to learn without an instructor; and (3) internal learning where the learner is not exposed to new things, but rather reinterprets "existing ideas in his/her cognitive structure".

2. In Japan, extracurricular activities are usually held after school. These activities can be divided into two categories: cultural activities and sports activities, and both are organised by teachers. In the latter case, the teacher is in charge of coaching (Kubo, 1992). However, according to a survey of 202 teachers conducted by Teraoka and Matsumoto (2015), about 70% of the teachers had no specific training in coaching, and about 50% of the teachers felt nervous about coaching.
3. The original explanation, questions and answers of the survey are written in Japanese. They have been translated by the author into English.
4. Several previous studies have clarified other learning approaches, including guided discovery, problem-solving, practice, reciprocal, self-check and individual programme approaches. This study covers three approaches related to the teachers' observation experiences: command, guided discovery and problem-solving.
5. Dewey (1975) divided reflective learning characteristics into two types: reflective, which is a deep reflection based on individual coaching interest and improvisational reflection for no special reason.

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