

# Improving a young female high school basketball coach's communication through a clinical supervision process

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## 1- Introduction

- The present study focuses on a coach's communication towards her players during selected practices in order to develop their basketball skills.
- Communication is defined in this study as « *A continuous bidirectional and dynamic share of thoughts, opinions and significant information between coach and athletes, oriented towards specific ends, using words, writings or other signs* » (Fucini & Tropmann, 1981; Myers & Myers, 1990; Target & Cathelineau, 1990).

## 2- Literature review and problem

- Based on systematic observation, (a) instructions, (b) feedback, (c) hustles/encouragements and (d) questions are among the most frequently communication coaching behaviors (Bloom, Crumpton & Anderson, 1999; Douge & Hastie, 1993; Lacy & Darst, 1985; Lacy & Goldston, 1989; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976).
- Coaching education through behavioral recommendations have a limited contribution : (a) goals / targets are difficult to reach and/or to meet consistently, (b) the achievement of one goal may be done at the expense of other behaviors (Abraham & Collins, 1998), (c) objectives of the coaching sessions used are not conducive to attain the target (Krause, Eklund & McDermott, 1991).
- The literature states that « *No stereotypical coaching personality or set of behaviors leads to success in coaching* (Cratty, 1983, p.299). » Thus, the coach must develop reflective skills :
  - « *Expertise in coaching is not a function of increasing or decreasing certain behaviors. Rather, it is a knowledge of making correct decisions within the constraints of the session. Thus coaching is not a behavior to be copied but a cognitive skill to be taught* (Abraham & Collins, 1998, p.68) ».

## 5- Method

### 5.1- Participant and context

Table 1  
Description of the coach's profile

Coach's profile	
Age	27 years old
Experience	5 years (all in high school)
Level	High School - Atom : 11 and 12 years old boys
Education	B.A. (Kinesiology) M.A. (Kinesiology) Ph.D Candidate (Education) N.C.C.P. Level I certified + Level II theory * She knows the system used to analyze communication and she is a teaching assistant in a course on communication.
Self description regarding communication	« <i>I am a positive coach... I try to make them think a lot... I want to make them more self-reliable... I don't talk a lot, some players might like it, others, not... I think I provide the players with a lot of corrective feedback...</i> »
Coaching goals	« <i>I want my players to be technically sound and to understand the game, to be able to adjust to any game situation</i> »
Supervision goals	« <i>I want to improve my coaching skills when I run drills, particularly feedback... Also, review skills... I don't know if I do it right... I do it during games, but during practice?</i> »

## 6- Results

Table 2  
Amount of time devoted to different communication stages (Desbiens et al., 2005)

Behaviors	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Total	Proportion
Preparation : Greetings	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:12	00:00:12	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:24	0,06 %
Preparation : Attention seeking	00:05:06	00:02:54	00:02:46	00:04:07	00:07:07	00:03:09	00:01:58	00:03:26	00:30:33	4,30 %
Preparation : Information	00:15:20	00:16:23	00:14:20	00:24:47	00:22:22	00:12:33	00:13:27	00:15:02	02:14:14	18,89 %
Realisation : Behavior management	00:05:24	00:02:15	00:10:33	00:03:04	00:01:21	00:13:16	00:06:50	00:01:03	00:43:46	6,16 %
Realization : Teaching	00:57:31	00:57:49	00:47:28	00:44:38	01:15:44	00:43:37	00:49:58	00:55:36	07:12:21	60,84 %
Review : Summary	00:00:26 0,50 % 1	00:05:15 6,11 % 3	00:07:21 8,65 % 4	00:09:36 11,08 % 5	00:02:21 2,12 % 1	00:04:04 5,15 % 2	00:17:29 19,49 % 7	00:11:27 13,10 % 4	00:57:59	8,19 %
Others : Breaks, etc.	00:02:36	00:01:19	00:02:28	00:00:26	00:01:31	00:02:11	00:00:00	00:00:49	00:11:20	1,59 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>01:26:23</b>	<b>01:25:55</b>	<b>01:24:56</b>	<b>01:26:38</b>	<b>01:50:38</b>	<b>01:19:02</b>	<b>01:29:42</b>	<b>01:27:23</b>	<b>11:50:37</b>	<b>100,00 %</b>

- Review** : « *At the beginning, I was not comfortable with it, it was not structured... Throughout the supervision process, I was wondering what is better : doing it once at the end of the practice or doing it briefly, more frequently, after each drill to make sure it is understood before starting the next drill? Then, I have decided to do it briefly, more often... It was easier for me to structure what I had to say... What made me think about it? Maybe because I had to teach it theoretically... Now, I can share my experience! I am more comfortable with this pattern... I don't want to get back to the way I did it before... I need to keep doing it to check if the players retained the message... They [players] were pretty good in answering my questions [review strategy]... They were getting used to answer questions... Did they learn it? I might know next year... On the court? They were doing things right but they were still inconsistent... they are still young...* »

## 2- Literature review and problem (continued)

- Because of coaching complexity (Saury, Séve, Leblanc & Durand, 2002), contextual factors must be considered in analyzing coaching such as : (a) coach's objectives (Franks, Johnson & Sinclair, 1988), (b) coach's concerns (Saury et al., 2002) and (c) players' profile and needs (Dodge & Hastie, 1993).
  - « *Now the evaluation is about « What Coaches do » and to be credible, the evaluation process will have to be done in a real context* (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006, p.530). »

## 3- Theoretical frameworks

- Coaching Model** : The goal of coaching is to develop athletes. Coach's behaviors are related to (a) organization, (b) training and (c) competition. Those behaviors are influenced by (a) the coach's personal characteristics, (b) athletes' personal characteristics and development and (c) contextual factors (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria & Russell, 1999).
- Clinical Supervision** : Supervisor and coach work together as associates and equals, and they are bound together by a common purpose : « *Throughout the process, the coach and supervisor jointly determine objectives, content and methods of instruction, formulate hypothesis about the end results; specify the nature of data to be collected during practice observations; analyze data that are obtained; and plan for needed changes as they are identified* (Randall, 1992, p. 13). »
- Metaphor of network** : The coach's cognitive structure (a vast and flexible network of ideas, knowledge, feelings and emotions) changes and adapts under the influence of three types of learning situations ; (a) mediated learning situations, (b) unmediated learning situations and (c) internal learning situations (Werthner & Trudel, 2006, p.201).

## 5.2- Data collection and analysis

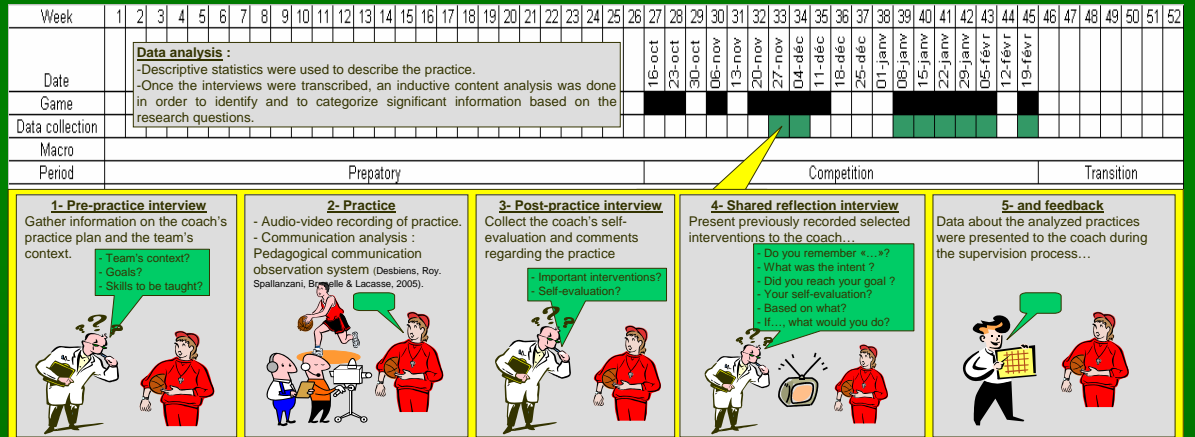


Figure 2. Illustration of the data collection and analysis

Table 3  
Coaching behaviors frequency (Desbiens et al., 2005)

Behaviors	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Total	Proportion
Directives / instructions	83	104	95	150	112	75	100	154	873	40,78 %
Questions	26	25	36	35	29	21	26	23	221	10,32 %
Answers	27	24	23	20	28	21	12	12	167	7,80 %
Explanations	16	14	23	28	32	20	23	4	160	7,47 %
Encouragements	1	10	17	11	21	20	21	21	122	5,70 %
Evaluative neutral specific feedback	32	18	6	8	11	17	12	17	121	5,65 %
Justifications	15	17	7	8	14	16	20	17	114	5,32 %
Jokes	13	4	9	7	19	11	4	4	71	3,32 %
Evaluative positive general feedback	8	8	8	6	13	7	13	5	68	3,18 %
Corrective specific feedback	14	11	0	5	13	12	8	3	66	3,08 %
Demonstrations	5	13	8	7	4	8	7	2	54	2,52 %
Justificatory feedback	5	5	0	0	4	6	5	5	30	1,40 %
Evaluative positive specific feedback	0	3	0	0	7	5	6	7	28	1,31 %
Others	5	3	3	9	5	6	3	12	46	2,15 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>2141</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

- Feedback and behaviors** : « *... Week 5, that's when I set the goal to increase the amount of evaluative positive feedback... Encouragements could also be included, they often come together... From week 5 until the end, it has increased compared to the first 4 weeks... I rarely just say « good job »... It's not relevant to me, I want to be more specific, I want the athlete to know what's good. It goes beyond the numbers... I have made the effort, I have paid attention to it but I am still not comfortable with it, I am not totally conscious about it... I can't remember specific intervention [feedback]... Maybe I need more time to see the difference... I just had 8 weeks ! It is also hard for me to see the impact of feedback on participants... »*

## 3- Theoretical frameworks (continued)

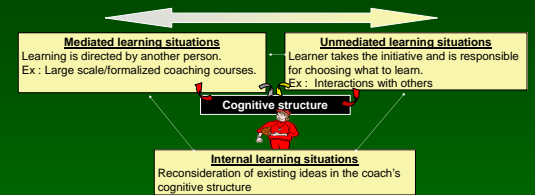


Figure 1. Metaphor of « network » applied to coach's learning in different situations (Trudel, 2006; Werthner & Trudel, 2006).

## 4- Objective

- Based on the stated problem and the theoretical frameworks, the supervision process is oriented towards improving a young female high school basketball coach's communication through a clinical supervision process. The coach decides what she wants to improve as related to communication in practice (clinical supervision) in order to improve her athletes' basketball skills, considering the context (participants' characteristics, phase of the season, etc.). The supervision process (illustrated below) leads the coach to reflect on her coaching (internal learning situations).

## 7- Conclusion

- Helping a coach to change his/her practice requires an open-minded individual, willing and available to go through a systematic reflection process. Conducting such a process takes time and commitment (Randall, 1992; Savoie-Zajc, 2001).
- Shared reflection interviewing (Tochon, 2002) is a valuable strategy to make the coach reflect on his/her practice.
  - « *Since the beginning, I was willing to be supervised because... Being supervised by someone else takes you out of your comfort zone. If you do the process by yourself, you might not go in the right direction... I want to start from it next year.* »