Investigating the process by which player development coaches attempt to ‘develop’ athletes: An exploratory qualitative Analysis

Semi-structured Interview Guide

Introduction:
I would like to begin by thanking you for your participation in our research. As we’ve discussed, I’m interested in speaking with you about your position as a player development coach. To be clear, during this discussion I will be asking you questions about your role, beliefs, and experiences pertaining to athlete development. The length of this interview will be approximately 30-50 minutes. I have developed a series of questions to discuss, but I’d like you to know that I may ask you related questions that are relevant to the interview, and that you may add any information that you think is pertinent at any point in time.

If at any time you feel that you do not want to carry on with this interview, you may withdraw with absolutely no consequences. Finally, you can be sure that the information you share will remain confidential and any results eventually presented or written will be in aggregate form, meaning you cannot be identified.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Introductory Questions:

1. To begin, I am interested in hearing about your experiences with hockey prior to becoming the player development coach for _______________.
   - Could you provide me with a summary of your playing career from start to finish?
     i. Prompt for length, level, highlights, etc.
   - Great, could you now discuss your career since you’ve finished playing?
     i. Prompt for positions, job descriptions, etc.

Transition Questions:

(LEAD INTO TRANSITION QUESTIONS)
In listening to your history, it sounds like you’ve had extensive experience both as a player, but also through the various positions you’ve occupied since then.
(Sentence is generic, but use history to make the statement more personalized during interview)

2. You’re currently (or have recently been) the player development coach for _______________. Could you provide a general description about what your role is within the organization?
   - Let’s say you go watch Jonny play in London Ontario, walk me through it.
   - Let’s say you go spend a weekend with (Farm Team), walk me through it.
   - How did you working for this organization come about?
i. Prompt for previous relationships, playing for this team, etc.

- How would you differentiate yourself from other positions?
  i. Other development coaches
  ii. Coaching staff, mental performance consultant

- When you were playing hockey (in junior, the minors, professional, etc.), were similar positions in place?
  i. If so, have they changed?
  ii. If not, who typically adopted the ‘developer’ role, if anyone?
  iii. Are you the first one, if not who was there before you?
  iv. What brought about this position?
  v. Where/how do you see this position developing moving forward?

3. Now that I understand more about your previous experiences and current (or recent) position, could you tell me how you would define ‘player development’? (Are they trying to develop ‘good people’ or is this predominantly outcome/performance based?)

Key Questions:

4. How do you know when an athlete is developing properly?
   - Probe for athlete outcomes (e.g., performance, personal, participation)
   - Do you keep records?
   - If I were starting as a player development coach tomorrow, what would you tell me to look for?

5. How do you know when you are being successful at developing players? Or that development has been occurring?
   - Probe for objective measures, discussions based on subjective outcomes

6. Can you describe some typical strategies or behaviours that you employ to facilitate the development process?
   - Probe for things that revolve around the four Cs (competence, confidence, connectedness, character)
   - Taking everything we have discussed are there differences between AHL/Junior (development needs, identifying development, strategies employed)

7. Do you discuss strategies or behaviours with other player development coaches across the league? Why or why not?

Ending Questions:

8. Thinking back to experiences you have had with various athletes, could you describe a situation when you’ve had a positive influence?
   - What was it about this situation that brought about these outcomes?
9. Now, thinking back again, can you describe a situation where you were unable to help with an athlete’s positive development?
   • What do you think led to this outcome, and what might you do differently if you were to do it over again (or have you done differently since)?

10. If you could go back and give yourself one or two pieces of advice when starting out as a player development coach, what would you tell yourself?
   • If you told yourself that there are specific outcomes from the athletes that he/she should be trying to achieve, what would those be?

11. I have asked the main questions that I had for you. Is there anything that you think we missed and should discuss with regard to this topic? Do you have any comments before we conclude the interview?

12. If we have any further questions, would you mind if I contact you? If so, what would be the most convenient way for you?

**Concluding Statement:**

That concludes our interview. I would like to thank you for your time. Your input is very important to us and we appreciate you discussing your experiences. Thank you.