



## Introduction

A large amount of research on elite coaches has focused on:

- *coach communication* (Bloom, Schinke, & Salmela, 1997),
- *coach-athlete feedback* (Amorose & Weiss, 1998),
- *coaching leadership styles* (Bennett & Maneval, 1998).

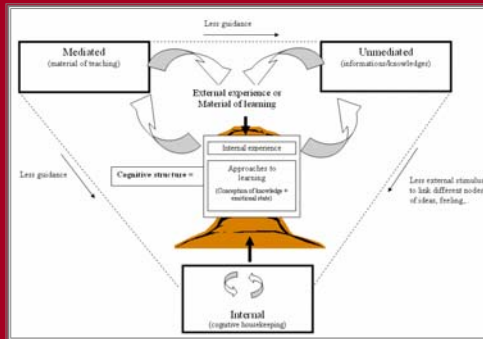
Irwin, Hanton & Kerwin (2004) have identified **different learning contexts**

- e.g., experience as an athlete/assistant coach, courses, mentoring, etc.

Therefore, most of the past research on elite coaches has focused on **WHAT they do and/or WHERE they have learned to do it.**

## New Perspective

A new theoretical perspective for understanding how coaches learn to coach using Moon's *generic view of learning* (Werthner & Trudel, 2006).



Based on this model, two coaches in the same learning situation might have different opinions about how useful the situation was to their learning.

Therefore this model is unique because it provides a way to view coach development from **the coach's perspective** and helps us understand why the path to becoming a coach is often **idiosyncratic**.

## Purpose of the Study

Discuss the different learning situations utilized by elite Canadian coaches and how that understanding will help create more effective learning situations in coaching education.

## Methodology

Interviews with 15 national level coaches from different sports

### Criteria

- they have been a coach at the national or international level for over 10 years,
- they have been an Olympic coach,
- at the time of the interview, were coaching athlete(s) with at least one top-ten result in the world within the last two years.



## Results

- All of the coaches learned using the three learning situations from model.
- The emphasis on each of the three learning situations varied considerably from one coach to another.

e.g., The importance of learning **from / with** athletes in different ways.



"I meet every athlete and we talk and sometimes they have a different opinion than I have, (...) so then I change a bit the ways I first analyze the season, then its easier to pin-point the issue, and to have a better analysis of the whole thing."

"(...) and the kids challenge me every night and have no idea that they do. I probably have learned the most from the kids (athletes), I would say."

"(...) in terms of how I learned to be a good coach is by listening to athletes. And it is not like evaluations forms and feedback forms. It is more dialogue and reading them and listening to their comments and getting to know them."

"I mean I have a DVD library of every possible athlete that we might run into. I have spent a lot of time watching the athletes (...) and then having your athlete prepared for them psychologically and technically."

"I was in the stands with the video camera (...) the coaches were like 'what, are you spying?' (...) I was thinking to myself, I'm just trying to learn."

"I'm always trying to figure out how to help the athlete get better, (...) why are they doing this, how can we change it, what can I say differently - I can spend the night thinking about how I need to change something."

"(...) each athlete is different, so I have to change as a coach. So many coaches stick to one program because it worked with one athlete, and they can't see that it is not working with the next athlete."

## Conclusion

This shows how one coach to another will learn differently from/with athletes. Therefore, the coaching development programs should not be structured as "one format fits all".