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**An interpretive phenomenological analysis of cricket coaches’  
experience of a Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC)  
approach to coaching**

by  
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**Faculty of Humanities**

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**Submitted:**  
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## DECLARATION

I, Monja Human, declare that this thesis is my original work except where I used or quoted another source, which has been acknowledged. I further declare that the work I am submitting has never been submitted before for another degree to any other university or tertiary institution for examination.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Abstract**

### **An interpretive phenomenological analysis of cricket coaches' experience of a Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach to coaching**

Performance development approaches in cricket are often aimed at enhancing the individual performance of cricketers. The aim of my study was to move from an individualistic utilisation of resources to an ecological and more holistic approach to performance development, by working with and educating coaches as central figures in sport, thereby becoming an extension of the work that sport psychologists do. This was attained by creating a performance development experience for cricket coaches through participation in a MAC program, which was mainly facilitated through experiential learning. The extent to which experiential learning occurred was established through analyzing semi-structured interviews with coaches using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Eighteen individual in depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six Level III male Cricket South Africa (CSA) coaches and analysed using IPA.

#### **The major findings were:**

Firstly, coaches' experienced the MAC program as flexible, accessible and a developmental psychological tool, which increased their knowledge of sport psychology. Coaches enjoyed the MAC program, and found the experiential learning and accompanying manual valuable.

Secondly, coaches learned through the performance enhancing MAC program about the nature of mindfulness, acceptance and commitment, as well as the obstacles to being mindful, acceptant and committed.

Thirdly, what the coaches experienced about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment became manifest in three "domains", namely the self as a person, coaching and a better understanding of the game of cricket.

Fourthly, coaches conveyed their experiential learning to their cricketers by means of educational methods (theoretical versus experiential learning), educational styles (formal versus informal styles) and educational formats (groups versus one-on-one).

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

Chapter 1 serves as an introductory chapter to orientate the reader to the context, research problem, research question, research design, research method, and goals. This chapter will conclude by giving an outline of the structure of my study.

### 1.2 Context

My study is informed by and based on previous personal and professional experiences. I am a registered psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). I obtained the following degrees: a BA (Psychology) (1996), BA (Hons) (Psychology) (1997) and MA (Counselling Psychology) (2001), all from the University of Pretoria (UP), as well as a M Psych (Sport and Exercise Psychology) (2005) from the University of Southern Queensland in Australia. I have been working at the High Performance Centre (hpc<sup>1</sup>) as a sport psychologist<sup>2</sup> since 2004. During this time I also presented yearly workshops for Cricket South Africa (CSA). For the last 10 years, the focus of my work as a sport psychologist has been performance development, as well as enhancing the sporting performance of athletes<sup>3</sup>/players.

### 1.3 Research problem

Performance development<sup>4</sup> in the form of performance enhancement has been a critical part of sport psychology over the last decades (Terry, 2011). Sport psychologists aimed via psychological interventions to enhance the performance and psychological well-being of players participating in competitive sports (Gardner & Moore, 2006; Terry, 2011). Associated with this are two prominent performance enhancement approaches in sport psychology, namely Psychological Skills Training (PST) and the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach.

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<sup>1</sup> The official abbreviation for the High Performance Centre is “hpc” and not “HPC”.

<sup>2</sup> The term “sport psychologist” is used as a public term in South Africa (SA). It is not an official HPCSA registration category. I will use this term to refer to a registered psychologist, irrespective of the HPCSA registration category, working in the sport context in SA.

<sup>3</sup> The term “athlete” is commonly used in sport psychology literature and refers to sport participants who participate in sport, on recreational, competitive, or professional level. This also includes sport participants practising different kinds of sports. My study will be done in cricket, and that is why I use the term “player” instead of athlete. This is acknowledged as a somewhat liberal use of the term; however, its liberal use makes for ease of reading.

<sup>4</sup> Performance development in my study has two elements: 1. Psychological well-being and development of players; 2. Performance enhancement in the sport, which players participate in.



Performance enhancement over the past 30 years has primarily been done through PST programs (Gardner & Moore, 2006). PST programs are psycho-education programs based on Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT), which falls within second wave behaviourism (Bernier, Thienot, Codron, & Fournier, 2009; Moore, 2009). Fundamental to PST programs is the longstanding assumption that an “ideal performance state” will lead to optimal athletic performance. An “ideal performance state” is characterised by the reduction of negative emotions and bodily states and is associated with positive cognitions and confidence levels. According to PST programs, players need to develop the capacity to control internal states such as thoughts and emotions, in order to achieve the “necessary” internal state believed to enhance performance (Moore, 2009). These programs are change-based in the sense that athletes need to avoid all negative internal experiences by changing them through mental skills into positive internal experiences. This will lead to athletes obtaining an ideal performance state for optimal performance or behaviour (Gardner & Moore, 2006).

PST further focuses on athletes’ weaknesses and problem identification. Athletes need to learn from mistakes and failures and thus require external expert assistance in the form of psychological skills to fix or improve them. PST is, therefore, remedial in nature (Gordon & Gucciardi, 2011).

Research indicates that changing negative internal experiences into positive internal experiences actually has a paradoxical effect in regards to the expected outcome; negative internal experiences grow in their negativity (Gardner & Moore, 2006; Moore, 2009). After applying PST programs in cricket, it became apparent to me that the main expectation of the coaches was to control the “necessary” internal states of players. The skills expected of the player seemed isolated and not integrated with their on-the-field performance (Martin & Pear, 1978). PST, to my mind, was fragmented and lacked psychological understanding and dynamic depth. PST furthermore focuses on improving weaknesses in a remedial manner by teaching athletes skills to correct them. Correcting weaknesses and mistakes is something that is already receiving a lot of attention in sport. Based on these reasons I chose to use the MAC approach for my study because the MAC approach differs theoretically and practically from PST, with the implication of adding different dimensions to sport psychology.

The MAC approach is also a psycho-education program based on a combination of mindfulness, as well as Acceptance-Commitment-Therapy (ACT) (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007), which falls within third wave behaviourism (Moore, 2009). The basic assumption of the MAC approach is that mindfulness is a way-of-being in everyday life and, therefore, applies to sport as well. On the one hand mindfulness is developed through acceptance, which entails athletes accepting their internal states, bodily sensations and external stimuli in a non-judgmental manner (Corey, 2005). This is in direct contrast to the underlying change-driven philosophy of PST programs (Moore, 2009).

On the other hand mindfulness is developed through commitment, which entails athletes committing to value-driven behaviour that will serve the development of mindfulness. It requires attentional focus on task-relevant stimuli and behavioural choices conducive to performance (Gardner & Moore, 2007). Whereas PST programs focus on mental skills, rather than value-driven behaviour (Gardner & Moore, 2006), the MAC approach proposes an acceptance-driven, as well as a value-driven approach to the performance enhancement of players. I experienced the MAC approach as proposing a way of being and living, due to the emphasis on non-judging moment-to-moment awareness and acceptance of one's internal states and external experiences. It also enables players to apply the skills underlying the MAC philosophy on-the-field whilst competing, and that appealed to me as opposed to players seeing the value of skills only before or after competition.

Although PST programs and MAC programs differ theoretically and practically, they share the same conceptual framework about the sport community. Both programs have an individualistic perspective to performance development in which mainly the sport psychologist engages with players (Gardner & Moore, 2007; Hasker, 2010; Weinberg & Williams, 1998; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010). This implies that other role players (e.g. coaches, parents and sport scientists) within the cricket community, who spend more time with players than sport psychologists, are not utilized in performance development work.

My professional experience as a sport psychologist working in cricket also confirmed this individualistic perspective that performance development is usually directed towards the players and this created time and logistical constraints. Firstly, time constraints because as a sport psychologist I often have one hour per week to work with players as the rest of

their time is used for their physical, technical and tactical training. This made me realize that cricket coaches are in the position where they spend much more time with players in one day than I, as a sport psychologist, spend with them in a month. This was confirmed by Weinberg and Gould (2011) who stated that coaches see players on a daily basis, whereas a sport psychologist does not.

Secondly, focusing mainly on cricket players highlighted logistical constraints with regards to the sport psychologist-player ratio. There are currently 174 980 male and female cricket players in South Africa (Van Schalkwyk, personal communication, May 30, 2014). There are 1 627 registered counselling psychologists and 2 721 registered clinical psychologists with the HPCSA (Daffue, personal communication, April 02, 2014), but it is difficult to determine how many of these psychologists actually work in the field of sport psychology, since sport psychology is not an official registration category with the HPCSA. The South African Sport and Exercise Psychology emailing list consists of 57 registered psychologists working in the field of sport psychology, which stretches the sport psychologist-player ratio even further. This illustrates that there are too many players to reach given the number of counselling and clinical psychologists registered with the HPCSA and who are working in the field of sport psychology. However, there are 7 397 cricket coaches in South Africa (Van Schalkwyk, personal communication, May 30, 2014) who are in the position to bridge this gap and who can also reach more cricket players than sport psychologists can on their own. Cricket coaches can, therefore, be empowered to become an extension of the sport psychologist's performance development work.

Besides the time and logistical constraints in cricket, highlighted above, sport psychologists in South Africa are part of the profession of psychology and practice under the regulations of the HPCSA. Although the context of a psychologist working in sport differs from a psychologist working, for example, in a hospital or an organisation, we are all confronted with the following two aspects:

The history of psychology in South Africa is characterised by two dilemmas. Firstly, a strong medical influence with the emphasis on treating pathology, disease, abnormal behaviour and psychological illness. This created the second dilemma because these issues were usually addressed by means of one-on-one interventions. This state of affairs is problematic because practicing psychology in this manner is exclusive and only reaches a small percentage of South Africans and cannot meet the growing psychological needs faced in South Africa (Pretorius, 2012).

The first dilemma can be solved if psychologists are willing to broaden their skills by changing the format of their service delivery to reach more South Africans by including more curative, preventative and developmental skills in their work (Pretorius, 2012). Sport psychologists can address this dilemma in the sport context by broadening their skills from a reactive approach, where the focus is on pathology and disease in players, to a more pro-active approach by implementing performance development in the form of psycho-education programs.

The second dilemma can be solved if the curative, preventative and developmental skills are expanded from one-one-one therapy to group work, program development and community interventions (Pretorius, 2012). Mpofu, Bakker, and Lopez Levers (2011, p. 315) also argue that “community-level interventions are more likely to reach more persons with counselling needs in African context settings.” Sport psychologists can, therefore, reach more players when working within the whole cricket community, for example, educating cricket coaches as opposed to following a one-one-one player centred approach.

This calls for a transformation of psychology as profession in South Africa and this needs to happen in all contexts across the entire South African society, including the sport context. This transformation can only take place if psychologists themselves recognise its value. The value becomes apparent on various levels, such as enhancing wellness, preventing psycho-social problems, developing life skills and assisting children in receiving education. This connects much more with a pro-active stance in developing people, instead of working reactively and attempting to cure pathology and disorders (Pretorius, 2012).

Pretorius’ (2012) plea is supported by Mpofu et al. (2011). They argue that sport psychologists should also make the shift from only working with players on a one-on-one basis to working with the broader cricket community because community-level interventions are more likely to reach more people.

This idea is also evident in Peterson’s (2004) argument that psychology needs to start moving out of the hospital and the private practice framework into communities, schools, prisons and non-governmental organisations that are in desperate need of assistance. Similarly Martens (1987, 2007) calls for a sport psychology that moves away from

research in laboratories and experiments with players to being more on the field, observing and understanding the sporting context where players spend most of their time. Sport psychology services should, therefore, become more relevant and address the needs of the sporting community by including all role players, amongst others, coaches.

#### **1.4 Aim and motivation**

Against the background of the preceding discussion of the research problem, the motivation and aim for my study are to move from an individualistic utilisation of resources to an ecological and more holistic approach to performance development, by working and educating coaches as central figures in sport to become an extension of the work that sport psychologists do.

This will be done by creating a performance development experience for cricket coaches through their participation in a MAC program, which will be mainly facilitated through experiential learning. Theoretical knowledge about the MAC approach will be shared in a limited way to provide some background and context because experience and reflection are less effective in the absence of the foundational knowledge that coaches receive through formal learning (Reade, 2009). Using experiential learning to deliver the MAC program to adults was chosen because it is an acknowledged approach in adult learning (Cushion, 2011). Experiential learning focuses on “doing” in addition to “hearing” and “seeing”, and is more often used in traditional, didactic learning approaches conveyed via psycho-education programs (Ruhanen, 2005). Experiential learning is informally defined as learning by doing combined with reflection and fits well in a cricket context because it involves an active, hands-on experience, which is contextualised and applied, rather than a passive process (Chambers, 2011; Priest & Gass, 1997). Experiential learning is “experiential” due to the crucial role experience plays in the learning process (Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004).

#### **1.5 Research question**

The aim of my study was to seek answers to the following broad research question:

Did participation in an experiential learning process of the MAC program develop mindfulness, acceptance and commitment of South African cricket coaches?

## 1.6 Research design and method

The purpose of my study is not to measure or evaluate the success or outcome of the MAC program, which calls for a quantitative research design. Quantitative research designs aim to prove or measure certain constructs in objective ways within a laboratory-type environment, eliminating any distorting influences from the personal perspectives and subjective properties of researchers or subjects (Kvale, 1996).

As implied in the research question above and considering the subjective nature of cricket coaches' experiences of the MAC program, it is fairly evident that my study falls within the domain of qualitative research. Qualitative research explores the complexities and subjectivities of lived experiences. It takes the researcher out of the laboratory and into a context where the phenomena are studied (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research is sensitive to the true context in which people live (Kvale, 1996) and engage in exploring, describing and interpreting the personal and social experiences of participants (Smith, 2003).

Smith (2003) describes different research designs in the field of qualitative research, which includes interpretive phenomenology, narrative psychology, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, focus groups and cooperative inquiry. From these Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected to provide an in-depth and rich understanding of coaches' experiences of the MAC approach by making their voices (as opposed to that of the players) heard. IPA explores in detail how individuals make sense of their personal world (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In the context of my study this method would entail the researcher's interpretation of coaches developing mindfulness, acceptance and commitment through participating in an experiential learning process of the MAC program.

IPA was explorative and interpretive in nature and the purpose of my study was to ascertain how coaches, as central figures in cricket (as opposed to players), experienced and made sense of a performance development experience. Data was collected through in-depth interviews over a six month period. The interviews were transcribed and themes identified. The aim was not to generalise these findings to the larger population, but to contribute to an understanding of how coaches experienced performance development and in the process empowered them to work with players on a daily basis. Answering the broad research question necessitated a number of specific goals.

## **1.7 Specific goals**

My study has seven goals:

1. To develop through a literature review an understanding of the ecological perspective on sport, which focuses on coaches as prominent figures in sport, as well as the two prominent performance enhancement approaches in sport psychology, namely PST and the MAC approach.
2. To describe the research inquiry of this research, with reference to the research context, research position, research participants, research process and research ethics.
3. Exploring cricket coaches' experiences of the MAC program.
4. Describing cricket coaches' learning about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment through experiencing the MAC program.
5. Exploring how cricket coaches manifest mindfulness, acceptance and commitment.
6. Exploring how cricket coaches convey mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to their cricket players.
7. To integrate the results and findings into a research report in the form of a dissertation, as well as a scholarly article.

## **1.8 Structure of study**

My study is organised as follows:

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the context, research problem, aim and motivation, research questions, research design, research method and goals.

Chapter 2 describes the ecological perspective as alternative to the traditional views on sport psychology. This will be done by focusing on Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of human development.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of coaches as central role players in cricket. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of human development will be used to describe the complexity of the coaching context, being a series of interconnected nested systems.

Chapter 4 depicts PST as one of the prominent performance development approaches within the field of sport psychology. This will be done by providing an overview of the origin, philosophy and nature of PST. Chapter 4 will conclude with discussing research done on PST for coaches, as well as discussing the limitations of PST.

Chapter 5 explores the MAC approach as the other prominent performance development approach within the field of sport psychology. Attention will be given to Acceptance-Based Behavioral Therapies, ACT, Mindfulness, as well as the MAC approach in sport.

Chapter 6 describes experiential learning according to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. A brief overview of behaviourism, cognitivism, social learning, humanistic psychology and constructivism will explain the origin of experiential learning.

Chapter 7 describes the research methodology with specific reference to the purpose of the research, ideological orientation, philosophical underpinning, research strategy, participants, research process, research ethics and research quality.

Chapter 8 delineates the results with regard to coaches' experiences of the MAC program.

Chapter 9 describes the results with regard to coaches' learning of mindfulness, acceptance and commitment through experiencing the MAC program.

Chapter 10 explores the results with regard to how mindfulness, acceptance and commitment manifest in their own coaching.

Chapter 11 contains the results with regard to coaches conveying mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to their cricket players.

Chapter 12 discusses the themes derived as relevant to the research question and embedded within the relevant literature.

Chapter 13 discusses my reflections on the effects of the research process on myself as researcher, reflections on the research process, the contribution to the body of knowledge of sport psychology, limitations and suggestions for future research.

## **1.9 Summary**

Chapter 1 outlined the context, research problem, aim and motivation for my study. The research question, research design, research method and goals for my study were explained. Lastly, the structure for my study was outlined.

Chapter 2 will describe the ecological perspective to sport.



## CHAPTER 2

### Ecological perspectives in sport

#### 2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, I discuss ecological perspectives of sport as opposed to the traditional and more individualistic views found in sport psychology. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Bio-ecological theory of human development forms the base for these discussions.

#### 2.2 Traditional views on sport psychology

Performance development in the form of psycho-education programs has been the dominant way of delivering sport psychology services to players (Terry, 2011). A review of the literature shows that PST programs embrace an individualistic perspective allowing sport psychologists to mainly render sport psychology services to individual players (Weinberg & Williams, 1998). In the last decade MAC programs have been introduced into the field of sport psychology. A review of the limited literature on MAC programs does not yield a different picture to that of PST programs. MAC programs also embrace an individualistic perspective allowing sport psychologists to mainly deliver sport psychology services to individual players (Gardner & Moore, 2006).

Both psycho-education programs, PST and the MAC approach, share the same limitation in that they embody an individualistic perspective. This implies that sport psychology services are mainly only rendered to players by sport psychologists, while negating other role players (e.g. coaches, parents and sport scientists) in the sport community as potential resources to extend the work of sport psychologists.

#### 2.3 An ecological perspective as alternative to traditional views on sport psychology

One way to change the individualistic focus referred to above is to adopt an ecological perspective. Community psychology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Visser, 2007) provided the basis because it shifts the focus away from the individual to the context in which he/she is developing (Larsen, Alfermann, & Christensen, 2012). This suggested engaging the sport community in a wider context, not isolating various interactive "parts of the whole" (e.g. coaches, players and parents). It, therefore, provides a more complex view of the context, in which sport features. It gives a deeper understanding of the issues at hand and the patterns of behaviour and activities which influence performance development in the competitive environment.

From an ecological perspective sport psychologists can also work with other role players in the sporting community, like coaches, by educating them in performance development for their cricket players. Coaches are central figures in sport and determine the nature of the coaching context, which ultimately influence players' performance (Fletcher & Scott, 2010). Furthermore, coaches' own education and knowledge regarding performance development shape and determine their players' perceptions and utilization of sport psychology services (Gardner, 1995). Their different relationships with players (development and elite levels), staff (full-time and part-time), parents, professionals (doctors and sport psychologists), organisations (franchises or CSA) combined with their multiple roles of being the coach, manager, fitness trainer, role model, father, disciplinarian, or guardian (Washington & Reade, 2013) emphasise the need for an ecological approach to performance development because there are so many nested systems involved and present.

An ecological approach to performance development also addresses the moral plea outlined by Pretorius (2012) that psychologists in South Africa have to move beyond one-on-one therapy to group work, program development and community intervention (Mpofu, et al., 2011). A psycho-educational MAC program presented to cricket coaches can, therefore, address this. An ecological perspective provides new ways of delivering sport psychology, i.e. to conceptualise the individual (coach or player) in interaction with his/her social and physical environment (Larsen et al., 2012; Visser, 2007).

The work of prominent theorists provide four ecological perspectives on sport psychology. These theorists are Brunswik, Barker, Gibson and Bronfenbrenner (Araujo & Davids, 2009). Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological model has been selected and will be discussed here. The reason for this is that my study is situated in the constructivist paradigm in which Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory of development played a crucial role. Bronfenbrenner built and expanded on Vygotsky's ideas of the role of cultural context in human development (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2009).

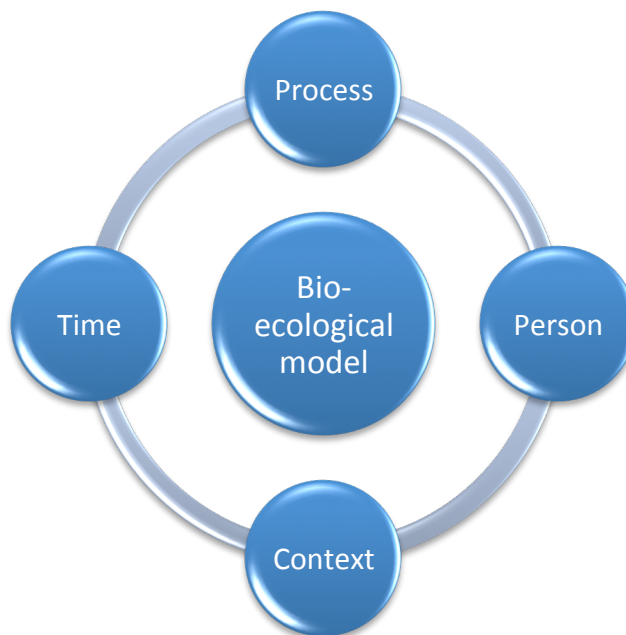
## **2.4 Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological theory of human development**

Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological model is an evolving theoretical system for analyzing the role of the environment in shaping human development throughout the life course. His model has an interdisciplinary and integrative focus (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005), which suggests opportunities for interdisciplinary involvement (sport psychology, sport science and sport coaching) in cricket with the aim of developing players.

A crucial part or pre-requisite for a person’s development (especially in youth) is long-term reciprocal relationships with others (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). In the sport context this type of relationship can involve coaches. Developing players physically, technically, tactically and psychologically is part of coaching. The coach-player relationship often allows for the development due to the amount of time spent with one another during training, competition and throughout seasons (Cassidy et al., 2009). This makes the coach a key factor in the sporting system, not just an actor that is acted upon by the system (Washington & Reade, 2013).

The defining dimensions of the Bio-ecological model of human development are the “Process-person-context-time” model (See Figure 2.1). This suggests that performance development is affected by the complex interactive and dynamic relationships between the process, person, context and time (Larsen, 2013). The “Process-person-context-time” model aims to understand how people accommodate changing environments where they grow, develop and live throughout their lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1999).

Figure 2.1. The “Process-person-context-time” aspect of the Bio-ecological model



### 2.4.1 Process

A process refers to particular forms of dynamic interactions between a person (organism) and the environment. Bronfenbrenner (2005) calls these interactions proximal processes, which constitute the core of the bio-ecological model because they drive the person-environment behavioural interaction of development. Proximal processes, therefore, involve interpersonal relationships and interactions (Aruajo & Davids, 2009), for example the coach-player relationship.

Proximal processes are functional for performance development in cricket because players engage in cricket-specific activities and training on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time, in order to develop and enhance their cricket potential. To be developmentally effective, activities have to take place for long periods of time (full cricket season) and become increasingly complex to prevent stagnation and boredom (Aruajo & Davids, 2009). The effectivity of these developmental proximal processes relies on both the individual and the environment (Aruajo & Davids, 2009), making all entities (players, coaches and governing bodies) accountable for performance development.

#### **2.4.2 Person**

Bronfenbrenner recognises that personal characteristics can largely be a product of development. There are three types of personal characteristics that influence and shape the way players live, experience and perceive the contexts in which they are involved in, namely demand characteristics, resource characteristics and force characteristics (Aruajo & Davids, 2009).

*Demand characteristics* create an immediate first impression on another person. It involves physical appearances such as age, gender and skin color, and has the potential for people to be accepted or rejected by others in their immediate environment (Aruajo & Davids, 2009; Krebs, 2009). For example, a player's attractive versus unattractive physical appearance can foster reactions from the social environment and from other people. *Resource characteristics* are not immediately recognizable or visible properties, but act firstly on mental and emotional resources such as intelligence, past experiences and skill, and then secondly, on social and material resources such as access to food, housing and educational opportunities. These resource characteristics can either be liabilities/barriers or assets/facilitators that influence the person's capacity to engage effectively in proximal processes (Aruajo & Davids, 2009; Krebs, 2009).

Finally, *force characteristics* or dispositions have to do with differences in temperament, motivation and persistence. Dispositions are also motivational forces that can activate proximal processes in a particular environment and can have positive or negative effects (Krebs, 2009). To explain these positive or negative effects of dispositions, Bronfenbrenner (2005) developed the terms "developmentally-generative dispositions" and "developmentally-disruptive dispositions".

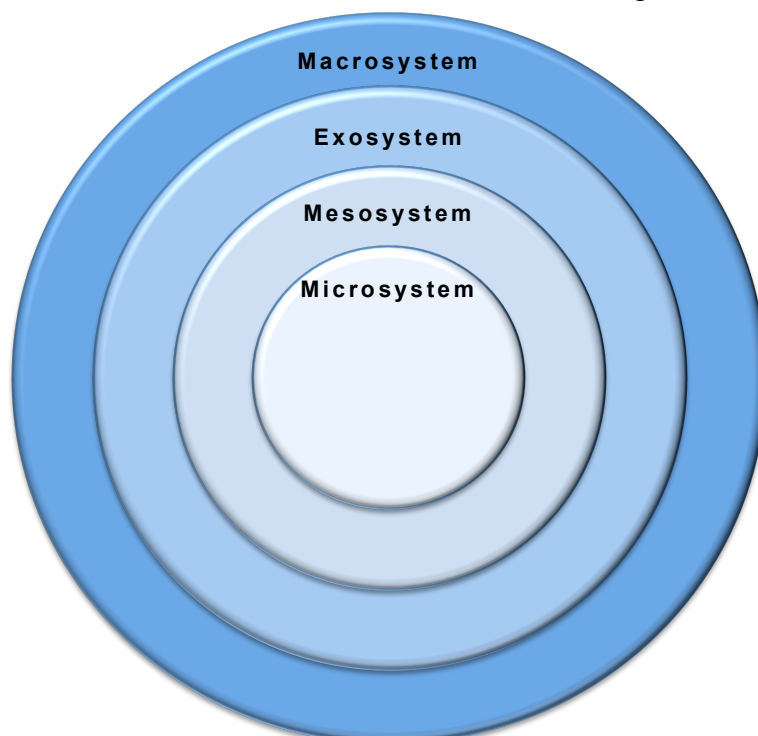
On the one hand, “developmentally-generative dispositions” refer to positive effects, for example a player’s disposition to repeat a routine of exercises in order to improve his fitness. This disposition also has positive characteristics such as abilities, knowledge, skills and experiences. On the other hand, “developmentally-disruptive dispositions” refer to negative effects, for example a player’s disagreement to repeat a routine of exercises which should improve his fitness. This disposition also has negative characteristics and refers to conditions that limit or disrupt the functional integrity of the player. Both developmentally-generative dispositions and developmentally-disruptive dispositions are present in cricket and can occur at the same time. These characteristics can invite or discourage reactions for the social environment by either fostering or disrupting the operation of proximal processes (Araujo & Davids, 2009; Krebs, 2009).

### 2.4.3 Context

People’s contexts refer to their environment which subsequently influences their behaviour. Understanding the context, therefore, creates space for understanding the person’s behaviour (Visser, 2007). Behavioural problems such as bad performance, ill-discipline, mindless playing, or mindless coaching are, therefore, not only intra-individual processes, but rather incompatibilities between the individual and their environmental circumstances, for example poor support systems.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes the context as a series of interconnected nested systems fitting into each other. An individual exists within these different levels and layers of social relationships called micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems (See Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. Levels of interaction in Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-ecological model



### **2.4.3.1 Microsystem**

A microsystem is the immediate system of which the individual is a part of or closest to (Visser, 2007), for example a coach and a player's direct and face-to-face interaction. The three elements present in the microsystem are activities, interpersonal relationships and roles.

Firstly, *activities* are divided into molar and molecular activities. Molar activities are activities which have meaning or intent for people, and they will persist until the activity is completed. Molecular activities are activities that people interpret as having no meaning, and that influence whether they will persist or not (Krebs, 2009). Applied to coaching this means that when coaches experience performance development programs as meaningful, they are more likely to persist with them and allow them to contribute to their coaching knowledge. If this is not the case, they will struggle to persist, apply or transfer these skills to their coaching.

The second element present in the microsystem is *interpersonal relationships*, and this refers to the relationships between the developing person and other people within the microsystem (coach-player relationship) (Krebs, 2009). Coaching never occurs in isolation, but always within a coaching relationship with a player (Wikeley & Bullock, 2006; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011). The third and last element present in the microsystem is *roles* and this refers to activities and relationships that are expected from the developing person in terms of societal expectations (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Krebs, 2009), for example the South-African people expecting coaches and players to perform and win the World Cup.

### **2.4.3.2 Mesosystem**

The mesosystem is defined as a set of linkages, interactions or interrelations between two or more settings or micro-systems in which the developing person actively participates (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Krebs, 2009). For example, interaction between the coach and a player or other role players such as sport scientists, psychologists or parents, and they can fluidly move in and out of the microsystem.

### **2.4.3.3 Exosystem**

Exosystems influence behavior in the microsystems and consist of one or more settings, but do not directly involve the developing person as an active participant. However, they have a direct influence on the person's behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Krebs, 2009). For

example, a coaching culture only characterized by winning and unrealistic expectations puts extra pressure on both players and coaches alike to perform. If the team is unable to perform or win, the coach's job is threatened.

#### **2.4.3.4 Macrosystem**

Macrosystems encompass all three other levels, namely micro-, meso- and exosystems. The macrosystem includes the wider environment and various environmental interaction systems which have an influence on the individual's life. All the connections between microsystems, mesosystems and exosystems form the individual coach's macrosystem. A macrosystem, for example sport governing bodies such as CSA, the International Cricket Council (ICC) or South African Sport Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) further provides a societal blueprint for a particular culture, sub culture or cricket society. It includes attitudes, values, economic trends and rules for cricket as a sport (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005). Even though coaches may not have direct contact with these organisations, the coaches still maintain a level of influence in terms of the arrangement of tournaments and the application for funding for educational coaching workshops.

An example of how these interconnected nested systems fit into each other in a cricket context would be how governmental policies and decisions in CSA (macrosystem) can possibly construct a winning-at-all-cost coaching culture (exosystem). This filters down to the coach-player relationship (mesosystem) and ultimately influences players and coaches' performance due to the excessive amount of pressure experienced (microsystem).

#### **2.4.4 Time**

The dimension of time includes both the historical period in which the person lives, as well as the timing of biological and social transitions related to age, role expectations and opportunities throughout the person's life course (Krebs, 2009).

There are three successive levels to classify time. *Microtime* refers to continuity versus discontinuity within ongoing episodes of proximal processes, for example one full day of practicing a specific bowling technique. *Mesotime* refers to the periodicity of these episodes of proximal process over days, weeks or months, for example practicing a bowling technique for three weeks. *Macrotime* (or the chronosystem) refers to changing expectations and events in a larger period of time occurring in a wider culture, for example a player's entire cricket career (Krebs, 2009).

## 2.5 Summary

Chapter 2 outlined how performance development is not an individual, inner, independent process for players only, but involves all environmental systems with specific reference to the role that coaches play in developing players.

The ecological perspective as alternative to traditional views on sport psychology was reviewed with reference to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Bio-ecological theory of human development consisting of process, person, context and time. Conceptualizing the cricket community from an ecological perspective allows sport psychologists to work with both coaches and players where they interact with their social and physical environments. One, therefore, moves beyond an individualistic view, to understanding behavior within the context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Visser, 2007). This implies that all psychological interventions and psycho-education should not be aimed towards players only, but rather towards the interaction between the player, coach and sporting environment.

Chapter 3 will consider sports coaching and the role of the coach in cricket.



## CHAPTER 3

### Coaches in sport

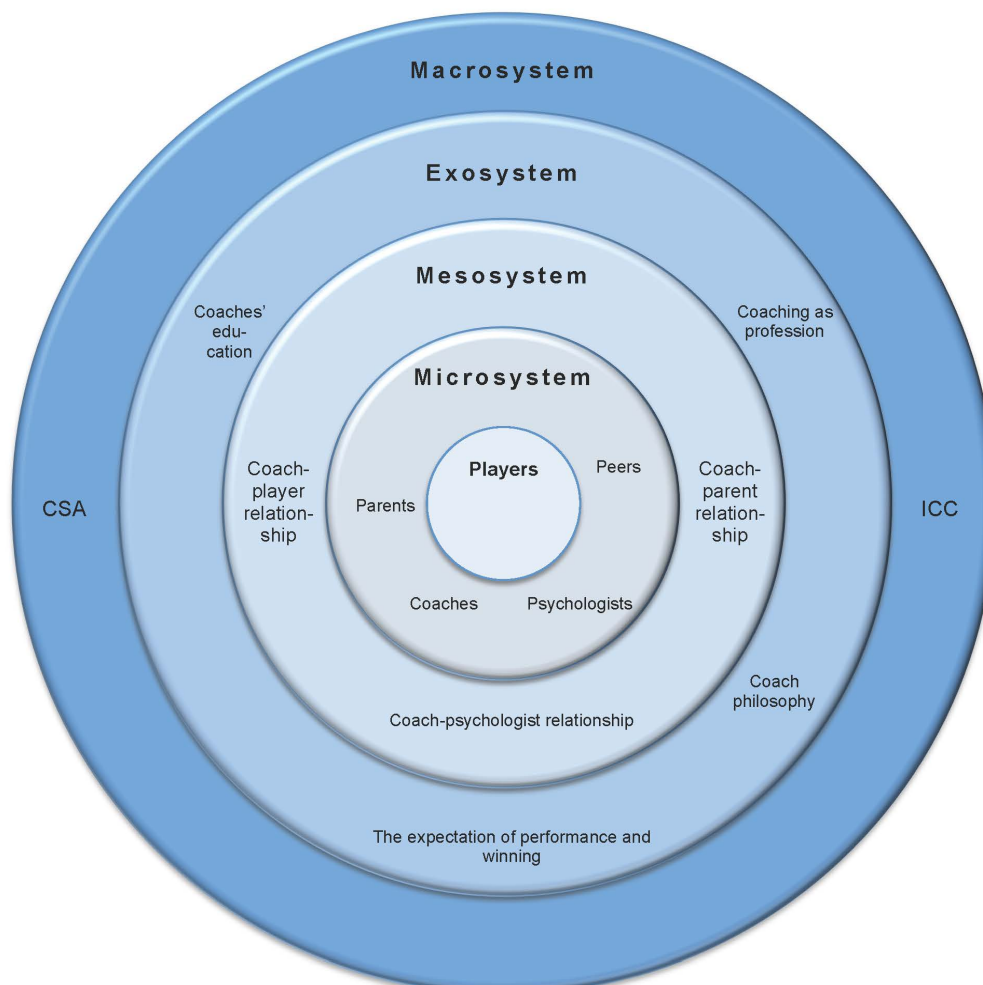
#### 3.1 Introduction

Coaches are central role players in cricket and have a dramatic influence on the development, performance and lives of cricket players (Fletcher & Scott, 2010). Chapter 3 aims to use Bronfenbrenner's (1979) description of the context, being a series of interconnected nested systems to provide an overview on some of the complexities faced by cricket coaches.

#### 3.2 Coaching as multi-dimensional system

Cricket needs both good and successful coaches, considering that coaching is an ever-changing, complex, multi-levelled and multi-dimensional system (Cote, Young, North, & Duffy, 2007; Olusoga, Butt, Hays, & Maynard, 2009). The ecological perspective opens new ways for sport psychology to address this complex system and helps to conceptualise the individual coach in interaction with his/her social and physical environment (Visser, 2007). Figure 3.1 displays the complexities of the coaching system. Each of these systems will be discussed in more detail.

Figure 3.1. The coaching system (Application based on the model of Bronfenbrenner, 1979).



### **3.3 Microsystem**

A microsystem is the immediate system of which the individual is a part of or closest to (Visser, 2007). Players and coaches are situated here.

#### **3.3.1 Players**

Cricket players are the people that physically play the game of cricket. All players are unique human beings with personal attributes. They come from different backgrounds, cultures and have their own set of values. Cultural differences also influence their learning and responses to the coach. Some players may come from individualistic cultures where the wishes or needs of the individual are more important or outweigh the wishes or needs of the group (team). These players may be used to playing and making decisions for the benefit of themselves, as opposed to the team. Other players may come from collectivistic cultures where the wishes or needs of the group (team) are more important or outweigh the wishes or needs of the individual. This collective culture emphasises conformity, rather than individual performances. These players may rely on the coach or senior players to make decisions for them (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011). Players are, therefore, in constant interaction with their coaches.

#### **3.3.2 Coaches**

Coaches need to be aware of, accommodate and appreciate that players have different abilities, capabilities, previous experiences, stages of learning, learning styles, motivation, goals, strengths and weaknesses. They need to be flexible when teaching players and encourage them to grow as self-reliant and disciplined players on and off the field (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Lorimer & Jowett, 2013; Wrisberg, 2007).

The competitive nature and demands of coaching in conjunction with the expectations of winning have an impact on the coach as a person. Being a coach can either be the most rewarding and satisfying experience, or it can be a most frustrating and soul searching experience. This often leads to coaches experiencing stress, as well as various strong emotions. If coaches do not manage that properly, it could influence their physical and mental health (Fuoss & Troppmann, 1981).

Emotions that coaches experience during coaching sessions and competitions are not purely internal phenomena, but also link to their daily social relationships and cultural/coaching contexts. Coaches have intensive personal interactions with others which also consist of interactive, emotional and pedagogical aspects. This makes it difficult

for coaches to separate their emotions from their perceptions or judgements. This then requires a multi-layered understanding of emotions (Olusoga et al., 2009; Potrac, Jones, Purdy, Nelson, & Marchall, 2013).

Traditionally, emotions were understood as physiological and psychological phenomena and a product of the individual's inner workings, related to brain functioning and personality (Turner & Stets, 2005). Sociologically orientated approaches challenged these traditional views on emotions stating that there is a relationship between the physical body, cognitive processes, cultural constructions and emotions (Zembylas, 2007a, 2007b). This makes emotions much more than only an individual's inner workings; rather like a kind of "glue" that binds people in social and cultural structures together. Also, emotions are expressed in bodily reactions and do not solely exist in the mind. Experience, behaviour, interaction and organizations are connected to the expression of emotions (Turner & Stets, 2005). Emotions in coaching should, therefore, be considered as biological, psychological and socio-cultural forces because they shape and reshape coaching practice (Potrac et al., 2013).

### **3.4 Mesosystem**

The mesosystem is defined as a set of linkages, interactions or interrelations between two or more settings or microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Krebs, 2009). The coaching environment as social and cultural context hosts these multiple relationships and roles (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2002; Nelson & Colquhoun, 2013). The mesosystem incorporates all the relationships that coaches are part of.

The individual coach exists within these layers of relationships, for example the coach-player relationship, coach-parent relationship or coach-psychologist relationship. These relationships either enhance or hinder performance of both coaches and players. If not managed correctly, it can also turn into potential stressors. The understanding of these potential stressors, associated with coaching or evoked by the interaction of people in relationships, needs attention because it can help other role players, for example psychologists and organisations to design appropriate interventions and psycho-educational programs (Olusoga et al., 2009).

#### **3.4.1 Coach-player relationship**

The coach-player relationship has key contributors that act both independently and interactively. The coach and player are both separate individuals who bring their own

individual characteristics like age, gender, personality and experiences to the relationship. Coaching is, therefore, not a unidirectional process, where only the coach is an active agent, but a relational activity consisting of reciprocal interaction between the coach and the player(s) (Wikeley & Bullock, 2006). Their relationship is embedded in a coaching and cultural environment consisting of values, choices, philosophies and beliefs (Jowett, Paull, Pensgaard, & Hoegmo, 2005). This environment is constantly changing, and neither the coach nor the player has any control over that (Erickson & Cote, 2013; Lorimer & Jowett, 2013).

Competent and highly skilled coaches will have no effect on players if they are unable to communicate or convey cricket-specific knowledge to them (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Martens, 1987). Communication refers to the act of expressing or transmitting knowledge, information, thoughts, feelings and ideas, as well as understanding what is expressed by others (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Walsh, 2011). Communication consists of both verbal (spoken word) and non-verbal (actions, gestures and listening) entities and occurs in one-on-one format and group settings, as well as writing format (printed material) or visual formats (pictures, videos and observational learning).

Communication involves both the content of the message, as well as the emotional impact or effect the message has on the player receiving it (Lynch, 2001; Stafford, 2011). Communication in the coach-player relationship, therefore, creates an environment where players build competence, confidence, character, relationships and sense of community. However, a lack of communication would destroy the latter in a moment (Walsh, 2011). Communication, therefore, underpins the coach-player relationship and needs to increase understanding of one another in an attempt to be effective in the task (Lorimer & Jowett, 2013; Potgieter, 2003).

There is a direct connection between a coach's expectations and a player's behaviour, which also influences the coach-player relationship. For every coach who has educated players to have pride, another coach installed shame. Too many coaches only focus on coaching players to win games, as opposed to educating players and help them to learn (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011). The expectation-performance relationship can either enhance or hinder a player's performance based on whether the coach had favourable, positive expectations or lower, negative expectations. The player's performance either adheres to or contradicts the coach's expectations (Nakamura, 1996). Expectations are, therefore, an active ingredient manifesting in the coach-player relationship.

### **3.4.2 Coach-parent relationship**

Communication also enables coaches to move between the different nested systems and relationships. The coach-parent relationship is also prominent in coaching. Parents can be a potential source of either support or stress for both players and coaches because they either complement or detract from the coaches' work. Coaches need to be aware and deal with parental expectations and pressure on children, for example, guilt pressure, financial or investment pressure, sacrifice pressure, self-worth pressure, family identity pressure and living through their children pressure. Parental ambitions often exceed those of the children and make participation a duty instead of a pleasure, which influences both coaching, performance and the coach-parent relationship (Kay & Bass, 2011; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011).

### **3.4.3 Coach-psychologist relationship**

The coach-psychologist relationship also features regularly in cricket. Coaches and sport psychologists share the common purpose of developing and enhancing players' performance. However, sport psychologists have an added purpose of maximising the psychological well-being of players as well (Nicholls & Jones, 2013). The coach-psychologist relationship is dependent on the coach's support for the psychologist's involvement. It cannot be stressed too strongly, but if the coach does not support the psychologist in a performance enhancement role, the players will not utilize the psychologist's services. The longer the psychologist is involved with the team and is seen as a natural part of the environment, the greater the likelihood of adequate utilization of the psychologist's services. Psychologists can help coaches to pro-actively attend to players' issues instead of reacting to post-problem issues (Gardner, 1995).

## **3.5 Exosystem**

Exosystems influence behaviour in the microsystems and consist of one or more settings, which do not directly involve the developing person as an active participant. Exosystems, however, have a direct influence on the person's behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Krebs, 2009). In my study this refers to the direct impact and influence that the expectation of performance and winning, coaching as profession, a coaching philosophy and lastly, education has on the coach's behaviour and subsequently on the players.

### **3.5.1 The expectation of performance and winning**

Coaches' success is often measured by winning matches, tournaments or World Cups. However, success is more than just winning. Striving towards winning is actually more

important than winning. A team can win a game without performing well and lose a game even though they performed outstanding (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011).

However, coaches' performance, competence and often future employability are often judged by their team's win-loss record. This puts a lot of pressure on coaches, often leading them to behave out of character (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011). Coaches then unintentionally damage talented cricket players because they sacrifice players' learning by focusing on winning. Overemphasis on winning creates excessive pressure for players and takes away the enjoyment of the game. This is also one of the most frequent reasons for dropping out of cricket (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).

Coaches are, furthermore, performers in their own right considering the technical, physical, organizational and psychological challenges that they face on a daily basis. Coaches have internal expectations for themselves which include their own personal and professional goals that they would like to achieve. These growing internal expectations, in conjunction with the expectation of winning effect coaches and often lead to experiences of stress (Olusoga et al., 2009).

### **3.5.2 Coaching as profession**

Coaching occurs in a results-orientated culture that asks for investment of time (long working hours, early mornings, late nights, weekends) and resources in the search for the competitive edge (Fletcher & Scott, 2010). Coaching as profession further consists of many components, multi-tasking competencies and involves various systems (Cote et al., 2007). Coaches work with different clientele (school, club, provincial, national and professional players), as well as with individuals (players) and groups (teams). Coaches attend to physical, technical, tactical and psychological skills of players. They also have different roles ranging from coaches, teachers, motivators, educators, role models, administrators and so on (Wikeley & Bullock, 2006).

Although coaches are first and foremost teachers and educators, they also have administrative duties that are time-consuming. These administrating duties include planning sessions and organising programs, which are crucial skills that underpin effective coaching and goal achievement of players (Stafford, 2011).

However, coaches prefer practice sessions and field coaching and tend to dislike the administrative and supervisory aspects of coaching. Coaches deal with their dislike for

administration by often avoiding it because they feel they lack management functions that involve planning, organising and directing (Fletcher & Scott, 2010; Fuoss & Troppmann, 1981; Washington & Reade, 2013).

The demands of coaching as profession can be strenuous on coaches because ultimately coaches stay ordinary human beings doing a job. The coaching profession further effects coaches' personal relationships (marriage, family and friends) and other support structures because they are often away from home and their families for long periods of time (Fuoss & Troppmann, 1981; Olusoga et al., 2009).

This can lead to coaches experiencing work stress due to their workload, long working hours, administrative duties, role stressors of conflict and ambiguity. They further have career concerns regarding job security, especially dealing with threats of losing their jobs if teams are unsuccessful (Olusoga et al., 2009; Washington & Reade, 2013). Long and enduring exposure to these work stressors could ultimately lead to job burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

### **3.5.3 Coaches' philosophy**

Coaching as profession is dependent on a coaching philosophy because it provides guidance and direction for coaches' actions. A coaching philosophy is personal and unique to each coach and refers to a practical system of principles, values, attitudes, priorities and beliefs that determine how coaches view experiences in their lives. It influences the way coaches perceive players and understand their relationships with them (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Lynch, 2001; Martens, 1987, 2012).

A coach's philosophy needs to be player-centred because cricket ultimately belongs to and exists because of players (Horn, 2008). A coach's philosophy is an ongoing process or journey that requires frequent reflection and updating (Cassidy et al., 2009). Without a well-developed philosophy coaches lack direction and often succumb to external pressures (Martens, 1987).

Due to the strong results and winning-at-all-costs-culture coaches often compromise on their coaching philosophy. Coaches' awareness and reflection can prevent this by monitoring their own thoughts, actions and behavioural patterns, in order stay true to their values (Cassidy et al., 2009). Significant others in the coaches' lives can further assist

coaches in staying true to their coaching philosophies because it provides an emotional mirror to be aware of personal blind spots whilst coaching (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Martens, 2012).

### **3.5.4 Education**

The two goals central to the perceived success of coaches are the expectations of performance and winning (discussed in 3.5.1) and education. The level of cricket participation will determine which one of these goals is the coach's primary focus (Gardner, 1995). Education in coaching can be twofold, firstly referring to coaches educating their players and then secondly, the coaches' own education.

#### **3.5.4.1 Coaches educating players**

Successful coaches should rather be measured by the way they teach or educate their players to reach their cricket potential, as opposed to the amount of games their team wins (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Roberts, 2011). In this regard, Wrisberg (2007, p. 1) comments as follows: "Good coaches are good teachers. They know the kind of skills their athletes need to learn, and they know how to teach them those skills. Realising that athletes have different levels of abilities and experience, good coaches try to design practices that are challenging and beneficial for each person. Good coaches know the kinds of questions to ask in order to help athletes perform at their best, and they tend to focus more on the process of effective execution than on winning and losing. Good coaches know that the best indicator of the quality of their teaching is the quality of their athletes' performance in competition".

Coaches' experiences and interaction with players are an inevitable part of coaching which offers learning opportunities (Cushion & Nelson, 2013). This puts them in an ideal position to educate the whole player, including the cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling) and psychomotor (physical) domains of the players they work with. However, coaches too often only focus on the psychomotor domain with little acknowledgement of the cognitive and affective domains. Coaches who are able to consider all three domains of a player will be more likely to treat players as knowledgeable and develop players personally and socially (Fletcher & Scott, 2010). Although this is the ideal, not all coaches are convinced of their role as educators due to the importance and expectations of results and winning. One recommended way for coaches to distinguish between coaching for winning only or educating players is through reflection (Cassidy et al., 2009; Nelson & Cushion, 2006).



### **3.5.4.2 Coaches' own education**

Coaches' own education refers to their knowledge, skills, teaching methods, as well as their personal and professional development. This becomes imperative, despite the level of coaching, participation or high performance competition because it determines whether cricket is a meaningful and valuable experience that meets players needs and demands (Galvan, Fyall, & Culpan, 2012; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Nelson & Colquhoun, 2013; Trudel, Culver, & Werthner, 2013).

Coaches' education takes place through both the completion of coaches' courses, coaching education programs and gaining coaching experience, which is an ongoing process that does not happen in a day (Cassidy et al., 2009) (See 3.6.1).

## **3.6 Macrosystem**

The macrosystem includes the wider environment and various environmental interaction systems, which have an influence on the coach's life and forms a societal blueprint for a particular culture, subculture or cricket society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005). In my study the macrosystem refers to governmental policies, decisions and sport organizations, for example the ICC and CSA.

The ICC is a global governing body for international cricket. The ICC governs the societal blueprint for cricket by being responsible for the administration of men's and women's cricket. This includes the management of playing conditions and officials. The ICC is responsible for the global expansion of the game through major international development programs (International Cricket Council [ICC], 2009).

CSA is an affiliate of SASCOC and a full member of the ICC. CSA is the governing body for the sport of cricket in South Africa. CSA administers all aspects of South African cricket for men and women on both professional and amateur levels (Cricket South Africa [CSA], 2014).

### **3.6.1 Coaching education programs in South Africa**

CSA also has a coaching academy that offers coaching education programs in order to contribute to the performance development of cricket coaches (Cricket South Africa [CSA], 2011).

Coaching education programs aim to prepare and educate coaches to handle the complex reality of coaching by developing confident and supportive coaches to work with others

(Potrac et al., 2013). Coaching education programs need to be context and cultural-specific to empower coaches to understand players (player-centred) in their environment (cultural and psycho-social domain) and to competently transfer their knowledge to players (Cassidy, 2013; Gilbert & Trudel, 2006). Coaches receive education on professional knowledge (sport-specific and sport science), interpersonal knowledge (understanding of self as a coach, introspection, reflection) and intrapersonal knowledge (ability to work and interact with others). Coaches transfer their knowledge through having relationships with others, such as players (Cote & Gilbert, 2009; Gilbert, Gallimore, & Trudel, 2009).

The CSA Coaches Academy currently offers the following coaches education programs:

- *CSA Orientation course (Preparatory phase)*

The CSA Orientation course introduces aspirant coaches to the hard ball version of the game. This course enables coaches to understand the basic laws and terminology of cricket. Coaches who would like to enrol in this course need to be 16 years of age (Cricket South Africa [CSA], 2011).

- *Level One (Basic skills coach)*

CSA Level One enables coaches to coach basic cricket skills and to organise training sessions for junior cricketers. Coaches who would like to enrol in this course need to be 18 years of age (Cricket South Africa [CSA], 2011).

- *Level Two (Intermediate skills coach)*

CSA Level Two enables coaches to coach any school or junior club side with confidence. This course covers all aspects of coaching and the individual's various teaching methods. Coaches who would like to enrol in this course need to be 21 years of age (Cricket South Africa [CSA], 2011).

- *Level Three (Senior skills coach)*

CSA Level Three enables coaches to coach senior clubs, provincial youth players and players at Cricket Academies. CSA (Coaching department) reserves the right to invite or select coaches to attend this course and coaches have to be 25 years of age. This course covers technical and tactical aspects of the game. It further includes more advanced topics and principles of sport science, sport medicine and sport psychology (Cricket South Africa [CSA], 2011).

- *Level Four (High performance cricket)*

CSA Level Four enables coaches to coach on the highest level, meaning national and domestic professional teams. CSA (Coaching department) reserves the right to invite or select coaches to attend this course. This is the highest coaching qualification currently obtainable in South Africa. This course covers team and individual game plans, analysing the opposition team and the usage of technology (Cricket South Africa [CSA], 2011).

- *Coaches-acceleration-program-initiative*

The Coaches-acceleration-program-initiative was introduced and launched in April 2009. This program focuses on developing the “soft skills” of cricket coaches rather than their technical cricket skills (Cricket South Africa [CSA], 2011). Sport psychology workshops and performance enhancing skills are examples of “soft skills”.

Although there is limited research available on coaches’ perception and experiences of sport psychology in cricket, elite coaches still have the need to gain knowledge regarding the mental preparation and psychological side of athletes (Sullivan & Hodge, 1991; Williams & Kendall, 2007) and to learn how sport psychology can be more effectively used in a coaching context (Pain & Harwood, 2004).

### **3.7 Incompatibilities of systems**

From an ecological perspective, cricket coaching can be understood as a series of interconnected nested systems fitting into each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005). However, these nested systems are often incompatible and this becomes evident when the coach’s personal goals differ from organizational goals (Gardner, 1995; Washington & Reade, 2013). Incompatible systems further refer to a misfit between the coach and the coaching profession where the coaching profession demands winning and maintaining complex interpersonal relationships (Gardner, 1995; Raedeke & Kentta, 2013). In this case, the coach is likely to experience work overload, lack of control, insufficient reward, lack of trust, communication and support, absence of fairness and value conflict (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Maslach, Schaufel, & Leiter, 2001; Olusoga, Butt, Maynard, & Hays, 2010).

The incompatibility of systems results in experiences of stress because of the imbalances between demands and resources (Olusoga et al., 2009). In this case, stress cannot be only handled on an individual basis, but needs ecological interventions because it is caused by the context and coaching environment. Focusing on all the different nested

systems can remove salient stressors on coaches, in comparison to only focusing the intervention on the individual and teaching the individual to cope with stressful working environments (Raedeke & Kentta, 2013).

If these stressors are not managed properly, it places great physical and psychological demands on any coach's health, personal well-being and job performance. This can ultimately lead to coaches' burn-out, a term used for people's reaction when they are consistently and continuously exposed to multi-stressors and chronic stress. Burn-out is interpreted beyond the individual coach's problem, but seen in terms of the job-person interaction (Fletcher & Scott, 2010; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Thelwell, Weston, Greenless, & Hutchings, 2008).

Burn-out research has its roots in care giving and service occupations. These occupations consist of relationships and are characterised by a high degree of personal interaction that has the potential to induce stress. However, sport coaches' experiences of stress have received little research attention in comparison with other occupations that are also characterised by personal interactions that evoke stress such as nursing, the police force and teaching professions (Maslach et al., 2001; Olusoga et al., 2009).

Coaches use different ways to cope with coaching stressors (Olusoga et al., 2010), amongst others, accessing psychological services and using psychological skills (Thelwell & Hutchings, 2008; Thelwell et al., 2008). Other ways of coping with coaching stress include education by means of coaching education programs (Cote & Gilbert, 2009).

### **3.8 Summary**

Chapter 3 provided an overview of some of the complexities faced by cricket coaches by using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) description of the context viewed as a series of interconnected nested systems fitting into each other.

Chapter 4 will explore PST as one of the prominent performance development approaches within sport psychology.

## CHAPTER 4

### Psychological Skills Training (PST)

#### 4.1 Introduction

Sport psychologists aim, via psychological interventions, to develop and enhance the performance, as well as psychological well-being of players participating in the competitive sports (Gardner & Moore, 2006; Weinberg & Gould, 2011). There are two prominent performance enhancement interventions or approaches in sport psychology: PST, which will be discussed in Chapter 4 and the MAC approach, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

#### 4.2 PST

PST was developed by Meichenbaum (1977) almost 37 years ago. PST can be defined as “the systematic and consistent practice of mental or psychological skills for the purpose of enhancing performance, increasing enjoyment or achieving greater sport and physical activity self-satisfaction” (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 242).

PST and Mental Skills Training (MST) are often used as synonyms within sport psychology literature (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). For the purpose of my study the term PST will be used.

##### 4.2.1 Origin of PST programs

PST is based on the principles of CBT. PST in sport is the psycho-educational component of CBT (Bernier et al., 2009; Moore, 2009) and is situated in the second wave behaviourism which has offered traditional performance enhancement interventions to the sport context for decades (Hasker, 2010; Moore, 2009; Terry, 2011). The focus here is on reducing, controlling or eliminating internal processes such as negative cognitions and emotions in contrast to classical behaviourism where the focus was on the observable relationship between stimuli, responses and reinforcing consequences (Skinner, 1953).

##### 4.2.1.1 CBT

CBT consists of two combined types of therapies which are Cognitive Therapy by Aaron Beck and Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy by Albert Ellis. These therapies share particular philosophical assumptions and techniques (Branch & Willson, 2010; Claspell, 2010; Dryden & Branch, 2008; Harwood, Beutler, & Charvat, 2010; Persons, 2008).

As mentioned in 4.2.1, PST is based on the principles of CBT which assumes that people have problems because of their faulty thinking (irrational cognitive distortions). This results in problems and unhealthy ways of feeling and behaving. The main objective of CBT is to understand how people's core beliefs (or schemas) maintain their problem and then to develop new ways of thinking in order to resolve their problems. This implies that people need to change their irrational cognitive distortions and core beliefs into rational healthy, positive thoughts. Once that has been accomplished, they will experience the positive consequences of change (Branch & Willson, 2010; Claspell, 2010; Harwood et al., 2010; Persons, 2008).

CBT only addresses past experiences, in so far it can help people to understand and change their own thinking and behaviour in the present. The focus remains on the current problem in the present, and how thoughts perpetuate these current problems in the here and now (Claspell, 2010). That makes CBT a short term intervention which only works in the present to provide immediate and quick relief to problems. The short term nature of CBT interventions is relevant to cricket performance, as coaches and players often request a quick relief to performance related problems.

#### **4.2.2 Philosophy of PST programs**

The aim of PST is to enhance performance in competitive sport by educating players in skills, strategies and techniques they can use to assess, monitor, adjust and change their thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations (Gucciardi & Mallett, 2010). This is often done by means of psycho-education where a professional, for example a sport psychologist, teaches psychological skills to players in addition to their physical and technical skills (Terry, 2011).

Fundamental to PST programs is the longstanding assumption that an "ideal performance state" will lead to optimal athletic performance. An "ideal performance state" is characterised by the reduction of negative thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations and associated with positive cognitions and confidence levels (Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010).

According to PST programs, players need to get to their "ideal performance state" by developing the capacity to control internal states such as thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations, in order to achieve the "necessary" internal state believed to enhance

performance (Moore, 2009). These programs are change-based in that players need to avoid all negative internal experiences by changing them through PST into positive internal experiences. This will lead to players obtaining an “ideal performance state” for optimal performance (behaviour) (Gardner & Moore, 2007). Change-based programs, such as PST, entail the philosophy of negating discomfort and negativity through the change and improvement of a player’s performance states to positivity prior to optimal performance.

#### **4.2.3 Nature of PST programs**

A PST program distinguishes between skills and methods. Skills refer to qualities obtained by players, whereas methods are the procedures and techniques employed to develop skills. Various methods such as physical practice and psycho-education are used to teach players how to apply these psychological skills to their sport (Wann, 1997; Weinberg & Williams, 1998; Weinberg & Gould, 2011).

Vealey (1988) proposed four foundational skills to develop a well-rounded PST program. Firstly, *volition* refers to players’ internal motivation and desire to succeed. The absence of volition will make the PST program unsuccessful because it is not only time-consuming, but also requires commitment and dedication to practice and implement. Secondly, *self-awareness* as players should understand and be aware of their bad habits, thoughts, feelings and problem behaviours. Their awareness also transfers to knowing and adapting their arousal levels and emotional status in order to reach their ideal performance state. The third foundational skill, *self-esteem*, and the fourth, *self-confidence*, imply that players need to display high self-esteem and self-confidence in the sport, as well as other areas of life. These foundational skills outlined by Vealey (1988) confirm that motivation, awareness, high self-esteem and self-confidence are almost pre-requisites in determining the success of a PST program.

#### **4.3 Skills in PST programs**

The training of skills in PST programs follows after players’ foundational skills have been established (Vealey, 1988). PST programs consist of a variety of different psychological skills such as goal setting, arousal control, imagery, self-talk and pre-competition routines, all aiming to enhance athletic performance (Gardner & Moore, 2012; Weinberg & Williams, 1998). These skills can be presented in isolation or be combined into one PST program (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). However, the PST program and the number of psychological

skills involved are always adjusted according to the players' needs, type of sport (team or individual), as well as the time available to present the PST program (Gucciardi & Mallett, 2010; Weinberg & Gould, 2011).

#### **4.3.1 Goal setting and motivation**

Goal setting is a skill or technique used in PST programs to help and guide players attain a specific standard of proficiency within a specific time frame because it maps out a pathway to track realistic performance progress so that players are able to continually monitor themselves and self-improve (Alfred, 2010; Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Gould, 1998; Horn, 2008; Maslan, 2009; Moran, 2004). Goal setting is a powerful strategy to help players make positive changes with regards to their motivation.

Players need to be motivated in order to achieve their goals and that makes motivation a process and not a steady state or condition (Roberts & Kristiansen, 2010). Two types of motivation exist: extrinsic motivation where players rely on other people such as coaches, parents or teammates to motivate them and intrinsic motivation where players manage their own motivation (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996; Weinberg & Gould, 2011).

The dominant theory that explains achievement motivation is the goal achievement theory. Two conceptions of ability exist, namely task orientation and ego orientation. Task orientation is when players focus on mastering a specific task based on their own ability and maximal effort. This is self-referenced and the pursuit of mastery serves as motivation. These players will set challenging goals for themselves based on their own skill ability. They tend to persist for longer and try harder when faced with setbacks and adversity (Hardy et al., 1996; Weinberg & Gould, 2011).

Ego orientation refers to players who set goals and do tasks with reference to others. They are motivated by results, outcomes and extrinsic rewards such as status, money and fame. Ego orientated players are also more likely to display maladaptive behaviour such as tantrums, sulking or dropping out if they perceive themselves as low in ability. They will, therefore, rather set easily attainable goals, thus making sure they achieve them instead of challenging themselves (Hardy et al., 1996; Weinberg & Gould, 2011). Performance is, therefore, dependent on the players' type of motivation before they can achieve their goals.



### 4.3.2 Arousal control

Arousal is defined as a blend of physiological and psychological activity and is often presented on a continuum ranging from deep sleep to extreme excitation (Landers & Boutcher, 1998; Moran, 2004; Smith & Kays, 2010; Weinberg, 2010; Williams, 2010). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss all the theories attempting to explain the relationship between arousal and performance. The drive theory, inverted-U theory and the “individualized zone of optimal functioning” will be briefly discussed as they illustrate the focus of PST. Optimal performance, therefore, requires control of arousal levels so that performance takes place in the absence of discomfort.

The Drive Theory states a positive relationship between arousal and performance. Performance is thus a function of drive (physiological arousal) and habit strength (correct or incorrect response) (Weinberg & Gould, 2011). This implies that increased arousal will enhance performance when the player’s dominant response is the correct one such as the correct bowling action. However, when the player’s dominant response is incorrect, such as the wrong bowling action, it can affect performance negatively. Other external factors such as the presence of others (spectators, teammates or coaching staff) can either increase or decrease arousal (Cox, 1985; Weinberg & Gould, 2011).

The Inverted-U Theory proposes that the arousal-performance relationship follows an inverted-U curve with an optimal level of arousal for each individual task. This implies that, as the complexity of the task increases, the level of arousal required for optimal performance decreases. Levels of arousal below or above the optimal point are associated with inferior performance. Optimal levels of arousal vary according to the nature of the task, the ability of the player and personality dimensions (Cox, 1985; Weinberg & Gould, 2011).

One constant idea of these arousal theories is that players need an optimal level of arousal in order to perform well. Players need to be aware of their own “individual zones of optimal functioning” instead of comparing themselves to other players. Some players need higher levels of arousal (pumped up) before they perform, whilst others need lower levels of arousal (more relaxed or calm) to perform optimally (Cox, 1985; Hanin, 1997, 2000).

Performance is thus, firstly, dependent on awareness of own and personal “individual zone of optimal functioning” and secondly, knowing ways to either increase or decrease their arousal levels to get to the “individual zone of optimal functioning”. Strategies to decrease

arousal are relaxation, breath control, progressive muscular relaxation, pre-competition routines, imagery and self-talk (Williams & Harris, 1998). Arousal-inducing techniques include physical activity, mood words, upbeat music and energizing imagery (Weinberg, 2010; Williams & Harris, 1998). Optimal performance, therefore, relies on the control of arousal levels in order to reach “individual zones of optimal functioning”.

### 4.3.3 Self-confidence

Self-confidence and self-efficacy make up players’ belief of “I can do it” and function as an important determinant for success (Hardy et al., 1996; Vealey & Chase, 2008; Zinsser, Bunker, & Williams, 1998). Self-confidence is when players believe in themselves, their own powers and abilities, as well as expecting the best possible performance outcome (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Weinberg & Gould, 2011). Self-efficacy is related to self-confidence in the conviction to successfully execute specific behaviour that will produce a specific outcome. Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory related players’ personal perception and belief about self to their ability. That implied that strong feelings of self-efficacy regarding a specific task can determine whether the player will succeed or not (Jarvis, 2006; Vealey & Chase, 2008). Players performing with high self-confidence are unstoppable. However, the flip side that fragile and damaged self-confidence are detrimental to performance is also true (Vealey & Vernau, 2010).

There are four main sources of building self-confidence in sport. Firstly, players build self-confidence through persistent and deliberate *preparation* in the form of consistent practise and training. Any short cuts, cutting corners or quick fixes undermine self-confidence. Secondly, players build self-confidence through *regulation* in the form of mental repetitions and strategies like self-talk and other self-regulatory skills such as “fake it until you make it”. This refers to controlling outward appearances such as body language, facial expression, posture and acting with self-confidence to disguise any nervousness during competition. Thirdly, players build self-confidence through *inspiration* by means of supportive and trusted interpersonal relationships with teammates, coaches and parents. Fourthly, players build self-confidence through *validation* and the strongest source of confidence is success. However, all players need to define success for themselves. Although building self-confidence is an internal process reliant on each player, self-confidence is also situated in a complex range of social contexts and relationships with team mates, coaches and organisations (Vealey & Vernau, 2010). Self-confidence as part of PST programs, therefore, guides players to believe that they can only perform well if they display high self-confidence and control their self-efficacy.

#### **4.3.4 Imagery**

Imagery in sport is also called mental rehearsal and is defined as the creation or re-creation of an experience that either happened in the past and is, therefore, stored in the player's memory, or imagining something that can happen in the future which the player has never experienced before (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Vealey & Greenleaf, 1998; Weinberg & Gould, 2011), for example a batsman imagining hitting his first century (100 runs) in a match.

There are various theories that attempt to explain imagery. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed discussion of each, but the following theories explaining and defining imagery practices in sport should be mentioned: the psycho-neuromuscular theory, symbolic learning theory, dual-code theory, bio-informational theory, triple-code theory, attention-arousal set theory, self-efficacy theories, motivational explanations and functional equivalence theories (Nicholls & Jones, 2013; Morris, Spittle, & Watt, 2005; Murphy, Nordin, & Cumming, 2008).

Imagery involves quasi-sensorial, quasi-perceptual and quasi-affective characteristics and takes place in the absence of a real stimulus normally associated with the actual experience (Nicholls & Jones, 2013). Players decide and control what, where and how they imagine their performance. However, when images are not consciously controlled by the player they can be unhelpful and detrimental to performance (Morris, 2010; Weinberg & Gould, 2011). Corresponding with the PST philosophy, imagery is a change-based skill of which the aim is to control mental images. Mental images should be positive in nature because they aim to avoid all negative internal experiences or discomfort, whereas positivity contributes to obtaining an ideal performance state which leads to optimal performance.

#### **4.3.5 Concentration and attention control**

Concentration and attentional control are part of PST programs and in line with the PST philosophy due to the emphasis on control. Moran (2010) advised that concentration should be understood according to the spotlight metaphor. Each player has a mental spotlight when they perform, and this spotlight is always present implying that it can never be lost. Players need to have appropriate and tight control over their mental spotlights, otherwise it wanders around. However, the mental spotlight often shines on task-irrelevant or wrong targets, which is detrimental to performance.

Concentration is part of the multi-dimensional construct of attention (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Nideffer, 1992). Attention has three main dimensions. The first dimension being the selectivity of perception, which refers to players zooming in on relevant information while blocking-out or ignoring any other potential distractions. The second dimension is the ability to coordinate two or more actions at the same time, which is also called divided attention because players share their mental time while they are coordinating several actions simultaneously. The third dimension is making a deliberate decision to invest mental effort in the most important information at a specific or given time (Moran, 2010). Once again, the emphasis is on teaching players to control their concentration and attentional focus as that will lead to optimal performance.

Attention requires that players control both the width, as well as the direction of their attentional focus. On the one hand, the width of attentional focus asks for either a broad (players attentive to several different cues) or a narrow (players attentive to one cue) focus of attention. On the other hand, the direction of attention is internally focused (towards own thoughts and feelings) or externally focused (towards external distractions). Players need the ability to shift their attention as different situations have different attentional demands (Nideffer, 1992; Nideffer & Sagal, 1998). However, control of both the width and the direction of attentional focus is emphasised according to the PST philosophy.

Effective concentration in sport requires that players prepare themselves and make a conscious decision to start concentrating. Mental imagery is used to decide when to switch on (focus) and when to switch off (relax). Players' focus needs to be directed to only one thought or action at a time. Appropriate action is triggered by focusing on a single word or phrase, as opposed to a series of complex technical instructions. Players' minds are focused when they are doing what they are thinking. This implies that the fusion of thoughts and behaviour is facilitated by controlling and concentrating on task-relevant information. Effective concentration further requires that players refocus regularly to keep their minds on track because concentration is fragile and the mind tends to wander. Anxious players should focus outwards or externally instead of inwards because inward focus tends to make players self-conscious, nervous and creates self-doubt which is detrimental to performance (Cox, 1985; Kremer & Moran, 2008; Nideffer, 1992). Effective concentration is, therefore, dependent on control by ignoring or blocking-out either internal experiences or external distractions as the aim is to avoid any discomfort in the performance domain.

### 4.3.6 Self-talk

Self-talk is a psychological skill often used in PST programs and the key to cognitive control because it organises and structures a player's thoughts. Self-talk is an internal dialogue that players have with themselves because every time players think about something they are in a sense talking to themselves. Players can also say out loud what they experience privately or internally (Van Raalte, 2010; Weinberg & Gould, 2011).

The nature of self-talk can be either positive (I am in control) or negative (I am a loser) (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Zinsser et al., 1998). Negative self-talk is often associated with poor performance. Therefore, staying true to the PST philosophy, it should be avoided, changed or controlled to positive self-talk.

Self-talk is used for skill acquisition, changing bad habits, enhancing attentional control, creating or changing a specific mood or affect, controlling effort and building self-efficacy (Weinberg & Gould, 2011; Zinsser et al., 1998). This is done by using task-related statements in the form of self-coaching (watch the ball) or positive self-statements in the form of self-encouragement (I am in control). Mood words in the form of cue words (hit or smash) also control self-talk (Cashmore, 2008; Hatzigeorgiadis, Zourbanos, Mpoumpaki, & Theodorakis, 2009). Other techniques to control self-talk are *thought stoppage*, whereby any negative or counter-productive thoughts are stopped or eliminated because they provide distractions or self-doubt and, therefore, they should be terminated. The trigger word "stop" interrupted or stopped the undesirable thought. Another technique to control self-talk is changing *negative thoughts into positive thoughts*. Positive thoughts refer to encouraging, motivating or supportive thoughts such as "I can do this, or my team believes in me". Irrational and distorted thinking has to be identified and modified at all times (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Weinberg & Gould, 2011; Zinsser et al., 1998).

## 4.4 Research findings on PST for coaches

A literature search<sup>5</sup> was done to determine the research conducted on PST in cricket, specifically concerning cricket coaches as opposed to cricket players.

The efficacy of PST is not the scope of my study because I am not evaluating the success of performance development approaches. However, a brief discussion could be useful.

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<sup>5</sup> The literature search for PST was administered on five data bases, namely PsychInfo, Google Scholar, Ebscohost, Scopus and SportDiscus. There was an unlimited date range. The search terms used were 'PST programs for cricket coaches', 'PST programs for cricket players', 'PST for coaches'; and 'Psychological skills training for athletes'.

Since Meichenbaum (1977) started PST almost 37 years ago there were not a lot of empirical studies investigating the efficacy of different psychological interventions in sport (Weinberg & Williams, 1998). Moore's (2009) qualitative review of traditional PST methods of performance development confirmed this. It was found that multi-component interventions demonstrated slightly better efficacy than single interventions strategies, but the findings were still inconsistent and did not meet the criteria for evidence-based empirical support (Gardner & Moore, 2006). Although PST started with the purpose of enhancing performance in sport (Weinberg & Gould, 2003), empirical studies struggled to demonstrate whether this was in fact true due to the absence of critical examinations (Birrer & Morgan, 2010). That makes the efficacy of combined psychological skill interventions into one PST program an area that still requires further research.

Besides the efficacy of PST, my search of the sport psychology literature found no studies in which PST for cricket coaches was researched. Only a small number of studies were found with regards to PST for cricket players. These will only be mentioned as my study focuses on cricket coaches and not on cricket players. Thelwell and Maynard (2003) examined the effects of a mental skills package on 'repeatable good performance' in cricketers and found that a mental skills package is beneficial to enhance actual levels of cricket performance consistency. Jooste, Van Wyk, and Steyn (2013) investigated the relationship between mental skills and the level of cricket participation and discovered that there were no mental-skills differences between the various levels of cricket-playing performances in the one-day cricket format. Lastly, Weissensteiner, Abernethy, Farrow, and Gross (2012) determined the psychological characteristics and skills fundamental to batting success and found that skilled batsmen had higher mental toughness dimensions relating to motivation.

When my searches were elaborated beyond cricket, it illustrated that research on traditional PST has been extensively done with athletes as participants in other sports such as golf, sailing, gymnastics, rugby, athletics, soccer and field hockey (Thelwell et al., 2008). There were only a small number of studies in which coaches were used as participants (Paquette & Sullivan, 2012). Research with regards to coaches' usage of PST programs appears less extensive if one compares that with the amount of research on athletes' usage of PST (Paquette & Sullivan, 2012; Vealey, 1988). Table 4.1 provides an overview of the research with regards to study, aim, sample size, design, type of sport and findings.

Table 4.1. PST for coaches

Study	Aim of study	Sample size	Design	Sport	Findings
Paquette & Sullivan (2012).	Coaches' usage of PST and its impact on athlete self-confidence	115 coaches 403 athletes	Quantitative behaviour and perception measures	Curling	Coaches used PST significantly to predict athletes' perceptions of coaches, which in turn significantly predicted athlete confidence.
Thelwell et al. (2008).	Coaches' usage of four psychological skills (self-talk, imagery, relaxation and goal setting).	13 elite level coaches	Qualitative methods	Golf, Sailing, Cricket, Gymnastics, Rugby, Athletics, Soccer, Field hockey	Coaches used psychological skills in varying locations, at a number of times, for a number of reasons. They used self-talk and imagery more in comparison to relaxation and goal setting.
Grobbelaar (2007).	Implementation of PST by netball coaches.	265 netball players	Open trial	Netball	Coaches regarded MST as very important, specifically goal setting, self-confidence and concentration. However, 64.29% of coaches had no formal MST.
Gould, Damarjian, and Medbery (1999).	Understanding reasons why coaches don't use mental skills.  Identify better ways to convey this information to coaches.	20 elite junior coaches	Qualitative method	Tennis	Coaches want more MST education on content information, but in a more user-friendly, concrete and tennis specific manner.
Olusoga et al. (2010).	Explore stress responses and coping strategies employed by coaches.	12 coaches	Qualitative method	Unknown	Psychological skills helped 10 coaches to cope with stress related coaching.

#### 4.4.1 Discussion of research findings

The research findings outlined in Table 4.1 illustrate that coaches recognised the value of PST and used it in their daily coaching practices when working with athletes (Gould et al., 1999; Grobbelaar, 2007; Olusoga et al., 2010; Paquette & Sullivan, 2012; Thelwell et al., 2008).

Paquette and Sullivan (2012) found that athletes easily recognised coaches who used PST whilst coaching and that influenced the way they perceived their coaches. These PST informed coaching practices then had a significant influence on the athletes' confidence. Thelwell et al. (2008) outlined further specifics with regards to coaches often using PST in

varying locations and different reasons. This usage can be further maximized to their wide-ranging coaching roles if coaches become aware of their existing psychological skills, as well as outstanding skills still required.

The importance and value of MST<sup>6</sup> for coaches was once again illustrated by Gould et al. (1999) with specific reference to the need for coaches' education in psychological skills. The only South African study located was that of Grobbelaar (2007) and this study highlighted the gap in coaching education. 64.29% of coaches had not received any formal education in MST. Gould et al. (1999) pleaded that MST education needs to include more content information in a user-friendly, concrete and sport (tennis) specific manner. The format of teaching mental skills should also include hands-on concrete examples and activities, more mental skills training resources (audio and video formats) and in the process get away from classroom, content-driven sessions to on-the-court demonstrations and practice teaching sessions. This can be interpreted as a request for teaching mental skills by means of experiential learning because "coaches learn sport psychology by doing!" (Gould et al., 1999).

Although the study by Olusoga et al. (2010) did not focus on coaches' usage of PST, it remains relevant to my study, due to one of its findings that PST can help coaches cope with stress related to coaching. Stress is a prominent part of coaching and requires coping with it (Olusoga et al., 2010).

These findings illustrated that coaches found PST valuable and important. They used them in their daily coaching practices when working with athletes (Gould et al., 1999; Grobbelaar, 2007; Olusoga et al., 2010; Paquette & Sullivan, 2012; Thelwell et al., 2008). PST makes coaches more influential so that they can shape and positively influence athletes' sporting experiences (Paquette & Sullivan, 2012). This can be strengthened if coaches have awareness of the psychological skills they have and still want to learn (Thelwell et al., 2008). However, financial limitations, unavailability of sport psychologists (Grobbelaar, 2007), as well as a lack of knowledge hinders their competence in using, teaching and applying PST confidently and consistently in their coaching practices (Gould et al., 1999; Grobbelaar, 2007).

These considerations emphasised the importance of including performance development approaches, such as PST, in coaching education because firstly, more knowledge can

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<sup>6</sup> Mental Skills Training (MST) is synonymous with PST.



empower coaches to address the psychological component of cricket players. However, Gould et al. (1999) warns that these psycho-education programs need to be more user-friendly by making them more individualised, concrete and sport specific, as opposed to general programs for all sport. Secondly, this will also address the need for and call made by Grobbelaar (2007) that South Africa needs more coaches' education due to the shortage of psychologists working in the sport context. Due to this shortage, the responsibility to introduce and expose players to PST currently falls on coaches.

#### **4.5 PST limitations**

After reviewing the PST literature (4.2 and 4.3) and PST research (4.4) it became apparent that PST also has limitations.

The first limitation deals with the paradoxical effect of PST being a change-driven, as well as a skills-driven approach to the performance development. Gardner and Moore (2006), as well as Moore (2009) indicated that controlling and changing negative internal experiences into positive internal experiences actually has a paradoxical effect because controlling causes negative internal experiences to grow in their negativity. The same applies to attempts to perform without discomfort because the more players attempt to avoid discomfort, the more the focus will be on that. This makes striving towards the ideal performance state with no or minimal discomfort unattainable.

The second limitation deals with reasons why coaches still neglect using PST during coaching sessions despite acknowledging the value of PST in developing players psychologically. Reasons for coaches' neglect are due to a lack of PST knowledge, as well as uncertainty in knowing how to teach or practice psychological skills (Gould et al., 1999; Weinberg & Gould, 2011). Coaches also still believe that champions are born rather than made and that PST is not really needed. Coaches neglect using PST because coaching sessions are still primarily filled with physical and technical training. That leaves little room for the teaching and the application of PST (Weinberg & Gould, 2011).

The third limitation deals with the development of foundational skills as a pre-requisite in determining the success of a PST program. Once these foundational skills are developed, a variety of different psychological skills can be chosen to make up the PST program. This makes every PST program different and unique without requiring a fixed combination of skills. This can easily maintain the coaches' neglect highlighted above because of their uncertainty as to what should be included or excluded in the PST program. Choosing the

right combination of skills can be further challenged by the type of sport, situational constraints and time limitations before competition (Weinberg & Williams, 1998). This was confirmed by Thelwell et al. (1998) where coaches prefer to use self-talk and imagery more in comparison to relaxation and goal setting, whilst in the study by Grobbelaar (2007) coaches used goal setting, self-confidence and concentration.

The fourth limitation refers to the PST philosophy being remedial in nature. PST identifies problems and focuses on players' weaknesses. Players need to learn from mistakes and failures and they require external expert assistance in the form of psychological skills to fix or improve them (Gordon & Gucciardi, 2011). It has limited application within certain multicultural contexts, especially the understanding of problems and characteristics of healthy thinking (Claspell, 2010). PST as situated within CBT focuses on short term interventions and practical everyday problems of players and may not work for players who seek more long term or in-depth interventions (Claspell, 2010).

#### **4.6 Summary**

Chapter 4 provided an outline of skills often used in PST programs, namely goal setting and motivation, arousal control, self-confidence, imagery, concentration and attention control, as well as self-talk. The aim of these skills is to educate players to reach their ideal performance state by controlling, eliminating, reducing or denying discomfort or any negative thoughts, emotions or bodily sensations. Optimal performance can only occur in the absence of the latter and with the ideal performance state achieved.

Chapter 4 further highlighted that after 37 years the majority of PST research is still done with athletes only (Gould et al., 1999; Paquette & Sullivan, 2012). Limited research exists on how coaches use PST. Coaches neglect to use PST due to a lack of knowledge of PST and teaching PST. This highlights the great need for coaches' education on psychological skills to equip them to convey these skills to their players, especially considering the shortage of sport psychologists in South Africa that can fulfil this role.

Chapter 5 will discuss Mindfulness and Acceptance-based therapies, focusing on the MAC approach as an alternative approach to traditional PST programs in sport.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach

#### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 includes the other prominent performance development approach in sport psychology, namely the MAC approach. The MAC approach combined Acceptance-Based Behavioural Therapies such as ACT with mindfulness. Chapter 5 will give a brief overview of Acceptance-Based Behavioural Therapies, ACT, Mindfulness and finally, the MAC approach in sport.

#### 5.2 Acceptance-Based Behavioural Therapies

Acceptance-Based Behavioural Therapies are situated in third wave behaviourism (Roemer & Orsillo, 2009). Third wave behaviourism reshaped behaviourism in the late 1980's because a different perspective on the relationship between cognitions, emotions and behaviour was introduced. The focus shifted from the content of consciousness (cognitions and emotions) to the context and functions of psychological phenomena (Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda, & Lillis, 2006). Third wave behaviourism aims to understand the context in which those contents (cognitions and emotions) are expressed. Acceptance-Based Behavioural Therapies challenged the notion that internal experiences (cognitions, emotions and bodily sensations) need to be controlled or lessened in order to enhance psychological functioning (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999).

Acceptance-Based Behavioural Therapies has a fundamentally different view on human dysfunction as opposed to other psychological therapies such as CBT (Fruzetti & Erikson, 2010). Acceptance-Based Behavioural Therapies work with the acceptance of internal experiences through commitment to personal values (Gardner & Moore, 2010). The opposite of acceptance is called experiential avoidance and refers to the avoidance of internal processes (cognitions and emotions). Avoidance leads to problematic behaviour. Acceptance-Based Behavioural Therapies aim to enhance psychological functioning through the acceptance of internal processes. The efficacy for Acceptance-Based Behavioural Therapies as an intervention for clinical issues and problem areas such as eating disorders, substance abuse, anxiety disorders and depression disorders have been illustrated in the field of clinical psychology. However, it is also applicable to the field of sport psychology due to emphasis on accepting internal processes in an attempt to also enhance psychological functioning with competitive athletes (Gardner & Moore, 2012;

Hayes et al., 1999; Hayes & Strosahl, 2004). A well-known Acceptance-Based Behavioural Therapy in clinical psychology is ACT.

### 5.2.1 ACT

ACT represents a significant deviation from traditional behaviourism and CBT due to the inclusion of acceptance and mindfulness-based interventions (Harris, 2006, 2009; Hayes, Folette, & Lineham, 2004). ACT is a functional contextual intervention approach based on relational frame theory. The core components of functional contextualism refer to people who act-in-context, which means they are never alone, but an interactive whole. People are “whole organisms” who interact within a certain historical or situational context. Furthermore, people need to be sensitive to and understand the role of context in their lives. Lastly, the truth needs to be understood as local and pragmatic (Hayes et al., 1999).

The main aim of ACT is to establish psychological flexibility by focusing on six core processes. Firstly, *acceptance* refers to a position of non-judgmental awareness by actively embracing the experience of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. Control is the opposite of acceptance. In ACT intervention, the theme “control is the problem, not the solution” is evident (Hayes & Strosahl, 2004, p. 7). The reason for this has to do with the paradoxical effect of controlling thoughts and feelings. Controlling amplifies the problem instead of solving it. People have to understand the futility of controlling thoughts and feelings. They need to express willingness to engage in the acceptance process instead of avoidance, suppression or elimination. Although raised willingness might not solve the problem immediately, reduced willingness will amplify the problem. People can engage in the willingness to accept by exposing themselves to distressing events and then refrain from changing, controlling, suppressing or judging the accompanying thoughts, feelings or images (Hayes et al., 1999; Hayes & Strosahl, 2004).

Secondly, *cognitive defusion* implies that thoughts and feelings in particular situations are not always valid and can be conceptualized as inappropriate mental events only. People believe that thoughts are representations of reality and, therefore, it requires action. ACT challenges people’s justifications for their own thoughts and feelings. They can allow themselves to see thoughts as thoughts and feelings as feelings without always wanting to act on them (Hayes et al., 1999; Hayes & Strosahl, 2004).

Thirdly, *self as context* helps people to define themselves as a whole entity. This means that people need to refrain from identifying themselves as mere thoughts and feelings. People's thoughts and feelings are merely private, transient events and not permanent fixtures (Hayes et al., 1999; Hayes & Strosahl, 2004).

Fourthly, engage with the world in the *present moment* and not through preconceptions or expectations often informed by past experiences or futuristic ideas. This will enable people to merely observe unpleasant events, rather than striving to modify, control or change their thoughts and feelings (Hayes et al., 1999; Hayes & Strosahl, 2004).

Fifthly, identify and clarify *values* in various domains (family, work, friends, spirituality or sport) as it relates to idealized goals and desires. People's attempts to control thoughts and feelings, as well as displaying avoidance behavior are the opposite of striving towards value-driven behavior (Hayes et al., 1999; Hayes & Strosahl, 2004).

The sixth and last process includes *committing genuinely to action* that is in line with values. People should focus on behavior that aligns with their values and not with their thoughts and feelings. Genuinely committing to values communicates a willingness to accommodate or experience unpleasant thoughts and feelings with the aim of accepting them (Hayes et al., 1999; Hayes & Strosahl, 2004).

### **5.3 Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is firmly rooted in Buddhist psychology. It is part of the Eightfold Path in the fourth noble truth of Buddhism (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007; Hooker & Fodor, 2008). Mindfulness and being mindful is one path to *sukha* (translated from Sanskrit and Pali as "happiness" or "pleasure") and the ceasing of *dukkha* ("suffering" and "pervasive unsatisfactoriness") (Andersen & Mannion, 2011).

Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges when one is paying attention to purpose in the present moment in a non-judgmental way, by allowing experiences to unfold on a moment-to-moment basis. It is a state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Mindfulness further relates to the self-management of attentional experiences (Dryden, David, & Ellis, 2010; Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007).

Mindfulness occurs or manifests itself when people are coming to their senses or know what they are doing when they are actually doing it. People often function on “automatic pilot” mode which then becomes a habit. Mindfulness aims to improve health and the quality of life, as well as reduces suffering by overriding this automatic pilot mode and making people more attentive to and accepting the present. Mindfulness is practiced by using meditation exercises to help people engage in non-judging awareness of their internal experiences such as bodily sensations and emotions and also in external experiences such as environmental stimuli, sights and sounds (Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 2003, 2005; Kaufman, 2009).

Mindfulness is inherently a state of consciousness and consists of two features, namely awareness and attention. Firstly, awareness can be explained as the “radar” or background of consciousness and consistently monitors the inner and outer environment. It is the conscious registration of stimuli as impinging on people via their five senses (Brown et al., 2007). Secondly, attention is a process of focusing consciousness where there is heightened sensitivity to certain experiences (Brown & Ryan, 2003, 2004). Mindful awareness then, is the enhanced ability to recognise potential internal and external distracters and then employ mindful attention to refocus on the task at hand and is hence, the ability to self-regulate task focused attention (Gardner & Moore, 2007; Gooding & Gardner, 2009).

Buddhist concepts of mindfulness and self are influencing Western psychotherapy practices (Andersen & Mannion, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Siegel, Germer, & Olendzki, 2005) and have been applied in the fields of clinical, counselling and sport psychology. However, Western psychology often uses these meditative or spiritual practices as a technique or quick fix resolution and not as a life style. Mindfulness is further used to increase personal power, self-esteem or to compensate for emotional deficiencies, feelings of emptiness, or then to enhance performance. This can easily lead to taking mindfulness out of context which will result in spiritual materialism. This means that mindfulness and spiritual practices are then used only for material or ego-orientated gain. If mindfulness is used out of context and for spiritual materialism, it becomes a technique or quick fix resolution (instead of a life style) for emotional and psychological challenges experienced in the sport context (Andersen & Mannion, 2011).

Mindfulness is also used for stress reduction and Kabat-Zinn (2005) coined the term Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. It has been developed in the outpatient Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction developed as an adjunct to medical care to assist people dealing with psychological stress linked to chronic medical problems and conditions. The aim of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction is to reduce stress and improve physical health status amongst medical, psychiatric and non-medical populations (Brown & Ryan, 2003; De Petrillo, Kaufman, Glass, & Arnkoff, 2009; Kabat-Zinn 2005; Kaufman, Glass, & Arnkoff, 2009; Shigaki, Glass, & Schopp, 2006; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011).

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction can also feature in sport psychology because increased self-awareness and mindfulness exercises provide ways to help coaches cope with the demands of coaching, especially stressful periods during competition and tournaments. Mindfulness exercises can be incorporated into coaches' lifestyles, relieve stress and prevent conditions such as burnout (Raedeke & Kentta, 2013).

The six core processes of ACT (See 5.2.1) consisting of acceptance, cognitive defusion, self as context, contact with the present moment, values and committed action (Hayes & Strosahl, 2004), combined with mindfulness, constitute the MAC approach used in the sport context (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

## **5.4 The MAC approach**

### **5.4.1 Origin of the MAC approach**

Frank Gardner and Zella Moore (2004a) are the originators of the MAC approach. They combined Acceptance-based interventions such as ACT with Mindfulness in 2001 to develop the MAC approach. The development of the MAC approach used and applied in the sport context was inspired by two aspects. Firstly, research indicating the efficacy of ACT and mindfulness as a psychological intervention in the field of clinical psychology and, secondly, the lack of empirical support for traditional PST models in sport (Gardner & Moore, 2004b, 2007, 2010, 2012).

### **5.4.2 Philosophy of the MAC approach**

The MAC approach promotes a modified relationship with players' internal experiences (thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations) instead of seeking to change the form or frequency thereof (Gardner & Moore, 2004b, 2012). Mindfulness is a way-of-being in

everyday life and develops acceptance of internal experiences (thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations) and external stimuli in a non-judgmental manner (Corey, 2005). Furthermore, mindfulness develops through commitment to value-driven behaviour. It requires attentional focus on task-relevant stimuli and behavioural choices conducive to performance (Gardner & Moore, 2007, 2012), and, therefore, a value-driven approach to the performance development of players.

The MAC approach can be delivered in either five distinct phases (Gardner & Moore, 2004a) or seven modules (Gardner & Moore, 2007). Participants always need to be prepared for and understand that the MAC program is psycho-educational in nature and requires consistent personal commitment of time and effort. This takes place within a working alliance between the person presenting the MAC program, whether it is the coach or the sport psychologist, and the player(s).

From the MAC philosophy flows four main aims: To enhance awareness and acceptance of the individual's cognitive and affective states; to enhance willingness to experience internal experiences even though it is uncomfortable or distressing in nature; to enhance attention to task-focused and relevant stimuli (as opposed to self-focused attention stimuli); and, lastly the individual needs to act in a manner that is in line with his/her personal values (Schwanhausser, 2009).

## **5.5 Components of the MAC approach**

The MAC approach consists of three components, namely mindfulness, acceptance and commitment.

### **5.5.1 Mindfulness and mindlessness**

Mindfulness is the ability to focus one's attention on the present experience and what is happening on a moment-to-moment basis (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007, 2012; Gooding & Gardner, 2009). Players need to be aware and have the ability to recognise their own thoughts and emotions, as well as any external distractions such as critical parents, opponents, bad weather, etc. Then they need to employ mindful attention to refocus on the task at hand which might be batting, bowling or fielding.

Mindfulness and mindlessness are described as opposites. On the one hand, mindfulness is when the body and mind are in the same place during the same time and engaged in the same task. Mindlessness on the other hand is when the body and the mind are in



different places and, therefore, busy with different tasks (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007, 2012; Gooding & Gardner, 2009).

### **5.5.2 Commitment to values**

Commitment refers to consistent actions and behaviour necessary to enhance performance. This commitment includes facing unpleasant internal experiences in pursuit of personal and performance values and value directed choices. These values refer to chosen qualities intrinsic to action that can be instantiated, but not obtained, permanently achieved or finished. The pursuit of these values are, therefore, the “journey” that provides guidance and direction towards the player’s goals. Goals are seen as the final destination because they are object-like consequences of action that can be obtained or finished (Chase, Houmanfar, Hayes, Ward, Vilardaga, & Folette, 2013; Hayes et al., 1999). Personal values should be the anchor point for behavioural decisions (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007).

Motivation differs from commitment. Motivation is simply the desire for something and most individuals are motivated to perform better. However, not all individuals are actually committed to doing anything and everything (even unpleasant and uncomfortable) to perform better (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

### **5.5.3 Acceptance and avoidance**

Acceptance refers to players accepting their experiences in a non-judging way. This means accepting internal experiences (thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations), as well as external stimuli such as noise, in a non-judging way. One, therefore, accepts that in reality any negative thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations are an inevitable part of life, and it is not necessary to control, reduce, eliminate or deny these experiences (Aherne & Moran, 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007, 2012; Hasker, 2010; Kee & Wang, 2008; Schwanhausser, 2009; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010).

The acceptance part of the MAC approach educates people that emotions are a natural human condition. This implies that emotion per se is not the enemy of effective performance, but it is rather the failed efforts and attempts to eliminate, control, or deny these emotions that hinder performance. Failed efforts to eliminate and control emotions are not due to a lack of effort, but rather due to the impossibility of doing it. These efforts should rather be spent on the task at hand (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

If a player is able to accept internal experiences, it could lead to sustained behavioural commitment to performance related values. Acceptance further contributes to performance because all one's efforts can be applied to the task at hand instead of struggling to control or eliminate negative or unwanted thoughts or emotions which have a paradoxical effect anyway. Acceptance does not mean that we as human beings need to accept all unwanted life circumstances. It simply expresses a willingness to sometimes experience unpleasant and painful thoughts and emotions because acceptance is in the service of following performance related values (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

The opposite of experiential acceptance described above is experiential avoidance. Experiential avoidance refers to conscious decisions to avoid any unpleasant thoughts or emotions or experiences of personal discomfort. Coaches and players employ subtle avoidance strategies in order to do so. Subtle avoidance strategies are patterns of avoidance that could interfere with the development of certain skills necessary for performance. The primary reason for avoidance is short-term comfort instead of long-term benefit (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

## **5.6 Research specific to the MAC approach**

A literature search<sup>7</sup> was done to determine what research has been performed on mindfulness and acceptance-based interventions for cricket coaches, as well as cricket players. No studies were found for either.

Literature searches into other sports showed that research, specific to mindfulness and Acceptance-Based interventions, was only found in clinical psychology and in sport psychology (Gardner & Moore, 2012).

Twelve mindfulness and acceptance-based studies were reviewed and are summarised in Table 5.1 with regards to study, aim, sample size, design, sport and findings.

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<sup>7</sup> The literature search for Mindfulness and Acceptance based studies was administered on four data bases, namely PsychInfo, Google Scholar, Ebscohost, Scopus and SportDiscus. There was an unlimited date range. The search terms used were 'Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment approach for cricket coaches', 'Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment approach for cricket players', 'Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment approach for cricket coaches', and 'Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment approach for athletes'.

Table 5.1. Mindfulness and Acceptance-Based research in sport

Study	Aim	Sample Size	Design	Sport	Findings
Gardner and Moore (2004a).	Demonstrate possible value of the MAC approach	2	Case studies	Weightlifting  Swimming (Division I university)	Improved personal best competitive performance, as well as improved concentration and experiential acceptance.
Garcia, Villa, Cepeda, Cueto, and Montes (2004).	Evaluate effectiveness of hypnosis and ACT for improving physical performance	16	Non-randomised matched control	High-level canoeists	Significant improvements in athletic performance for both hypnosis and ACT intervention groups.
Wolanin (2005).	Compare MAC with a non-intervention control group	11	Open trial	Women's field hockey  Volleyball (Division I collegiate level)	The MAC group showed enhanced athletic performance, as well as attention, practice intensity and game-related aggressiveness in comparison to the non-intervention control group.
Kee and Wang (2008).	Study the relationships between mindfulness, flow dispositions and mental skills adoption.	182	Open trial	23 various individual and team sports	Players with increased mindfulness are more likely to experience flow and showed better mental skills adoption.  Speculation whether flow is not a by-product of mindfulness instead of an outcome goal of players.
Schwanhausser (2009).	Evaluate the utility of the MAC approach.	1	Case study	Adolescent springboard diver	Increased mindful awareness, mindful attention, acceptance and flow and diving performance from pre to post intervention. MAC can be applied with the adolescents.
Kaufman et al. (2009).	Investigate if mindfulness is compatible with theories of flow and peak performance in sport.	32	Open trial	Archers (11) Golfers (21)	Mindful sport performance enhancement affects state flow levels in performance enhancement.
De Petrillo et al. (2009).	Determine the effects of mindful sport performance enhancement.	25	Open trial	Long distance runners (recreational)	Increases in state mindfulness and trait awareness. No improvements in actual running performance.

Bernier et al. (2009).	<p>Study 1: explore the relationship between flow state, mindfulness and acceptance.</p> <p>Study 2: Test effectiveness mindfulness and acceptance program compared to PST.</p>	17	Open trial	<p>Elite swimming (10)</p> <p>Elite golf (11)</p>	<p>Study 1: Found a link between mindfulness and flow. Optimal swimming experience related to Csikszentmihalyi's dimensions of flow. New dimension of awareness and acceptance of bodily sensations was added.</p> <p>Study 2: Mindfulness and acceptance group gained a sound understanding of mindfulness and acceptance; became more aware, reached their competition goals and improved their national ranking. Only 2 in PST group improved performance.</p>
Gooding and Gardner (2009).	Determine the relationship between mindfulness, pre-shot routine, trait arousal and basketball free throw shooting percentage.	17	Open trial	Basketball (Men's NCAA Division I)	A combination of mindfulness, skill and competitive experience contributed to the prediction of successful competitive throw percentage.
Hasker (2010).	Illustrate the efficacy of MAC versus PST to enhance athletic performance.	19	Open trial	Basketball Baseball Lacrosse Soccer Golf Track & field (Division II university athletes)	No statistically significant increases in athletic performance in flow for the MAC group compared to the PST group. Both MAC or PST can improve general athletic performance.
Wolanin and Schwanhausser (2010).	Assess the psychological functioning of to serve as moderator before implementation of MAC.	20	Open trial	Volleyball (11) Hockey (9)	<p>Players receiving the MAC intervention improved their performance when compared with the control group.</p> <p>Accurate assessment of subclinical psychological difficulties via the Multilevel Classification System-Sport Psychology before performance development interventions was highlighted.</p>

Thompson, Kaufman, De Petrillo, Glass, and Arnkoff (2011).	Do a one-year follow-up on athletes who attended their previous mindful sport performance enhancement workshops.	57	Open trial	Archers (11) Golfers (21) Long distance runners (25)	Significant increases in awareness and trait mindfulness together with decreases in task-related worries and task-irrelevant thoughts.
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### 5.6.1 Discussion of research findings

The research findings on the MAC approach as performance development program were mixed and inconclusive because some research did not show significant increases in athletic performance whilst others did.

In Hasker's (2010) study, the MAC approach did not show statistically significant increases in athletic performance or flow compared to the Mental Training group. Garcia et al. (2004) indicated that there were significant improvements in both intervention groups (hypnosis and ACT) as seen in the number of repetitions in a rowing exercise. These studies show the possibility of improvement in general athletic performance through the MAC approach, PST, hypnosis and ACT.

In some of the other studies, the MAC approach made significant contributions to athletes' lives as illustrated by the increases in their state mindfulness and trait awareness (De Petrillo et al., 2009). Athletes with increased mindfulness are more likely to experience flow which resulted in better performance (Bernier et al., 2009; Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Kaufman et al., 2009; Kee & Wang, 2008; Schwanhausser, 2009; Thompson et al., 2011; Wolanin, 2005; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010). Gardner and Moore (2004a) further illustrated that the MAC approach lead to improved self-report on concentration and experiential acceptance and athletes' attained personal best competitive performance.

### 5.7 Shortcomings relating to mindfulness and acceptance-based interventions in sport

Diverse shortcomings became evident after reviewing the MAC research and literature. There seems to be an emphasis on the relationship between mindfulness and enhanced athletic performance. The majority of studies discussed in Table 5.1 highlighted that athletes who engage in a performance development MAC program showed increases in their performance due to increases in their mindfulness and levels of flow (Bernier et al., 2009; Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Kaufman et al., 2009; Kee & Wang, 2008; Schwanhausser, 2009; Thompson et al., 2011; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010). The

absence of evidence in the other two components of the MAC approach, i.e. acceptance and commitment indicate that more research is required to determine whether the overall elements of the MAC approach have an effect on athletes' performance.

Gardner and Moore (2012) called for future research by other research teams than the originators of the MAC approach. Independent research laboratories for multiple sports were also suggested. Caution should be exercised with regard to the latter suggestion. Against the background of Martens' (1979) landmark paper that researchers need to get out of laboratories and into the environment of the athlete in order to conduct better field research, independent research laboratories often provide the outcome that the researcher is looking for. My study chose to incorporate Martens' (1979) ideas by doing research in the coaches' environment. It further adhered to Gardner and Moore's (2012) calls for doing research by someone other than the originators of the MAC approach and in multiple sports including cricket.

Living in an age of accountability, evidence-based practice and consumer satisfaction highlighted that research also required classification levels of empirical support. Three levels of empirical support were identified: "well established", "probably efficacious" and "experimental". After only 11 years of research dedication, mindfulness and other acceptance-based interventions moved from a "probably efficacious" status of intervention to "well established", whereas traditional PST models achieved the "experimental" level after 30 years of substantial research dedication (Gardner & Moore, 2012). This illustrates that although mindfulness and Acceptance-Based interventions are new, they also have a lot to offer to the field of sport psychology and performance enhancement.

Accountability and consumer satisfaction also apply to cricket (Gardner & Moore, 2012). The consumer in cricket not only includes players, but also other role players such as coaches. Therefore, the voices and experiences of coaches during the research process should be included. From an ecological approach, including other role players can reach more players within the cricket community (Mpofu et al., 2011).

The unavailability of MAC related research in South Africa is a current shortcoming. Research pertaining to the MAC approach only emerged over the past decade in the field of sport psychology in other countries such as the USA (De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007; Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Hasker, 2010; Schwanhausser, 2009;

Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010); France (Bernier et al., 2009); Singapore (Kee & Wang, 2008); and Spain (Garcia et al., 2004).

MAC related research is also urgently needed in South Africa. South Africa as a country faces serious economic, geographic and educational challenges and dilemmas (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2013). From an ecological approach, these challenges also influence cricket as a sport. MAC related research can illustrate how educating and developing the broader cricket community and their coaches can assist with dealing with the above-mentioned challenges.

### **5.8 Rationale for using the MAC approach in my study**

As outlined above, the MAC approach is one of the two most prominent performance development approaches in sport psychology (Gardner & Moore, 2012). I chose the MAC approach for my study due to its philosophy that performance is about employing mindful awareness and attention in the present moment to focus on the task at hand.

The MAC approach further teaches people to express willingness to accept either internal or external discomfort. Mindfulness further develops through commitment to value-driven behaviour and choices conducive to one's performance goals (Gardner & Moore, 2007, 2012). In my opinion, this philosophy fits well within the South African context. South Africa is a diverse country with many economic, geographic and educational challenges (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2013). Cricket as sport also seems to be influenced by these challenges because at the end of every training session or cricket game, players and coaches return home to their personal circumstances. These challenges often provide unavoidable discomfort in the cricket context, but aiming for a life without discomfort seems unrealistic and unattainable.

Using Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological model as basis for educating the CSA coaches in the MAC approach provides more opportunities for all role players to embrace the MAC philosophy of accepting cumulative discomforts whilst performing and mindfully focusing on the task in the present moment.

### **5.9 Summary**

Chapter 5 gave an overview on Acceptance-Based Behavioural Therapies. It further discussed the origin, philosophy and components of the MAC approach, where

mindfulness is about moment-to-moment awareness and acceptance of internal experiences and external distraction in a non-judging way. Research findings and shortcomings pertaining to the MAC approach were discussed, followed by the rationale for using the MAC approach in my study.

Chapter 6 will discuss experiential learning and other learning theories, as well as the MAC program as presented in my study.



## CHAPTER 6

### Experiential learning

#### 6.1 Introduction

PST and the MAC approach were discussed as the two dominant performance development approaches in the field of sport psychology. Although PST and the MAC approach differ in their philosophical orientations both pre-dominantly use didactical teaching as a way to convey these approaches to players. My study is different because it will attempt to convey the MAC approach primarily through experiential learning with limited use of theoretical knowledge.

Chapter 6 will define experiential learning and trace its origins referring to behaviourism, cognitivism, social learning, humanistic psychology and constructivism. The process of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), as well as research pertaining to experiential learning in sport will be outlined.

#### 6.2 Defining experiential learning

Learning from experience is one of the most fundamental and natural means of learning. It involves learning by doing combined with reflection, whereby experience is the source of learning. Experiential learning is, therefore, “experiential” due to the crucial role that experience plays in the learning process (Moon, 2004).

Kolb (1984, p. 38) defined experiential learning as “a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”. Knowledge, therefore, results from a combination of both grasping and transforming experience. It involves an active, hands-on experience, which is contextualised and applied, rather than a passive process (Chambers, 2011; Gass, 1985; Priest & Gass, 1997). The concepts of experience and learning are, therefore, intertwined and almost inseparable (Beard & Wilson, 2013).

##### 6.2.1 Learning

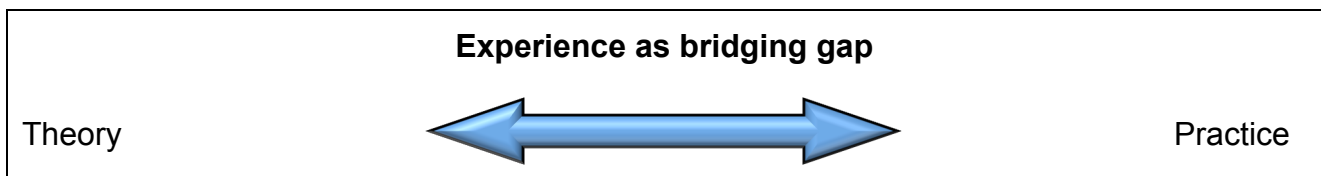
Although learning and teaching occur on a daily basis in cricket coaching for both coaches and players, these concepts differ from one another. On the one hand, teaching is about the action of one person (coach or teacher) who has to facilitate the learning process of another person through guidance, presentation and instruction of simplified versions of material of teaching (Moon, 2004). This happens for example, when coaches as educators teach players various skills in order to develop them as cricketers (Gardner, 1995).

Learning on the other hand can occur without teaching (Cushion, 2011). Learning refers to the potential to become transformed (Cushion, 2011; Law, Ireland, & Hussain, 2007). Learning then is seen as the action of the learner and how the learner processes information from external experiences (new ideas) and internal experiences (ideas already possessed by the learner) (Moon, 2004). The learner in this view can either be the coach learning from coaching educational programs or players learning skills from the coach's teaching. Learning is, therefore, about the acquisition of skills/knowledge, as well as the internalisation of these into the individual's learner identity (Kolb, 1984; Wikeley & Bullock, 2006). That makes learning a process, whereby experience produces a relatively enduring, permanent and adaptive change in a person's behaviour (Hill, 2001; Passer, Smith, Holt, Bremner, Sutherland, & Vliek, 2009).

### 6.2.2 Experience

Experience is defined as: "direct observation of or participation in events as a basis of knowledge or the fact or state of having been affected by or gained knowledge through direct observation or participation" (Merriam-webster.com, n.d.). Experience viewed in this way can be a unifying concept, bridging the gap, whereby theory (academic knowledge, thought, knowing, education, subject, person) always interacts with practice (skills, action, doing, body, nature, object) (Beard & Wilson, 2013; Bower, 2013; Ruhanen, 2005) (See Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1. Experience as unifying concept (Adapted from Beard & Wilson, 2013)



A person's theory consists of abstract conceptualizations of how thoughts and external objects relate to one another in a consistent manner, subsequently informing and guiding the person's practice, as well as providing insight into the events involved. If the person's practical theory does not match his/her practical experience it leads to either the revision of the person's theory or the revisiting of the experience, in an attempt to fit it into the way he/she sees the world (Beard & Wilson, 2013). Participating in the MAC program created an experience of performance development for coaches. Coaches' experiences, therefore, functioned to bridge the gap between experientially learning about the MAC approach

(theory) and utilizing and conveying it to daily coaching practices. Experience becomes the source of learning.

### **6.3 The origins of experiential learning**

Experiential learning provides a holistic, integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behaviour derived from several learning theories (Kolb, 1984). Five main perspectives, namely behaviourism, cognitivism, social learning, humanistic psychology and constructivism provide an overview with regards to past and present ideas about human learning. Although these are different perspectives, “experience” is associated with each of them (Beard & Wilson, 2013).

#### **6.3.1 Behaviourism**

Behaviourism focuses on how the external environment governs and shapes people’s actions and behaviour. People learn habits, ideas and knowledge from both their previous experiences in life and stimuli in their immediate environment. This determines the way they act and behave (Passer et al., 2009).

Prominent theorists in behaviourism were Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) who discovered classical conditioning and revealed how a person (organism) made associations from environmental events; thus, how the environment shapes behaviour. John B. Watson (1878-1958) stated that human beings are products of learned experiences which made observable behaviour the focus. Edward Thorndike (1874-1949) revealed that learning is the key to understanding how previous experiences shape and mould people’s behaviour. He examined how people learn through consequences of their actions, meaning the law of effect. B.F. Skinner (1904-1990) illustrated the process of operational conditioning and that the real causes of behaviour reside in the outer world and not within the person. Behaviour is, therefore, shaped by either positive consequences (rewarding) or negative consequences (punishment) (Cassidy et al., 2009; Fuoss & Troppmann, 1981; Hill, 2001; Passer et al., 2009). Experience in the behaviouristic mould is a generic form, assuming that a collection of learned behaviour (to be studied in behaviouristic fashion) derives from experiences. Behaviourism proposes observational learning as a means in which people learn and, therefore, do not have to experience an event in order to learn from it.

#### **6.3.2 Cognitivism**

Unlike behaviourism, cognitivism deals in an automatic way with experience itself. Cognitivism proposes that learning transforms internal cognitive structures, short and long

term memory, beliefs or schemas which are usually developed through early childhood experiences and reinforced through learning. These schemas are often linked to problems. So, it is important to identify these schemas and cognitive distortions and modify them through cognitive and experiential strategies (Beck, 1995; Claspell, 2010; DeRubeis, Webb, & Tang, 2010). The cognitive focus sees people as unique and intelligent. The learning process happens within the person’s brain by thinking, remembering, analysing, processing and making sense of the world (Beard & Wilson, 2013).

The major contributor was Lewin (1951) who stated that learning is an integrated process occurring in a four-stage cycle (See Figure 6.2). An immediate concrete experience forms the basis for observations and reflection. These observations and reflections are then assimilated into a “theory” through the formation of abstract concepts and generalizations. This is followed by forming new implications for action to serve as a guide when acting, thereby creating new experiences (Kolb, 1984).

Figure 6.2. Lewin’s feedback process



### 6.3.3 Social learning

The major contributor to social learning was Albert Bandura (Bandura, 1977) who proposed that people learn by observing, copying and modelling the behaviours of others, for example significant adults in their lives (coaches, teachers or parents). People’s thoughts, expectations and behaviour are shaped and influenced by the environment and

their prior learning experiences (Hill, 2001; Meyer, Moore, & Viljoen, 1997; Passer et al., 2009).

### 6.3.4 Humanistic psychology

Humanistic psychology proposes that learning is person-centred by emphasising the role of personal agency and fulfilment of potential. Carl Rogers (1969) was a major contributor and expressed that warmth, acceptance and the nurturing of people are central to learning. If people are treated the right way, they have it within themselves to learn and work towards solving problems (Beard & Wilson, 2013).

### 6.3.5 Constructivism

Constructivism emphasises people's active involvement and social interaction in learning. Learning is, therefore, active and contextualised and both cultural and social contexts become increasingly important (Beard & Wilson, 2013). The learning process involves an internal construction of subjective meaning of an objective reality. There are two main branches of constructivism, namely cognitive constructivism and social constructivism (Cassidy et al., 2009; Chambers, 2011).

*Cognitive constructivism* emerged from the work of John Dewey's (1938) ideas of the learning process. He viewed it as a complex intellectual operation. This is similar to the Lewinian model (Kolb, 1984). Dewey's views included observation, knowledge and judgement. Figure 6.3 explains that people first observe their surrounding conditions. People then use their knowledge or recollection to review what has happened in similar situations in the past. Lastly, judgement is applied, whereby they use what was recalled and observed before they act.

Figure 6.3. Dewey's learning process



*Social constructivism* emerged from the work of Vygotsky (1978) who proposed that learning occurs in a society that is based on social relationships and interactions between people. Learning, therefore, always occurs in the interaction and collaboration between teacher and learner (Wikeley & Bullock, 2006). This makes cognitive learning and development an interactional social, historical and cultural process. People use new knowledge and skills to construct meaning for themselves within a context and through interaction with others (Cassidy et al., 2009; Cushion, 2011; Potrac & Cassidy, 2007).

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized two key points. The first key point is co-construction which refers to a dynamic process of knowledge creation that occurs between people. The second key point is the zone of proximal development. This refers to a context in which people's higher mental functions take place. The zone of proximal development fills the gap between an "actual developmental level" (what is known to them from past experience) and the higher level of "potential development" (what is possible to know). Stated otherwise, the zone of proximal development exists between what can be achieved by the child (learner) alone and what can be achieved with assistance from significant others (Cassidy et al., 2009).

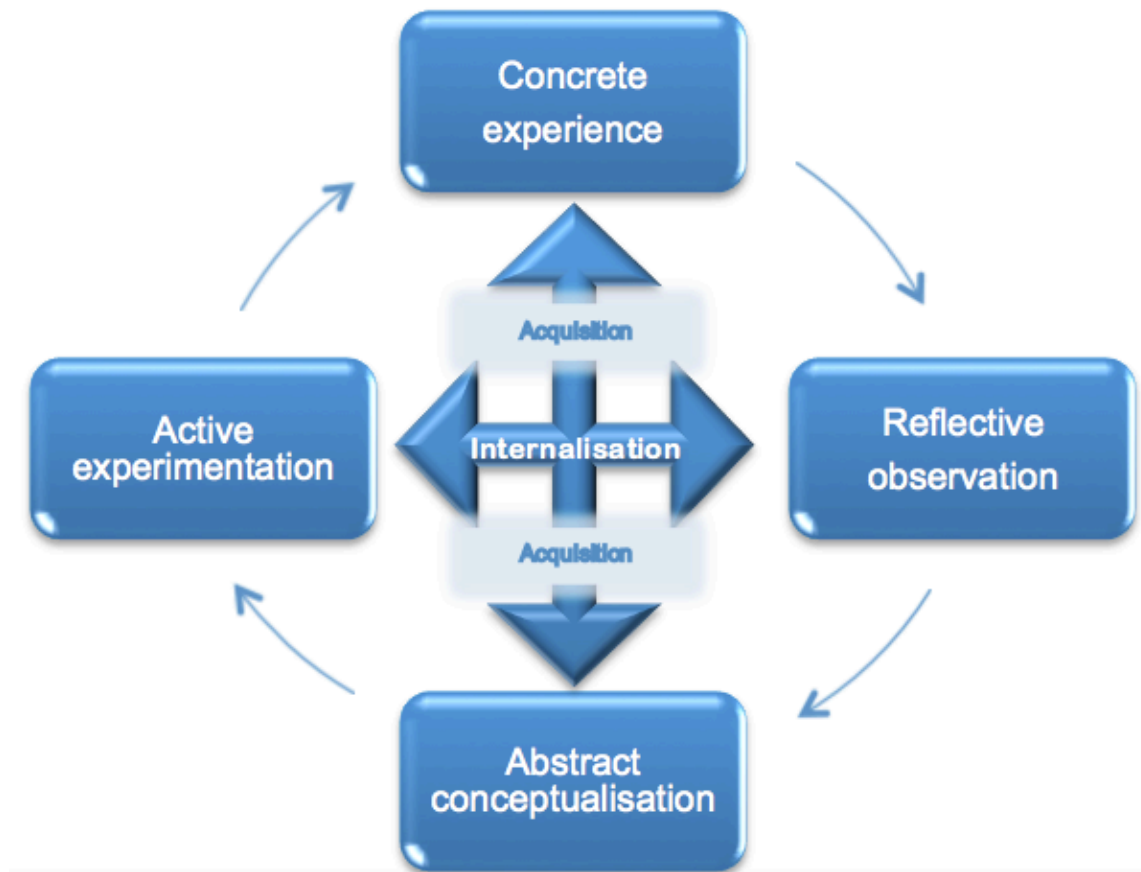
In sport, coaches are seen as significant others who help players (learners) through collaborative learning in this proximal zone of development to improve their performance. This is done through conversations or dialogue so that collaboratively they can construct knowledge and meaning about performance (Cassidy et al., 2009; Law et al., 2007; Potrac & Cassidy, 2007).

#### **6.4 The process of experiential learning**

David Kolb (1984) made an important contribution to the development and utilization of experiential learning in a breadth of subjects such as management, education, psychology, nursing, medicine and law. Kolb's experiential learning cycle is far reaching and the most enduring of the learning theories (Beard & Wilson, 2013).

The process of experiential learning consists of a learning cycle with four stages. Concrete experiences (experiencing) are the basis for reflective observation (reflections). These reflections are assimilated into abstract conceptualisation (thinking) from which new implications for active experimentation (action) can be drawn (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009) (See Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4. Kolb's experiential learning cycle (adapted from Kolb, 1984)



The acquisition stage of learning consists of two dialectically related modes that are necessary for learners to *grasp* experiences, namely concrete experience and abstract conceptualisation. The internalisation of knowledge consists of two dialectically related modes that are necessary for learners to *transform* their experience into abstract concepts, namely reflective observation or active experimentation. There are only a few learners who have equal skills in all four areas as most learners develop an orientation towards one of the poles in each dimension. Kolb called this their preferred learning styles (Kolb, 1984; Law et al., 2007; Turesky & Gallagher, 2011; Wikeley & Bullock, 2006).

New knowledge, skills and attitudes are achieved through conflict and confrontation among these four modes of experiential learning. The way in which conflict and confrontation are handled and resolved determines the level of learning (Kolb, 1984).

#### 6.4.1 Concrete experience

The first stage of Kolb's experiential learning cycle is creating a concrete experience. Before learning can take place, learners need to experience an event. Having a concrete experience provides a starting point to understand how they experience the situation, as

well as challenges in relation to the world (Law et al., 2007). However, learners have to engage and involve themselves openly, willingly and without bias in new experiences (Kolb, 1984).

In the coaching context players and coaches learn by doing, thus having a concrete experience and not merely by receiving instructions on what to do. A concrete experience provides them with opportunities to perform activities in order to experience them. Learning by doing is applicable to physical, technical, tactical and psychological skills in sport. Coaches, therefore, need to provide ample opportunities for players to experience and practice skills and techniques, as opposed to just talking about them (Fuoss & Troppman, 1981). In my study the concrete experience was created through participation in the MAC program as suggested by Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

#### **6.4.2 Reflective observation**

Reflective observation is the second stage of Kolb's experiential learning cycle. After experiencing an event or situation, learners need to appreciate and observe the nature of the event. Mere exposure to a concrete experience cannot bring about learning on its own (Miles, 2011) because people don't learn from experience per se, but from reflecting on the experience they had (Beard & Wilson, 2013). Reflection, therefore, requires critical evaluation of the concrete experience from many perspectives, as opposed to shallow and meaningless descriptions (Cushion & Nelson, 2013). It enables learners to frame their learning experience by drawing meaning from lessons learned, thereby comparing the present event with past experiences and thinking about future possibilities (Turesky & Gallagher, 2011).

Reflection, as used in this stage, is defined by Law et al. (2007, p. 39) as "a cognitive process that involves both thinking and feeling about an experience (past or present). Thereby a new consciousness emerges with a new appreciation, understanding and insight about that experience". Reflection is, therefore, a form of self-assessment, which can be made known to others by disclosing and sharing it verbally or through writing. Moon (2004, p. 158) defines reflection differently by stating that "reflection is the means by which awareness of experience is recognized as knowledge and is made explicit and generalizable to other situations".

The reflection observation stage of Kolb's experiential learning cycle requires learners to be open-minded by listening to more than one side of a story. Giving full attention to alternative versions provides opportunities for altering learners' dearest beliefs. Reflection



observation further asks for wholeheartedness, whereby learners are totally absorbed or interested in a particular subject. Displaying responsibility enables learners to consider and accept the consequences of their actions, making sure it is in line with their integrity and beliefs (Dewey, 1916) cited in Cassidy et al. (2009).

Reflection in my study encouraged coaches to evaluate and make sense of any personal or professional experiences that arose from participating in the MAC program. This was done by using both written and oral reflections over a six month period.

### **6.4.3 Abstract conceptualisation**

Abstract conceptualisation is the third stage of Kolb's experiential learning cycle and it amounts to the reflective process through which observations and experiences are translated into logical and meaningful concepts or theories (Kolb, 1984; Law et al., 2007). Reflection remains a prominent feature throughout the experiential learning cycle, once again present in abstract conceptualisation, requiring ample opportunities and enough time to develop (Cushion & Nelson, 2013). In my study abstract conceptualisation occurred by means of both written and oral reflections over a six month period.

### **6.4.4 Active experimentation**

Active experimentation is the fourth and final stage of Kolb's experiential learning cycle. Learners have to utilize and display their own generated theories and abstract concepts by taking action, making decisions and solving problems (Kolb, 1984; Law et al., 2007). Active experimentation also refers to the conveyance of personal theories and learning to other contexts of learners' lives (Gould, Carson, & Blanton, 2013). Active experimentation in my study occurred when the cricket coaches displayed and transferred their experiential learning of the MAC approach to their personal lives and coaching careers.

However, Moon (2004) warns that although active experimentation is ideal, it is not always a simple element of the learning cycle. Learners struggle to transfer their learned experiences from one context (psycho-education) to another (coaching), especially if the contexts are very different from one another. This highlights the importance of consistently reminding learners throughout the experiential learning process that learned skills and theories should be transferred to other contexts. Facilitators and leaders, therefore, need to provide ample reflective opportunities and follow-up discussions where learners action their theories in other contexts (Gass, 1985).

In a coaching context coaches are more likely to utilize learned psychological skills if the learning was meaningful and took place in an appropriate context and in a positive group environment with supportive group facilitators or program leaders (Gould et al., 2013). Coaches' new learning should be clarified and related to their current coaching situation by anticipating or imagining the nature of their improved coaching practice. This can be done by addressing questions such as, "How will my new learning make my current coaching situation different?" This is a form of prospective learning whereby coaches imagine a variety of futures (Beard & Wilson, 2013). Imagination plays a crucial role in this sequence to help coaches imagine how their current coaching situation can improve by displaying and conveying their new learned skills and theories to other contexts of their lives (Moon, 2004).

## **6.5 Research pertaining to experiential learning in sport**

Research pertaining to experiential learning in sport was explored because of its importance in my study. Experiential learning is used as a medium to convey the MAC approach to coaches. It is often also used in adult learning due to the person's active involvement and interaction in the learning process (Cushion, 2011; Law et al., 2007).

A literature search<sup>8</sup> was done to determine what research has been conducted in the field of sport psychology, using experiential learning in cricket as means of educating coaches. No such studies were found. When my searches were broadened to other sports, there was only a handful of studies addressing coaching from an experiential perspective (Becker, 2009; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). Some research was located, using experiential learning in coaches' education (Galvan et al., 2012; Knowles, Borrie, & Telfer, 2005; Nelson & Cushion, 2006; Vella, Crowe, & Oades, 2013). Furthermore, research indicated that experiential learning is more widely used in other disciplines such as the field of sport management (Charlton, 2007; Dees & Hall, 2012; Pierce, Petersen, & Meadows, 2011; Schoepfer & Dodds, 2010), travel and tourism (Bethell & Morgan, 2011; Ruhanen, 2005), as well as a range of other disciplines such as psychology, education, nursing, medicine and law (Beard & Wilson, 2013).

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<sup>8</sup> The literature search for experiential learning studies was administered on four data bases, namely PsychInfo, Google Scholar, Ebscohost, Scopus and SportDiscus. There was an unlimited date range. The search terms used were 'Experiential learning in cricket', 'Experiential learning in sport', 'Experiential learning in cricket', 'Experiential learning for sport coaches', and 'Experiential learning for sport coaches education'.

Studies by Knowles et al. (2005) and Galvan et al. (2012) emphasise the need for reflection as part of learning in coaching education programs because it encourages coaches to explore their coaching philosophies, personal positions and ways of coaching in order to be more player-centered. Nelson and Cushion (2006), as well as Vella et al. (2013) confirmed these findings by stating that coaches have a need for learning to be situated within experiential learning approaches in the form of reflection, practical demonstrations and discussions to help them apply the program content to coaching practice. Coaches, therefore, learn best by creating opportunities in coaching educational programs where they reflect on their practical coaching experience (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). Experiential learning, incorporating both reflection and experience is, therefore, an essential element of coaching education. Reflective coaches are developed through coaches' educational programs and lead to social action, achieving social change within the coaching context (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003).

Despite reflection being a prominent feature present throughout the experiential learning cycle, it has not been used extensively in coaching. My study will incorporate the above findings and Kolb's experiential learning cycle discussed in 6.4, by encouraging coaches to be aware and reflect verbally and in writing on their learning experiences throughout the actual presentation of the MAC program. Reflection was further encouraged by interviewing the coaches over a six month period.

## **6.6 Summary**

Chapter 6 consisted of discussing the nature of experiential learning by focusing on learning and experience. This was followed by defining experiential learning and the origins thereof. The process of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) was utilised in my study. It started with creating a concrete experience for the cricket coaches through their participation in the MAC program. This was followed by reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation, where both written and oral reflections were used over a six month period. The final stage, active experimentation, occurred when the cricket coaches displayed and transferred their experiential learning of the MAC approach to their personal lives and coaching careers. Chapter 6 concluded with a discussion relating to research pertaining to experiential learning in sport.

Chapter 7 will discuss the methodology of my study.

## CHAPTER 7

### Research methodology

#### 7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 presents a description of the research methodology in my study. I will pay specific attention to the purpose of my research, my research position (qualitative research), philosophical underpinnings (phenomenology), my research strategy (IPA), participants, research process, research ethics and research quality.

#### 7.2 Purpose of the research

The purpose of my study was to generate accounts of how mindfulness, acceptance and commitment of a group of South African cricket coaches developed through participating in an experiential learning process of the MAC program.

#### 7.3 Research position: Qualitative research

Research in sport psychology is guided by both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Quantitative research has been used predominantly in the field of sport psychology (Biddle, Markland, Gilbourne, Chatzisarantis, & Sparkes, 2001; Singer & Burke, 2002). Therefore, knowledge and research in sport psychology is regarded as an objective and scientific enterprise. Quantitative research approaches aim to measure and verify certain constructs in objective ways within a laboratory-type environment, eliminating any distorting influences from the personal perspectives and subjective properties of researchers or subjects (Kvale, 1996). The dominant epistemology and methodology used in sport psychology is logical positivism. Positivism drives mainstream psychology, including behaviourism, but is not limited to that. Positivism is associated with the outsider perspective, thus yielding quantitative data (Martens, 1987, 2007).

Calls for greater methodological diversity within the field of sport psychology have increasingly lead to using qualitative research methods (Dale, 1996; Fahlberg, Fahlberg, & Gates, 1992; Schutz & Gessaroli, 1993; Sparkes, 1998; Streaan, 1998; Streaan & Roberts, 1992). Qualitative research explores the complexity and subjectivity of lived experience and takes researchers out of the laboratory and into real-life contexts to study human phenomena (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research is sensitive to the real-life contexts in

which people live (Kvale, 1996) and engage in exploring, describing and interpreting the personal and social experiences of participants (Smith, 2003). The coaching context is the place where coaches and players spend most of their time. Field research contributes to observing and understanding coaches' and players' experiences within the cricket context instead of only measuring, assessing and quantifying their behaviour (Dale, 1996; Martens, 1987, 2007).

Considering the subjective nature of South African cricket coaches' experiences of participating in an experiential learning process of the MAC program, it would appear that the most appropriate format of research for my study would be a design falling within the broad framework of qualitative research.

Smith (2003) describes various qualitative methodologies available for understanding subjective data and includes descriptive and interpretative phenomenology, narrative psychology, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, focus groups and cooperative inquiry. IPA is grounded in the philosophy of phenomenology and associated with the insider perspective yielding qualitative data.

#### **7.4 Philosophical underpinnings: Phenomenology**

Phenomenological research engages in understanding the subjective data generated through people's experiences. Phenomenological research has two variations, namely descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology.

##### **7.4.1 Descriptive phenomenology**

Descriptive phenomenology is about consciousness as a necessary condition for all human experience. Research questions consist of general and open questions. The purpose of descriptive phenomenology is to search for general, rich descriptions of lived experience. Descriptive phenomenology proposes withholding in-depth literature reviews to prevent personal biases and attempts to strip away prior experiential knowledge so that it can not influence the research process. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction are used to conduct analysis with the aim of separating and decontextualising the phenomenon from the world. The outcome is to provide a universal description of the phenomenon which is free from personal biases and prior knowledge and consists of highlighting common features (Finlay, 2008, 2009; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

### **7.4.2 Interpretive phenomenology**

Interpretive phenomenology is about understanding the phenomena in context through being-in-the-world. This is how we make sense and attach meaning to our world through our own experience by using language. The broad research question is carried by highly specific questions. The purpose of interpretive phenomenology is to understand, explore and interpret human experience in its context and to find out how people search for significance and meaning in their lives. Interpretive phenomenology uses literature reviews to address situatedness in relation to language and the broader social, political and cultural contexts in which people live. The hermeneutic circle and awareness of the researcher's own prejudice is used to conduct analysis with the aim of understanding the fore-structure as fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception. The outcome is to provide an idiographic description of the meaning of the phenomenon, whereby the researcher and participant work together to make their interpretations and perceptions meaningful (Finlay, 2008, 2009; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Greatrex-White, 2008; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). IPA flows from interpretative phenomenology and was suggested as a "logical" choice based on the purpose of my research mentioned in 7.2.

### **7.5 Research strategy: IPA**

IPA is a research method aimed at understanding and getting an appreciation of the subtle nuances of the meaning people assign to their experiences of a specific phenomenon. IPA further allows interpretations that analyse meaning, cognition, affect and action with awareness of the contextual and cultural background against which the data is generated (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). When people experience something significant in their life, they will start to reflect on the significance of what is happening to them and IPA aims to engage in these reflections (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). As researcher, I wanted to engage the coaches' own reflections by exploring their insights as being the experts of their own experience.

IPA is increasingly used as a method in qualitative research (Smith, 2011). It has been used extensively in the field of health psychology and to a lesser extent in the field of sport psychology.

Smith (2011) reviewed IPA studies done between 1996-2008 on three of the major data bases, namely Web of Science, Medline and Psycinfo. 293 papers on IPA research were

published. These studies were all done in health psychology with specific reference to experiences of illness very prominent in the UK.

IPA has also been used in the field of sport psychology, but to a lesser extent. There is also scope for IPA research to become less disease- and deficit-focused and give participants a chance to express their views about strengths, growth, wellness and quality of life (Reid et al., 2005). In principle this makes IPA applicable to the field of sport psychology and in particular the sporting context by considering cricket coaches' experiences about performance development, which is the opposite of disease- and deficit-focused approaches.

A literature search<sup>9</sup> was done to determine the research conducted with IPA in cricket, but no results were found. I was able to locate seven studies where IPA was used in other sports:

Warriner and Lavalley (2008) analysed women's experiences retiring from elite female gymnastics; Hefferon and Ollis (2006) analysed the subjective experience of "flow" in professional male and female dancers; Lavalley and Robinson (2007) examined factors that facilitate or hinder women's self-identity formation and adaptation after retiring from artistic gymnastics; Turner, Barlow and Ilbery (2002) studied the experiences of professional male football players living with osteoarthritis; Nicholls (2007) explored coping effectiveness among Scottish international adolescent golfers; Cotterill, Sanders and Collins (2010) explored the nature of pre-performance routines in male international golfers, and lastly, Larkin and Griffiths (2004) explored how bungee jumpers and ecstasy users made sense of risk.

The focus of all these studies was to understand a variety of experiences of athletes as participants in a variety of sports such as gymnastics, football, golf, dance and adventure sport. The above studies neither considered coaches as participants nor the sport of cricket. My study is, therefore, unique in this regard by considering how cricket coaches as participants developed and made sense of the MAC program through a process of experiential learning.

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<sup>9</sup> The literature search for IPA in sport was administered on five data bases, namely PsychInfo, Google Scholar, Ebscohost, Scopus and SportDiscus. There was an unlimited date range. The search terms used were 'Interpretive phenomenological analysis in cricket' and 'Interpretive phenomenological analysis in sport'.

## **7.6 Participants**

### **7.6.1 Sampling method**

My study used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a conscious selection of a small number of participants that meet certain inclusion criteria. This sampling procedure is particularly useful in selecting participants who might provide rich information that will enable the researcher to conduct an in-depth study on the phenomenon of interest. Inclusion criteria may also evolve over the course of analysis (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Russell & Gregory, 2003). Purposive sampling also allowed me, as the researcher, to repeatedly return to the data to explore new cases or perspectives. It ensures that a more homogenous group of participants, for whom the research question will be particularly relevant, would take part in the research project (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

### **7.6.2 Sampling criteria**

The following sampling criteria applied to all participants selected for my study:

- Participants who attended the CSA Coaches acceleration program initiative
- Participants who participated and experienced the MAC program
- Participants who were sufficient in English
- Participants who were coaching on provincial and/or national level
- Participants who have completed the Level III or IV coaching course with CSA

### **7.6.3 Research participants**

Originally 30 male CSA cricket coaches took part in the one day MAC workshop presented as part of the Coaches-acceleration-program-initiative. This workshop was coordinated and formed part of their continued training under the auspices of the manager of Coaching at CSA. Participation in the one-day workshop was compulsory, but participation in this research project was completely voluntary. Only 10 male participants (six black coaches and four Caucasian coaches) volunteered afterwards to participate in the research project. Being a qualitative study there is no prescribed number of participants in IPA research (Smith et al., 2009).

## **7.7 Research process**

The research process consisted of eight phases, namely permission, an information session, program development, program facilitation, interviews, transcription, analysis and reporting.



### **7.7.1 Permission**

The first phase of the project was to obtain permission from the Postgraduate and Ethics Committees of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria. Permission was granted by the Chief Executive Officer of the hpc for the research to be conducted on its premises (See Appendix A), as well as the Manager: Coaching of CSA (See Appendix B). Once research permission had been granted, I continued with the research process.

### **7.7.2 The information session**

Subsequent to the granting of permission, I held an information session with each of the interested cricket coaches to explain the research process and obtain their informed consent (See Appendix C).

### **7.7.3 Program development**

The MAC program for my research was based on my personal and professional experience as a sport psychologist working with the MAC approach underpinned by the relevant academic knowledge. This is in line with IPA requirements, whereby the researcher's knowledge and experience is essential in the research process (Smith et al., 2009).

#### **7.7.3.1 Program outline**

The MAC program, presented in a one-day workshop (eight hours) consisted of five distinct phases as proposed by Gardner and Moore (2004a), namely psycho-education, mindfulness, value identification and commitment, acceptance, as well as integration. (See Appendix D for the MAC program).

- *Phase 1: Psycho-education*

The purpose of Phase 1 was to prepare coaches for the process of psycho-education. It was important to establish a working alliance between me, as the sport psychologist, and the coaches. The rationale, goals and foundations for the MAC program were explained, ultimately enhancing hope for performance development through the possibility of behavioural change (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007). Experiential learning activities used in Phase 1 were video clips, written personal reflection and small group discussions.

- *Phase 2: Mindfulness*

The importance of mindfulness, mindful awareness and attention in behaviour change was addressed in Phase 2. The concept, 'cognitive fusion' was explained and entails treating

thoughts as though they are ‘things our mind tells’, which is separate and different from the literal truth (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007). Mindfulness was experienced in Phase 2 through a process of experiential learning and included the brief centering exercise, find an object activity, washing a dish activity, written personal reflections and discussions.

- *Phase 3: Value identification and commitment*

The purpose of this phase was to understand and explore the role of values in a performance context. The differences between goals and values were emphasized. Values were explained as chosen qualities intrinsic to action that can be instantiated, but not obtained, permanently achieved or finished. The pursuit of these values are, therefore, the “journey” that provides guidance and direction towards the player’s goals. Goals are seen as the final destination because they are object-like consequences of action that can be obtained or finished (Chase et al., 2013; Hayes et al., 1999). Personal values should be the anchor point for behavioural decisions. The role of emotions was explored and also the difference between value-directed and emotion-directed choices and behaviour. Phase 3 further aimed to enhance commitment to performance related values through the activation of specific value-directed behaviours (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007). Experiential learning used in Phase 3 included the values activity, values and goals activity, personal evaluation forms, video clips, written personal reflections and small group discussions.

- *Phase 4: Acceptance*

The primary goal in this phase was to explain the difference between experiential avoidance and experiential acceptance. The benefits of pursuing performance goals and desires by living a value-based life were explained (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007). Experiential learning used in Phase 4 were the hearing activity, the about-your-life activity, the don’t activity, the eating activity, written personal reflections and small group discussions.

- *Phase 5: Integration*

The purpose was to summarize all concepts covered in the MAC program up to this point. Coaches were encouraged to regularly engage in the MAC skills, exercises and behaviours that enhance performance (Gardner & Moore, 2007). Experiential learning used in Phase 5 were the task-focused attention activity, case studies, video clips, written personal reflections and small group discussions.

#### 7.7.4 Program facilitation

The MAC program in my study was facilitated differently than the original MAC program developed by Gardner and Moore (2007), which is mainly facilitated through didactical teaching methods by means of sharing theoretical information, completing MAC related forms and using limited activities such as the brief centering exercise and washing-a-dish activity (Gardner & Moore, 2007). My study used experiential learning as the way in which the MAC program was presented to participating adults because it is a central part of my research question. Furthermore, it is a well-known and acknowledged approach in adult learning (Cushion, 2011). Experiential learning focuses on “doing” in addition to “hearing” and “seeing” that dominates the more traditional, didactic learning approaches (Ruhanen, 2005) often used in psycho-education programs.

During the facilitation process a printed version of the MAC manual was given to each coach as resource and for future reference. Open spaces in the manual were used to complete their personal reflections before moving on to the next phase. Coaches spontaneously used their manuals during their interviews. A slide show based on the MAC manual was also used during the facilitation process. The aim was to provide some structure for the “team talk” sections in each phase.

The MAC program was facilitated through using the outline in Appendix D.

- “*Score board*”

The content of each phase was displayed in the “score board” section and used to set the context for the phase that was about to follow. It outlined the objectives for each phase.

- “*Practice sessions*”

The “practice sessions” consisted of MAC related activities and watching video clips and was used to generate experiences. Kolb (1984) called this part of the experiential learning cycle a concrete experience (See 6.4.1).

- “*Team talk*”

The “team talk” section consisted of concise, brief definitions of the MAC principles and assisted in situating the experiential learning activities experienced in the “practice sessions”. Limited theoretical knowledge about the MAC principles was shared to provide some background and context because experience and reflection is less effective in the absence of the foundational knowledge that coaches receive through formal learning (Reade, 2009).

- *“Post-match reflection”*

This included written and oral reflections with regards to coaches’ experiential learning. Kolb (1984) called this part of the experiential learning cycle, reflective observation (See 6.4.2), as well as abstract conceptualisation (See 6.4.3).

### **7.7.5 Interviews**

IPA interviews work on an idiographic level which is concerned with the particular, implying the understanding of a particular experiential phenomenon, as experienced by particular people, in a particular context. IPA, therefore, commits to an inductive approach, asking participants to talk about the way they experience and think about an issue, thereby privileging their own priorities, terms and ideas, rather than using a priori hypotheses to make assumptions about how people, in general, think about a certain issue (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA interviewing invites participants to offer rich, detailed, first-person accounts of their experiences. The aim of the interview is to enter the lived world of the participants and allow them the opportunity to recount their life experience (Kvale, 1983; Rapley, 2001). It can be explained as a conversation between two people characterised by a specific purpose (Smith et al., 2009).

Semi-structured interviews were used in my study because it allows the researcher to plan for any difficulties that may be encountered during the interview. It requires thorough preparation which results in being a more attentive listener and a more flexible interviewer. I was mindful of the difference between good and poor semi-structured interviews. A good semi-structured interview consists of questions that are open and extensive with minimal assumptions about the participants’ experiences and concerns. These questions encourage the participants to talk at length about their lived world experiences which makes input from the researcher minimal. A poor semi-structured interview contains “closed” questions, a rapid pace and leading judgemental contributions and interpretations by the researcher. This makes participants uncomfortable and results in a poor interview (Smith et al., 2009).

An interview schedule was used with the aim of preparing for potential difficulties which included phrasing of complex questions or addressing sensitive issues. It may further help more reserved participants by giving structure to the conversation. An interview schedule

also assists with coping with anxiety provoked by the interview. However, a schedule should be adaptable to allow for follow-up questions and some flexibility if relevant matters are introduced by the participant (Smith et al., 2009). A schedule containing between six to ten open questions combined with possible prompts is suggested by some writers (Kvale, 1983; Rapley, 2001). (See Appendix E for the interview schedules used in my study).

The interview schedule was given to the cricket coaches three days prior to the interviews for two purposes; firstly, being familiar with the broad topics covered in the interview would allow the coaches to be more relaxed about the interview process and secondly, it would allow them some time to make sense of their experiences and give a more comprehensive account of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). All interviews were audio recorded with the permission from the participants. Each interview lasted between 45 to 70 minutes.

All three rounds of interviews were informed by Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle (See 6.4) and conducted with the ten coaches who volunteered to participate in the research process, after experiencing the MAC program.

#### **7.7.5.1 First interview**

Within seven days after having a concrete experience (See 6.4.1) through the MAC program each of the 10 participants was interviewed. The emphasis in this interview was on what the coaches themselves had learned experientially with regards to performance development and was depicted by the abstract conceptualisation stage (See 6.4.3), which forms part of grasping the experience. The venue for the first round of interviews was at the hpc where the MAC program was presented. The venue allowed for privacy and was sufficiently quiet.

#### **7.7.5.2 Second interview**

Two months later all the participants participated in the second semi-structured interview also ranging from 45-70 minutes. The emphasis was on how they had displayed their experiential learning to their own coaching. This is referred to by Kolb (1984) as reflective observation (See 6.4.2), as well as active experimentation (See 6.4.4) and forms part of the transformation of experience mode. A convenient time, date and location for each participant was organised. These interviews were conducted at each coach's work place throughout South Africa.

### 7.7.5.3 Third interview

Four months after attending the initial MAC program all ten participants participated in the third semi-structured interview ranging from 45-70 minutes. By then they had four months of coaching with their MAC experience. The emphasis of this interview was on how they had transferred their experiential learning to their cricketers. This is referred to by Kolb (1984) as reflective observation (See 6.4.2), as well as active experimentation (See 6.4.4) and forms part of the transformation of experience mode. A convenient time, date and location for each participant was organised. These interviews were conducted at each coach's work place throughout South Africa.

### 7.7.6 Transcription

I personally transcribed the material to become familiar with each participant's accounts. This ensured that at the conclusion of the transcribing stage I had acquired an intuitive appreciation for each account and had started to make sense of each participant's experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). After each round of interviews the recordings were transcribed immediately. It should be noted that grammatical and semantic adjustments were made to enhance readability. I am satisfied that these adjustments did not "corrupt" the data and still expressed "immaculate" representations of coaches' accounts.

### 7.7.7 Analysis

Six of the 10 coaches' interviews were analysed (See 13.3 for further guidance on this decision). Eighteen interviews representing three black and three Caucasian coaches were analysed, i.e. three interviews with each coach. The IPA guideline for the number of interviews in professional doctorates is between four and 10 and is regarded as sufficient to ensure quality data. The IPA approach considers time spent and depth of reflection as central and not a large sample size (Smith et al. 2009).

The method of analysis for my research followed the IPA method as outlined by Smith et al., (2009). The same steps were followed for each of the six coaches' interviews and involved the following:

- *Step 1: Reading and re-reading*

I firstly listened to the audio-recordings at least once after transcription. Then I read and re-read the transcripts with the aim of becoming familiar with the accounts. This is the way

to start the process of entering the coach's world. It oriented me to locate richer and more detailed data sets.

- *Step 2: Initial noting*

Initial noting was a very detailed and time-consuming process (Smith et al., 2009). I had to keep an open mind and noted anything of interest within the transcripts. I had to pay attention to things that mattered to the coaches, as well as the meaning they assigned to what matters to them. After reading the whole transcript the left hand margin of the transcript was used to annotate what was meaningful or significant. This process included using my own personal reflections, professional knowledge and experience in order to sound out the meaning of key processes for each coach.

- *Step 3: Developing emerging themes*

After initial noting I returned to the beginning of the transcript and used the other margin to document emerging theme titles. At this stage I worked with a larger data set compared to the original transcript. Looking for developing emerging themes is a way to reduce the volume of detail whilst maintaining the complexity, connections and patterns between exploratory notes (Smith et al., 2009). After this, the initial notes are transformed into concise phrases to capture the quality of what was found in the text (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This interpretative procedure, of course, "moved" further away from the coaches' original accounts, but without abandoning integrity of the original text.

- *Step 4: Searching for connections across emerging themes*

The emerging themes were listed and connections between them were explored. This process started by keeping the order chronological as the themes came up in the transcript. Then analytical ordering was followed by a process of making sense of the connections. Some themes clustered centrally together, whilst others were regarded as possible super-ordinate concepts (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

- *Step 5: Moving to the next participant's transcript*

Steps 1 - 4 were repeated for each interview. After the analysis was completed for all three interviews with the first coach, I moved to the second coach's transcript. Keeping to IPA's idiographic commitment, I allowed new themes to emerge to do justice to its own individuality (Smith et al., 2009).

- *Step 6: Looking for patterns across all participants' transcripts*

After repeating steps 1 - 4 with each of the six coaches' transcripts I started searching for patterns across all data sets. This step included the configuration of themes, as well as outlining master and super-ordinate themes (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009).

### **7.7.8 Reporting**

Reporting and writing up followed after completing the analysis as outlined in steps 1 - 6. This stage involved translating themes into narrative accounts. The analysis became expansive again, as the themes were explained and illustrated. This was followed by a discussion, therefore linking the themes to extant literature (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009).

## **7.8 Ethics**

### **7.8.1 Ethical treatment of study participants**

Conducting 18 interviews with six coaches over a period of six months required commitment to ethics. The relationships and type of data are different in qualitative research and require a more sustained commitment to ethics. The ethical treatment of participants was important throughout my research. Qualitative researchers spend a lot of time together with research participants and have to treat them with equal dignity (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2005).

### **7.8.2 Privacy and confidentiality**

The coaches' right to privacy and confidentiality was respected throughout the research process and pertains to the "right against intrusion". This means that participants had the right to keep certain information about themselves private and were not obliged to reveal everything about themselves (Hewitt, 2007; Human, Tinsley, Muller, & Rutsate, 2009). Participants had the choice to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reasons for doing so. However, all ten participants completed the whole research process. The right to privacy subsumes the "right to confidentiality". This means that participants had the right to maintain control over the information that they shared with the researcher (Allan, 2001). The confidentiality of participants was kept by excluding all identifiable information and using fictitious names (Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA], 2007).



## 7.9 Dual roles

Dual role relationships are described as relationships where there are two or more distinct kinds of relationships with the same person (Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999). The usefulness of dual roles in research is described by Hodgson (2000, p. 3) who states that “the researcher’s part in the social world that is being investigated and that ‘subjects’ responses to the presence of the researcher, and the researcher’s response to the context, are as valuable as any other aspect of the study”. I had dual roles in my study in that I was both the facilitator of the MAC approach and the researcher. In these roles I conducted interviews afterwards to facilitate reflection on experiences with regards to the MAC program. These dual roles helped me to understand both the research context, as well as how cricket coaches experienced the MAC program.

Dual role research also poses certain challenges such as power differences between the professional (facilitator/researcher) and the research participants, unrealistic expectations from either parties and the two role categories that could conflict. Further challenges include insufficient transparency regarding the boundaries and responsibilities of the dual roles, transferability of confidential information between two roles, and the fair treatment of participants when negotiating and acting out the dual roles (Eide & Kahn, 2008; Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999; Hegney & Wai Chan, 2010; Jones, Evans, & Mullen, 2007).

One way to address these challenges was through the process of reflexivity. Reflexivity amounts to being thoughtful and self-aware and entails continued evaluation of the researcher’s own subjective responses, preconceptions, emotions and previous experience (Eide & Kahn, 2008; Finlay, 2009; Hewitt, 2007; Hodgson, 2000; Jones et al., 2007; Macphail, 2004; Trondsen & Sandaunet, 2009). Keeping a journal or diary can enhance the process of reflexivity (Finlay, 2009; Pringle, Hendry, & McLafferty, 2011). As researcher, I kept a journal or diary to enhance my reflexivity. This enabled me to be aware of my dual roles and observe my own views, so that I would be conscious of my own assumptions, preconceptions or personal biases with regards to the research topic. This also enhanced awareness of the meaning of my own views with regards to data gathering and analysis (Haggman-Laitila, 1999).

## 7.10 Quality assurance

In an attempt to improve the quality of my research I adhered to the following principles:

### **7.10.1 Dependability**

Dependability refers to demonstrating that the research findings occurred as I, as the researcher, reported them. This is accomplished by providing a thorough description of how interpretations and results were reached (Thomas et al., 2005). This asks for a clear focus of the detail of particular aspects instead of making broad and generalised statements. Dependability, furthermore, gave an indication of the convergence, divergence, representativeness and variability of data in my study (Smith, 2011). The dependability of my study will be illustrated throughout the results sections by providing an indication of the breadth and depth of each theme. In my study a larger data sample was used and examples from at least three to four participants per theme were provided to indicate the prevalence of the theme.

### **7.10.2 Credibility**

Credibility refers to being clear about the context, participants and settings of the research in order to help the readers understand and evaluate the research findings (Thomas et al., 2005). Credibility in my research was ensured by being clear that the research took place within CSA. Credibility was enhanced by the fact that 30 cricket coaches attended the MAC program, 10 cricket coaches volunteered to participate in the research process, and finally the data of six cricket coaches' accounts were analysed. Credibility was further achieved by giving coaches the opportunity, by means of follow-up interviews, to reflect on the content of the previous interview with the aim of evaluating their own sense of the congruence of information shared so far in the research process.

### **7.10.3 Conformability**

Conformability indicates engaging in a supervisory environment. This was done through research supervision and peer supervision. Firstly, research supervision aimed to create awareness of the existence of dual roles where reflexive exploration was necessary to examine my own values, attitudes and preconceptions. Transparency was necessary for setting ground rules for the research and being clear regarding the responsibilities of the dual roles. Secondly, peer supervision and review meetings with fellow PhD colleagues also enhanced the trustworthiness of the research material. This enhanced the dependability and credibility of the research report (Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999; Krefting, 1991). Research supervision with my supervisors was conducted throughout my study to provide guidance in the writing of the research report and enhancing the quality of the research material. This also enhanced the trustworthiness of the research material and ensured that ethical standards were maintained

#### **7.10.4 Transferability**

Transferability enables other researchers and practitioners to transfer the findings of the research to other applications in the field. This is done by describing all aspects of the participants and the research context in detail (Krefting, 1991; Thomas et al., 2005). The participant cricket coaches (See 7.6.2) and research context (See 7.6.3) were described, therefore, staying within the ethical considerations of my study.

#### **7.10.5 Trustworthiness**

Thomas et al. (2005) stated that prolonged engagement increases the trustworthiness of a qualitative study and entails spending a substantial amount of time to develop a good understanding of the data. This was adhered to in my study by doing three consecutive interviews with each coach over a six month period and then also spending a substantial amount of time with the data in the form of analysing, writing and re-writing.

An “audit trail” describes the changes, writing and re-writing that occurred throughout the research process. These changes increase the trustworthiness because the focus and method in qualitative research often changes during the study (Thomas et al., 2005). The audit trail in my study specifically refers to the writing and re-writing of the results sections. My audit trail started off with a general summary of the themes that emerged. This was refined by sharing the themes on the pretence that I was writing a personal letter to each coach concerning the findings of the study. The extensive length of these “letters” highlighted the repetition of themes. This enabled me to structure the results according to the three components of the MAC approach. This structure had to change again into a more concise representation of the results, and this time it was structured according to coaches’ experiential learning, as well as the process of utilizing and conveying mindfulness, acceptance and commitment.

#### **7.10.6 Double hermeneutics**

The quality of my research was improved by being aware that IPA is engaged in “double hermeneutics”. Double hermeneutics have two positions. The first is “Etic” and refers to an “outsider” interpretive stance in which I attempted to make sense of the coaches’ experiences and concerns. The second position is “Emic” and refers to an “insider” phenomenological (experiential) position. In my research this position was provided by the coaches’ accounts, stories and views about their experiential learning of the MAC approach (Reid et al., 2005; Smith, 2011). Double hermeneutics in my study, therefore,

implied that firstly, the coaches were trying to make sense of their experiential learning experiences and secondly, that I was trying to make sense of the coaches' experiences.

### **7.11 Summary**

Chapter 7 reviewed the purpose of my research, which was to generate accounts of how mindfulness, acceptance and commitment of a group of South African cricket coaches developed through participating in an experiential learning process of the MAC program.

The research strategy was IPA and was aimed at the understanding of and getting an appreciation of the subtle nuances of meaning that the cricket coaches assigned to their experiences of the MAC approach. IPA research done in health psychology with specific reference to experiences of illness, disease and deficit-focused experiences was mentioned. IPA sport psychology research thus far has been used to a lesser extent. However, there is scope for using IPA research to a greater extent in sport in order to give participants (like coaches) a chance to also express their views about strengths, growth and wellness. The research participants, sampling criteria, as well as the research process were explored. Finally, research ethics and quality were discussed.

Chapters 8 - 11 will discuss the results of my study. Chapter 8 will focus on the coaches' experiences of the MAC program.

## CHAPTER 8

### Results

#### Coaches' experiences of the MAC program

##### 8.1 Introduction

IPA of the eighteen semi-structured interviews was inductive. I extracted units of meaning and related that to master and super-ordinate themes. The latter process was hermeneutic in nature, since some of the interpretation of meaning units were informed by my familiarity with the theoretical literature on the topic. Nonetheless, the following analysis and presentation of results attempts to present the coaches' meanings as accurately as possible. Detailed, lengthy extracts from coaches' interviews are provided within each section to enhance this accuracy, and I also reflected on the process of interpretation.

In presenting the verbatim extracts some minor changes have been made to improve the readability. Dotted lines at the beginning or end of an extract indicate that the coach was talking prior to or after the extract. All identifying information has been removed or changed and alias names have been used to protect the anonymity of coaches.

I acknowledge that these themes were only one possible account of coaches' experiences of the MAC program and were selected due to their relevance to the research question and research goals. I also acknowledge that this is my subjective interpretation and other researchers may have focused on different aspects of the accounts.

Chapter 8 discusses the master and super-ordinate themes central to coaches' experiences of the MAC program. Table 8.1 presents an overview.

Table 8.1. Coaches' experiences of the MAC program

Master themes	The significance of the MAC program	Duration of the MAC program	Presentation of the MAC program
Super-ordinate themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Psychological "tools" for human development</li> <li>• Sport psychology knowledge</li> <li>• Continuing framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufficient time</li> <li>• More time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole and the parts</li> <li>• Experiential learning</li> <li>• Manual</li> <li>• Enjoyment</li> </ul>

## 8.2 The significance of the MAC program

Coaches experienced the MAC program as significant. Six super-ordinate themes, namely flexibility, accessibility, awareness, psychological “tools” for human development, sport psychology knowledge, as well as continuing framework, which relate to this master theme will be discussed here.

### 8.2.1 Flexibility

Coaches experienced the MAC program as flexible because it allowed them space to make sense and discover their own interpretations relating to mindfulness, acceptance and commitment.

Riaan described his experience of flexibility as open and allowing him to find his own strategy or method when working with it:

MAC is a bit more, here is what it is and then you kind of find your own method on what you are trying to do with it, but that is what you ultimately look for. That was actually refreshing as well, the openness and flexibility (L93).

This flexibility guided Riaan to discover that the MAC program can be conveyed to players in a different order than what he originally experienced. He wanted to start with commitment, followed by acceptance and lastly, attending to mindfulness. Riaan’s learning process and unique interpretation of the MAC program made him challenge the traditional order of the MAC program. Riaan provided the following account of his newly discovered order:

I think the mindfulness comes from, well I actually think it works backwards in a way. I think commitment comes from being committed to your values and then going back to accepting that things can’t always go well. Then you have to realize that things are not always going to work out well because your mind is not always working so nicely. Then you have to be mindful by staying committed. So I think sometimes the order actually works the other way around and that works well for me. So I think that is one of things that I will use, especially as the season starts (T170-172).

The flexibility of the MAC program allowed Carl space to either use mindfulness, acceptance and commitment separately, or as an integrated program depending on the coaching situation:

I think MAC definitely gave me more of a process to (uhm) identify situations. It has made me more aware that while I am coaching, I need to break it down into the three main components: Being mindful of situations, identifying situations. Then accepting both the positive or negative and how that effect change and lastly then committing to making those changes (A179).

### **8.2.2 Accessibility**

Coaches experienced the MAC program as being accessible to everyone, meaning both coaches and players. Both parties, consisting of coaches and players were able to relate to mindfulness, acceptance and commitment. Experiences of the MAC program as being accessible, therefore, encouraged coaches in particular to utilize and convey the MAC principles to their players.

Riaan mentioned how accessible the MAC program was:

I think all the stuff has been really helpful all and all. The concepts are something that everyone can relate to and everyone can really do that. So I think that is good (A155).

The MAC program was also accessible for David because he could relate to it as a cricket coach:

The same applies to the MAC approach. It is something that talks to you as a cricket coach. Obviously, I think most of the coaches here feel that the MAC approach is talking to us. It is something we are going to try and translate or give to our players in the best way we can...I will use most of the things that I hear because I believe in it and it is working for me (L180).

### **8.2.3 Awareness**

Coaches became more aware after experiencing the MAC program. It seemed as if awareness was the golden thread that ran through the whole MAC approach, tying mindfulness, acceptance and commitment together into one approach. Increased awareness helped them to stay focused in the present moment, accepting situations as they happen by staying committed to value-driven goals. Awareness in the present moment was specifically described in relation to preparation for match situations in cricket.

Carl described his awareness of being in the moment during match situations:

I think the main thing of the MAC approach is awareness. It brought about an awareness of what we are doing and what we want to do. Furthermore, how we accept and commit to doing that. You need to be aware. Certainly being aware of the moment...(L159)...I think the main difference is that the MAC approach allows you to deal with situations in the here-and-now, as opposed to preparation and reflection. Like I said earlier, in terms of making sure, I have always believed that if your preparation is right, then you are in a good space to be able to go and deal with it (L164)...The MAC program allows you to deal with things as they come up and as they develop (L165).

Samual's awareness was more related to behaviour displayed in his personal life:

I think personally it has helped me and it's making me aware of things that I should do and shouldn't do (T326).

The MAC approach is something you do in life on a daily basis, but sometimes we are not aware of it. This course helped me to understand more about life. I became aware of things I wasn't aware of earlier. So if something happens I will think, oh, that is mindfulness or this is commitment or this is acceptance and, therefore, I will have a better idea (L112).

#### **8.2.4 Psychological “tools” for human development**

Coaches became aware that the MAC program offered different psychological “tools” for developing human beings. Developing human beings through personal values was a psychological “tool” Riaan wanted to use in his coaching because his MAC experience made him aware that values for human development were lacking in the current school system:

In general, the whole MAC approach is trying to develop human beings who are living according to their values. That is something that is lacking at the moment, especially in schools and in the boarding school where I work...I also like to use MAC more with my coaching (L88).

Garreth became aware that the MAC program offered another psychological “tool”, namely reflection. Reflection provided space for coaches by allowing them time to stop and think about their current coaching practices, as well as their own personal growth and development:

I think again MAC...is good because it enables you to stop and reflect on where you are? Then you can decide the way forward irrespective of whether you are working with individuals or groups at that moment. MAC also applies to my growth and development as a coach (L163).

Mpho described that a holistic overview was a psychological “tool” he became aware of during his MAC experience. Coaches, looking at their behaviour holistically were able to contribute to the players' and coaches' growth:

The MAC program is looking at everything holistically. MAC will be the tool to help my boys firstly, to understand themselves and then secondly, what they are doing or need to do in order to get to the next level. Same goes for me as a coach (L180).

Carl's MAC experience made him aware of the purpose of his behaviour, as well as using multiple options for dealing with difficult situations. These were psychological “tools” he employed in coaching:

Yes, it has been an extremely interesting concept, in terms of...having more tools to deal with certain situations. That for me has been the best thing, as opposed to doing things and not knowing why you are doing them? MAC actually provides more tools and more avenues to effect certain situations, particularly in



difficult situations where you maybe become unstuck, by referring to a basis. Then you can identify the situation by becoming mindful, accepting what the situation is all about and then committing to how you are going to go about it? That has been very good (A198-199).

### **8.2.5 Sport psychology knowledge**

Coaches experienced the MAC program as significant because it increased their knowledge of sport psychology. Becoming more knowledgeable of sport psychology contributed to developing coaches because they are the people consistently interacting with players and parents.

Garreth suggested that increased knowledge of sport psychology makes him a better coach because it positions him constructively to be influential whilst coaching:

...Psychologists can maybe work with teams or individuals for maybe once a week or so. We as coaches do it everyday. It is not whether we want to do it or not. We are doing it anyway. Our influence has an effect on the people we are coaching. We have to decide what kind of influence it can be because it is either going to be a positive or a negative influence. We have an influence anyway. We have to understand that it is our responsibility to try and up-skill ourselves and our knowledge of sport psychology because we have to transfer these skills to the kids (L159).

Increased knowledge of sport psychology enabled David in dealing with parents' expectations that coaches are knowledgeable people working with their children:

...We come to these sport psychology sessions. Then we get a lot of information, for example, about the MAC program. That automatically gives me a bit of knowledge of psychology...Parents bring their kids to me because they believe that I have knowledge and ability to do the work (L195).

Samual became more knowledgeable on mindfulness and acceptance. Understanding the meaning of these concepts increased his knowledge of sport psychology:

Now because you know what mindfulness, mindlessness and acceptance mean, that is helping me to know more about psychology and the psychological part as well. So yes, it has been great (T329).

Increased sport psychology knowledge developed by the MAC program created a platform or entry point for David to communicate to his players about other aspects of their lives, going beyond cricket itself. He felt that developing the whole person and not only the cricket player was part of coaching:

Like I said to you, the MAC program helps me to communicate with my players...(A198).

Usually coaches don't communicate to players or talk to them during training. That needs to change. So instead of just batting or bowling we must rather stop the cricket session to talk to cricketers about cricket and also life in general. Talk to the guys about their school and encourage them to talk back. I think that is where the MAC approach has been very helpful (A205).

### **8.2.6 Continuing framework**

The MAC program offered coaches a continuing framework in which they could situate their coaching actions and interventions.

Here Carl expressed how this framework further becomes a reference point for dealing with challenging coaching situations:

I think, a lot of things we do, we do sort of naturally as coaches. That is why you become successful in what you are doing. MAC just lends more of a framework to what you are doing, as opposed to wondering, well how did I do that? How did that happen? But working according to a framework provides a point of reference to identify with. That makes it easier to accept how the coaching process is taking place (A180).

I am trying to implement MAC in certain areas...So when I am confronted with a situation, I am referring to that framework. Then I am able to come out with a more positive sort of effect, in terms of how things have worked out (A194).

### **8.3 Duration of the MAC program**

The MAC program was presented to coaches in one day (8 hours). Coaches' experiences differed with regards to the duration of the MAC program as some felt that one day was sufficient to learn about the MAC program while others felt that more time was needed.

#### **8.3.1 Sufficient time**

One day was sufficient and enough time to learn about the MAC program as Garreth highlighted:

I think it was perfect for me. I don't mind sitting in a room for eight hours because I understand how this can help me to improve. It would obviously be different if you had a group of people who weren't really interested in what you were saying. For me it was perfect the length of time (L175).

#### **8.3.2 More time**

Four coaches felt that they needed more time to learn about the MAC program because it was too much information to absorb in one day. One day did not allow enough reflection time and they felt rushed and pressured. They wanted more time for debriefing and exploring their experiential learning. Either a two or three day workshop would have been more conducive to learning.

David's experience of time pressure reads:

...A day is not enough. If we had two days with you, we know that we are going to balance it nicely...In fact, we go through the manual and ask enough questions and do more activities as well. There were times that we didn't reflect because we were pressed for time...A day was not enough taking into consideration that the mind can only take in so much (L188).

Riaan referred to the experiential learning and made the following suggestion:

I think it is quite a lot to do in one day...I think it also depends on what you are trying to get from the day. The exercises that you do could be extended a little bit longer or you could explain a few things further in a bit more detail. For people hearing it the first time, I would say you probably would need two days or a day and a half to make sure that everyone got round to doing it (L108-110).

Carl suggested that the MAC program needed to be part of a longer camp consisting of a variety of cricket related topics:

...Perhaps a certain time of the day over a three day camp. So 08:00-10:00 every day would be allocated for the MAC approach or discussing only one topic for the whole day. The last session tends to drag because now you tend to pick up on the tail and that feels like repetition. Although it is different information, it is still the same topic throughout the day. Whereas, if you had the MAC approach today then we can work on something different, for example the Performax program as well. Then tomorrow we work on the MAC approach again. Then we look at the technical stuff. It just breaks it up a little bit (L196).

## **8.4 Presentation of the MAC program**

The MAC program comprised three principles. During the first part of the presentation, these principles were presented separately, but subsequently the three were integrated. In the presentation theoretical information and experiential learning were provided. Each coach also received a manual for future reference.

### **8.4.1 Whole and the parts**

Each MAC principle, (mindfulness, acceptance and commitment) was presented separately (the parts). Then at the end of the workshop, these three principles were combined into an integrated MAC program (the whole). Coaches experienced this presentation as positive by becoming aware that mindfulness, acceptance and commitment were distinct, but also interrelated.

Mpho appreciated the presentation of separate parts:

I think the way you divided MAC and made it into modules was good (L195).

Samual acknowledged the interrelatedness of the parts:

...I like to stay positive regardless of what I do. I mean those three things of the MAC approach working together (T300).

Carl identified with Mpho's and Samual's positive experiences. He added that experiencing each principle separately allowed for understanding and grasping the current concept before moving on to the next one. The interrelatedness of the MAC program was emphasised in this regard:

I thought it was very good. The start of the MAC program provided a lot of information, going into particularly the last session. But it was very good. Very well put together in terms of how you break it up into the three components at first and then bring it back together. You can almost look at each individual component and the effect that it has. When you move onto the next component, you could see the link between the two, and then the link between the three. Then concluding how all three components were important to the whole program (L191).

#### **8.4.2 Experiential learning**

Coaches wanted to attach their own personal meaning to the activities they experienced as they felt that experiential learning was a regular part of coaching.

David explained how he wanted to convey mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to his players based on his own experiential learning process of the MAC program:

Obviously in your presentation there were some activities that I am going to use. So I have decided that there are activities that I will use as is. Then there are one of two activities that I will tweak before using them but I will use the other activities like you presented it (L184).

Samual valued experiential learning because it was an active as opposed to a passive process:

I thought the presentation was good because we didn't just sit there and listen. We participated in the activities, the theories and that kind of stuff (L122).

Although coaches experienced the practical activities as valuable, some of them suggested that the experiential learning needed to be more cricket specific by including more cricket specific activities and exercises to convey mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to players.

Mpho was already using experiential learning in his coaching sessions by employing cricket specific activities in net sessions to create mindful awareness:

Yes, I think it is good. I think the practical part could be more specific to what you are talking about. Maybe more cricket specific so that the guys could relate to it more (L199). Like the drill I discussed with you where you give someone a cricket ball or anything in a cricket kit, like a glove. Maybe have some guys batting whilst others have a practical session. I don't know if you are going to get to that stage? The MAC approach is a practical presentation. Ok, throw a ball, clear your mind, don't think about anything, clear it, what happens if you do that, so that they can experience it (L202).

#### **8.4.3 Manual**

Each coach received a manual based on the MAC program, which was helpful because it provided structure and guidance and made the learning process easier for them. The manual allowed coaches to revisit the theoretical information of the MAC program in their own time.

### As Garreth explained:

I think the presentation was good. The manual made things easy and gave guidance so that the guys can afterwards go back and refer to it again. It will be easy to open, refer back and read through. So if you think about something that you need to access urgently, you just go back to the MAC manual...(L191).

We have the material and theory available to refer back to. It was very good in the sense that the MAC-modules were broken up, so the day didn't feel too long. It would have been very long (laughing), if you were being lectured to for eight hours (L167).

#### **8.4.4 Enjoyment**

All six coaches enjoyed participating in the MAC program. They discovered that the process of experiential learning was fun.

Experiential learning by means of examples contributed to David enjoying the MAC program:

The honest truth is very meaningful. It was something that caught my attention. I couldn't afford to sleep during the lecture because it was something that I always wanted...The way you presented the MAC program to us made it fun. The best way to learn is by having fun and receiving examples. Usually, with us blacks, reading something becomes a problem, but if you show it to me I will remember it forever...(L184).

Riaan also enjoyed the process of learning about and utilising the MAC program in coaching. His enjoyment increased when observing his players' practical engagement with the MAC principles via some other activities and examples:

So it has been good. I really enjoyed it and hope that the players also had a bit of fun when I gave it to them. So I gave them some tasks and stuff to do, like when you go home and you eat your dinner. Be aware when you eat something and see if your mind wanders off. If this happens, try and bring it back and be aware of how you get it back (A164).

Some of the guys have been quite excited and they came even before school to give feedback to me: Ah, I did that yesterday and this happened. So it has been good. It has been quite an informal thing, but the guys seem to like it quite a lot. So (uhm), I got quite good feedback actually and that is good (A165).

#### **8.5 Summary**

Chapter 8 provided rich data on the coaches' experiences of the MAC program regarding the significance, duration and presentation of the MAC program.

The MAC program was significant because it provided flexibility and accessibility to both coaches and players. There was no specific prescription on how to use the MAC program and that allowed coaches to make the MAC program their own. The MAC program

increased their awareness and gave them psychological “tools” to develop people. It increased coaches’ knowledge of sport psychology. They experienced the MAC program as a continuing framework to situate their coaching experiences.

Coaches’ experiences differed with regards to the duration of the MAC program. Some coaches felt that one day was enough time to learn about the MAC program, whilst the majority of coaches wanted more time, for example, two or three days. The reasons being firstly, that the MAC program contained too much information to digest in one day and, secondly, one day didn’t allow for enough reflection time.

Coaches experienced the presentation of the MAC program as enjoyable because the experiential learning was fun. Their enjoyment was further extended by observing their players experiencing fun while utilising the MAC principles. Coaches suggested that the MAC experience can be further enriched by incorporating cricket related activities into the learning process. The manual helped them to revisit the theoretical information according to their own style and pace of learning.

Chapter 9 will discuss coaches’ learning experiences about the MAC approach.

## CHAPTER 9

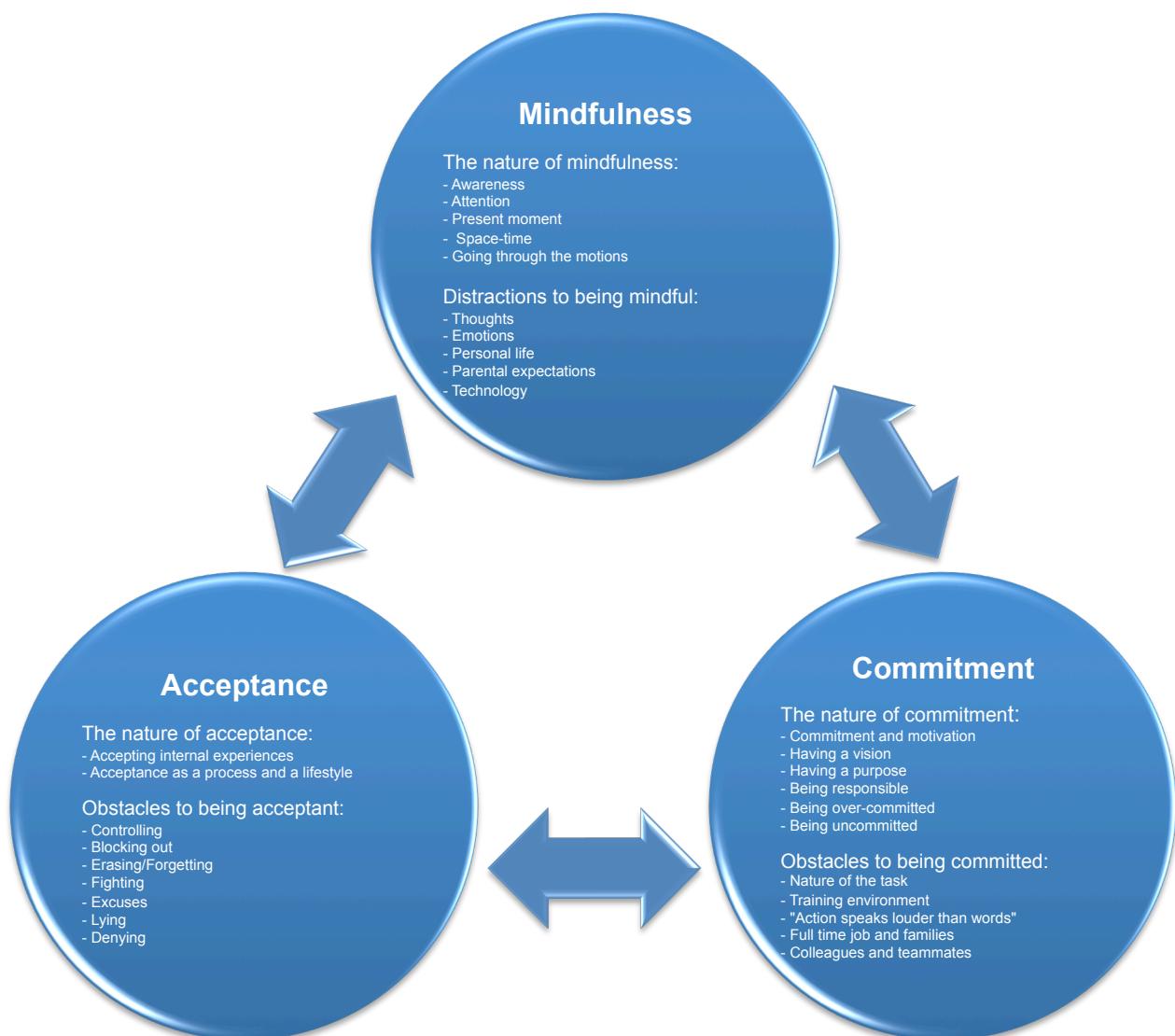
### Results

#### Coaches' learning about the MAC approach

##### 9.1 Introduction

Chapter 9 discusses coaches' learning from their own experiences of mindfulness, acceptance and commitment. Figure 9.1 presents an overview of the three master themes with related super-ordinate themes.

Figure 9.1. Coaches' learning about the MAC approach



##### 9.2 Mindfulness

What coaches learned about mindfulness became evident through two super-ordinate themes, the first theme being the nature of mindfulness and the second theme reporting the distractions from being mindful.

## 9.2.1 The nature of mindfulness

Coaches became aware that the nature of mindfulness was conflicting, as both mindfulness and mindlessness presented itself in their experiences. In learning about the nature of mindfulness, coaches identified the following themes: awareness, attention, being in the present moment, time space, as well as going through the motions.

### 9.2.1.1 Awareness

Coaches learned that an important ingredient of mindfulness is awareness. They shared experiences of their own coaching awareness, as well as how their players used awareness when playing cricket. Coaches' awareness led them to discover that their own verbal actions (words) and non-verbal actions (coaching behaviour) were influencing their players. Awareness, therefore, enabled coaches to think and reflect on their current verbal communication and non-verbal communication (coaching behaviour) because they preferred to be influential in a manner that enhanced performance.

Samual's awareness in preparing for team meetings was shared in the following extract:

I think for me personally, mindfulness has helped me. It is making me aware of things that I should do and shouldn't do. It is helping me to try and prepare myself in a good way, especially when I have to prepare the team in terms of speaking to them. What words to use when I speak to them. What issues should I concentrate on...( T326-327)

Mpho became aware that as a coach he influenced people by the content, tone and timing of his words:

That is where I am using awareness mostly because I find that I can actually influence people in the things that I say, as well as how and when I say them...( A17).

Coaches also described that players' awareness of themselves enabled them in understanding and making sense of their own internal experiences such as thoughts, emotions, strengths and weaknesses. However, coaches realised that players' internal experiences were hidden and private. The only way coaches could know about it was when players were willing to share their own awareness with the coach. Players' awareness guided coaches in knowing which performance areas to improve and which to maintain.

Mpho shared his experience of a player's awareness:

...The mindfulness again, for me was to make the guys aware. The player that I am working with has to be aware of what he is doing. Whether he does the wrong things, or whether he does the right things. Just to be in the moment and to be aware....Obviously then coming back to myself. I want to hear as much from them,



uhm, in terms of getting information back instead of me giving information the whole time. So basically I will say, be aware of what you do. Then you can tell me how it feels when you do it...Well, I have realised that there is nothing much you can do as a coach to make people aware of things. The reason is that some things are not the things that you see. Some things are things that he feels, especially when he plays (T3-6).

### **9.2.1.2 Attention**

In learning about mindfulness, coaches identified that attention played a role. They chose to make a clear distinction between task-focused attention and self-focused attention. Task-focused attention was directing focus and attention to the task at hand at that given moment, whereas self-focused attention referred to the focus of attention on the self, meaning internal experiences (thoughts and emotions). Both entailed a conscious effort of focus, but the deployment of attention differed between the task and the self.

Garreth saw his task in a tight game to focus his attention in the present moment. However, because it was a tight game the risk of losing was possible, which caused him to focus on himself in the form of questioning his ability as a coach instead of the task. So Garreth remained focused although his attention shifted from task to self and vice versa. In the following extract he shares an experience of self-focused attention:

Maybe some time ago, I think. I don't necessarily do it anymore. You know you start in a tight game, and then you think, OK, if we lose this game, does that mean I am not a good coach? That is an example of being very self-focused, where you forget about the task which is the game that is being played now (T44).

### **9.2.1.3 Present moment**

The nature of being in the present moment was discovered when coaches learned about mindfulness. Coaches were so absorbed and engaged with their own task in the present moment that nothing around them mattered. Although everything around them was still physically present, they experienced the moment as if they were alone and isolated from their physical environment.

Here Samuel provided his account of being in the present moment:

Sometimes people say to me, I am ignoring them, but I am not ignoring them. When I am concentrating or doing something that I feel is very important, I will be in the zone and just be focused on what I am doing in the present moment (A55).

David referred to the movie, "Take the Lead". The two dancers in David's description were so absorbed and focused on their task of dancing that everything around them got lost or

vanished, although the movie depicted their fellow dancers, noise, distractions and dance instructor as still physically present. So mindfulness was about losing one self in the moment. He described a scene in the movie by saying:

While the two of them were dancing, everything around them got lost or vanished and they were in the moment (A94).

#### **9.2.1.4 Space-time**

Coaches learned that mindfulness was a trifold way of being in time. They were accessing this space-time through sharing experiences of where they were mindful and mindless in the past, present and future. Performance takes place in the present moment where the body and the mind are engaged with the same task and in the same place. However, coaches warned that players' minds easily drifted to the past or future which lead to players physically being in the moment, but mentally occupied by memories of the past or anticipation of the future. These players were, therefore, not present in the moment.

Garreth described one of his players who was mentally occupied by both negativity from past performances and anticipating results in the future, whilst physically performing in the present. According to Garreth, this player was not focused on his task in the present moment:

So, the main thing where it ties in with the MAC approach, uhm, is mindfulness. The thing where you just try and focus on what you are doing now in the present, rather than focusing on the score board, or trying to anticipate what the results are going to be in the future. One thing that is very prevalent is harping on what happened in the past, especially the negative things from the past. Hopefully we can continue with being focused in the present (T243-244).

#### **9.2.1.5 Going through the motions**

The conflictual nature of mindfulness was depicted when coaches or players were not aware or attentive of their actions in the present moment. Coaches learned and referred to this experience as being mindless. Mindlessness illustrated that coaches just go through the motions, and their tasks were performed without any intentionality, focus, urgency or purpose. Activities were performed just for the sake of getting it done. They were physically present at the training session doing a task, but mentally absent from the training session, drifting off to other areas of life. Coaches highlighted that although such drifting was a normal, common daily activity experienced by all people, it was important for them to notice it and then employ mindful awareness to return to the task at hand.

Garreth knew his players were mindless when he observed their bowling or batting action as simply going through the motions:

Because you know we spend such a lot of time practising cricket. There is always, uhm, well the tendency that can creep in is just to go through the motions. In other words, you just mindlessly bowl and just mindlessly hit balls for the sake of just doing it (T34).

I try and keep the players focused on what they are doing and why they are doing it. They must never slip into that going through the motions mentality, which to me is mindlessness (T39).

Carl acknowledged that drifting also occurs whilst he is coaching:

I think mindlessness still happens, but I think I am more aware of it. So when I do get into a situation, where I think I've got a meeting this evening about x, y and z, I can pull myself back to the situation and the task at hand a lot better, as opposed to just drifting around the field (A38).

Mpho shared a personal example of driving his motor car and how he employed mindful awareness to return to his driving:

It also happens when I drive; my mind often just wanders off. I have to be aware of it. Bring it back, come back and rather be in the present. I think, by being in the present helps me with living mindfully. However, being in the past or in the future is mindless because now you are thinking what is going to happen or what has happened (T23).

## **9.2.2 Distractions to being mindful**

In learning about mindfulness, coaches became aware that there were distractions present in cricket that effected both them as coaches, as well as their players. Five themes emerged:

### **9.2.2.1 Thoughts**

Coaches identified thinking as mental activities they engage in on a daily basis. Becoming aware of the variety of thoughts present during their coaching sessions guided them to discover how their minds drifted away from the coaching task at hand to other areas of their lives. Therefore, thoughts distracted them from being mindful because their focus drifted away from their coaching task.

Carl shared an experience where his thoughts distracted him from being mindful during a coaching session:

Let's say if I am coaching a net session. Why am I thinking about the bus trip where we need to get 400 boys to Bloemfontein? What is the relevance of the bus trip to Bloemfontein having on the task that I am doing

and that is, completing a cricket practice? It made me aware. Is there a correlation between the thoughts that are generated which sort of makes you drift? Does it have an impact on the task you are doing? Why is it taking you away from the task? What is the relevance of that? (L108-110).

### **9.2.2.2 Emotions**

Coaches depicted emotions as feelings or affective states of consciousness present in the coaching domain. Becoming aware of the variety of emotions often experienced in competitive cricket provided different accounts of how emotions were distracting them from being mindful and focused on the task at hand.

Riaan shared how the emotions of anger and aggression distracted his players from being mindful:

...No, I think from a mindfulness point of view, the guys were saying that they find it difficult to go back into that mindful state that they experienced before, after they have been roughed up or a bit aggressive because a guy chirped them or that type of thing (T5).

### **9.2.2.3 Personal life**

Coaches experienced their players' personal lives as distracting them from being mindful in cricket. They acknowledged that besides being involved in cricket their players also have personal lives consisting of academic, social, sporting or cultural contexts, functioning within various relationships such as family or friends. Experiences in their personal lives interfered with them being mindful in cricket because they were distracted by images, memories, thoughts or emotions related to their personal lives.

Garreth referred to a player in his team who's personal life distracted him from being mindful because this player focused on his academic and/or bereavement experiences instead of the training session:

They might have in school written a bad test or something like that...There was a guy who was being mindless at practice and I had a bit of a go at him. Afterwards he came and spoke to me and told me that a friend of his had passed away. So, uhm, that actually reminded me that you just have to be patient with him (T68-69).

Samual also shared how his player had a mindless state during a training session because he was mentally occupied by worries about his family being poor:

Some guys go through a lot because they are unsure if there will be dinner on the table tonight or stuff like that. So they have too many things happening in their minds and too many worries. So they struggle to focus on one thing. They try to focus on and think of many things, such as how to get food and that kind of stuff... ( T11-12).

#### **9.2.2.4 Parental expectations**

Coaches shared that parental expectations created a lot of performance pressure for young, adolescent players. This was interpreted as a distraction from being mindful as their minds wandered away from playing cricket to instead finding ways of living up to their parents' expectations to perform.

Carl shared an experience when he was younger and still a cricket player and how his dad's presence distracted him from his task. Performing mindlessly influenced his cricket performance in the following manner:

.....Every time when my dad arrived for my Saturday match, I got out....If I was aware of this back then and I knew that when my dad arrived, I got out. Then I could have dealt with that better and it actually could have no impact on the task. I got into such a state. It was just coincidence that it happened two or three times, and then it became a major problem (L171-173).

David was coaching young players and observed the impact of parental expectations on their mindfulness:

With the younger ones, it is mostly the parents. The parents are sitting there and everybody expects their kids to perform well and to be the best. Then you get the parents who expect a lot from the kids and put a lot of pressure on the players. Obviously, we all want our kids to perform well, but sometimes that puts pressure on them because at the end of the day they don't enjoy the sport...(A33-37).

#### **9.2.2.5 Technology**

Coaches are aware that the current generation of cricket players are growing up very differently in comparison to previous years, when they, as coaches, were still adolescent players. Adolescent players live in a technologically advanced era where everything is visually presented and readily available, for example internet, cell phones, play stations and social media. Their involvement with these technological activities encourages regular and consistent interaction, engagement and input with others and in the process distracts them from being mindful during a practice or a game.

As Riaan emphasised:

...I think the kids of today generally lack mindfulness a lot. That is something that I think is a problem. It is just a culture of how they are growing up and what they are actually doing. There are so many tasks now. Reading as we used to do, I mean, I am not an old guy but reading is a more mindful task than watching TV or anything like that. Listening to radio is a lot more mindful than playing with the play station and that stuff. I think it will really be good if these guys can learn those mindfulness skills, so that it becomes more natural later on. I am not saying that I am older, but it comes more naturally for the older generations than for the younger generations (L10).

## **9.3 Acceptance**

What coaches learned about acceptance became evident through two super-ordinate themes describing the nature of acceptance and obstacles to being acceptant.

### **9.3.1 The nature of acceptance**

Coaches became aware that the nature of acceptance was conflicting as both acceptance and avoidance presented in their experiences. In learning about acceptance, coaches identified the two themes: acceptance of internal experiences and acceptance as a process and a lifestyle.

#### **9.3.1.1 Accepting internal experiences**

Learning about acceptance guided coaches in becoming aware that internal experiences (thoughts and emotions) were an inevitable part of their personal and cricket lives which needed to be accepted. However, acceptance was often difficult because the content of thoughts was often related to concerns about failure, and their emotions ranged from disappointment to excitement. Accepting these internal experiences (thoughts and emotions) meant recognising their presence in a non-judgemental way and then allowing them to pass, thereby keeping focused on the task at hand.

Garreth recognised how the distracting nature of internal experiences can be managed through accepting them:

The acceptance part...is to understand that there are going to be certain thoughts and emotions that might interfere with performance and the task at hand. This will ultimately interfere with long-term performance (L82)...

We are always going to experience negative thoughts. You know, what happens if I bowl a wide now and we lose? You know that kind of thing, but accepting the fact that the thought is OK, that is important (T109).

On the other hand, uhm, I do believe that letting thoughts and emotions pass is powerful in itself (T145).

Mpho spoke more specifically about accepting a range of emotions:

Because you have to know that there will be a lot of conflict and there will be a lot of disappointment. At the same time, there will be a lot of glory. And when you encounter them, you can use the strategy of acceptance and move on (L97).

#### **9.3.1.2 Acceptance as a process and lifestyle**

Coaches learned that acceptance was a process and by using and practising it regularly it became a lifestyle. Using acceptance in cricket leads to a process of becoming more acceptant in all areas of both coaches' and players' lives. This made acceptance a lifestyle and not limited to using it in cricket only.

Mpho explained how acceptance needed to be a life style applied in all contexts of life:

So, that is how I have practised acceptance with the boys. Again it becomes a process. It is not an overnight thing. Guys must practise, so that it becomes you. Even in difficult situations they must practise to accept the situation as it is. Not only in cricket. That is why I am saying, link most of these things to your personal life because if there is no link, forget it. You can't just use it in one part of your life, but not use it in another part of your life (T115-116).

### **9.3.2 Obstacles to being acceptant**

In learning about acceptance, coaches became aware that there were obstacles to being acceptant. This became apparent through seven themes, namely controlling, MAC principle, erasing/forgetting, fighting, excuses, lying and denying:

#### **9.3.2.1 Controlling**

All the coaches experienced control as hindering acceptance. As an obstacle, control refers to a position of judgmental awareness by actively allowing or disallowing certain thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. Coaches recognised aspects in their personal and professional lives which proposed possibilities to control. If they discovered that an aspect was impossible to control, they considered acceptance as a way to deal with these uncontrollable aspects.

David described his understanding of control by sharing an experience of being stuck in traffic:

Obviously accepting that in life, I need to control what I can, but if I can't and if I don't have control over it, there is nothing I can do about it. When you are standing in the traffic there is nothing you can do about it because it is not in your control. So you need to accept the fact that it will take time until you get to where you want to go or when the traffic starts flowing. You just need to relax and start focusing on something else (A139-142).

Coaches shared that they felt more familiar with controlling internal experiences and external distractions, as opposed to accepting these experiences and events. Explanations given for their familiarity with controlling experiences related to their previous attending and being exposed to control based approaches as presented through PST programs. Although they recently learned about acceptance they still caught themselves trying to control internal experiences and external distractions.

Garreth shared his experience of control and acceptance in relation to internal experiences:

...I mean, we were taught that you can control what you think. I think in certain cases it is OK to try and control rather than to just accept (A43).

Carl experienced accepting, as opposed to controlling external distractions, as difficult:

...We only have got a week building up to a game and we can accept those types of things. But knowing that things come and go and not controlling it, that is quite difficult (A107).

### **9.3.2.2 Blocking-out**

A second obstacle to being acceptant was that coaches were still blocking-out internal experiences (thoughts and emotions). These blocking-out attempts caused a paradoxical effect because players then focused more on the experience that they actually wanted to avoid. Coaches indeed experienced players as more distracted when their blocking-out attempts were unsuccessful.

Riaan shared that players felt anxious when their blocking-out attempts were unsuccessful:

You've said a clear mind is not always the best mind. You would rather like to have the ability to say, my thoughts are coming in, so don't block them out, otherwise that is going to create anxiety because you are unable to block them out (L27).

### **9.3.2.3 Erasing/forgetting**

A third obstacle to being acceptant was coaches' attempts to erase or forget internal experiences. Coaches acknowledged that besides the difficulty to just erase or forget experiences as if they never took place, such experiences often interfered with task-focused attention.

As Mpho explained:

Basically if you accept, (what is the word?) you are not erasing them, but you can put them on a shelf somewhere. You just put them away. Obviously it is hard to forget things or erase things out of your brain and, therefore, you just put them onto a shelf and close it (T127).

### **9.3.2.4 Fighting**

Fighting the existence of internal experiences was also described as an obstacle to being acceptant. Coaches advised that fighting against internal experiences were keeping players stuck, whereas accepting these internal experiences instead provided "healing" and allowed players moving forward.

Mpho warned against fighting internal experiences because it kept players stuck:

I told him listen, the situation is there, but it is not for you to fight it. You have to accept it and move on. I know the healing side takes time, but accept the situation, make it part of you and move on (A43).



### 9.3.2.5 Excuses

Coaches experienced finding excuses as an obstacle to being acceptant because it allowed for attempts to rather escape unpleasant or uncomfortable situations instead of dealing with them.

David avoided declining a request from his player by looking for excuses not to coach a one-on-one session:

And you know that today you have nothing on, your schedule has nothing. You have nothing to do today and then you get the call from a player on a day when you are feeling down...You don't feel like running a session. Then he says, coach can we have a one-on-one session? Then you try and find excuses to avoid doing that session. I use that most of the time...(L143-144).

This is how Samuel explained his understanding of using excuses in coaching:

I think for me personally, I would have slacked if I didn't accept. Slacking, finding excuses, hiding myself and running away will affect the team because they couldn't work like that. So if I didn't accept long working hours and only went through the motions, we were going to lack in the coaching department...(A78-80).

### 9.3.2.6 Lying

Lying is also an obstacle to being acceptant because it provides coaches with ways to avoid unpleasant or uncomfortable situations instead of being honest and confronting the real reasons for being unable to attend to certain responsibilities.

David shared a personal experience where he lied about working commitments in an attempt to avoid responsibilities at home:

Fine, avoiding is also basically lying. You avoid spending time at home by lying about being at work basically. It is there and mostly I use it at home (L147).

### 9.3.2.7 Denying

The seventh obstacle to being acceptant was denying. Hereby coaches refused to recognise or acknowledge the reality of unpleasant, uncomfortable situations, often created by poor performances.

Here Mpho shared how he explained denial to players:

For me avoidance is basically denial. That is how I deal with it. We don't really avoid it, we will just deny it. So players denying the real reason how they got out. You know, uhm, I speak to the guys about it and tell them to accept what has happened. What are you trying to deny? When you are out, then you are out. How you got out doesn't really matter (T118).

## **9.4 Commitment**

What coaches learned about commitment became evident through two super-ordinate themes: the nature of commitment and the obstacles to being committed.

### **9.4.1 The nature of commitment**

Coaches learned about the nature of commitment through experiencing the difference between commitment and motivation, and experiencing what it means to have a vision, a purpose, being responsible, and being over-committed and being uncommitted.

#### **9.4.1.1 Commitment and motivation**

Coaches experienced the difference between being committed and being motivated. Commitment was about doing everything one hundred percent which left no room for short cuts or easy ways. Commitment brought obligation and responsibility by making sure all actions were performed to the best of the coaches' abilities and in line with their goals.

As Samuel pointed out:

You just want to commit yourself and do everything one hundred percent. Then you are making sure that you do it to the best of your abilities (A193).

Coaches felt that motivation simply refers to a desire to perform. Commitment, however, is experienced when following through on one's desire to perform by making sacrifices to one's life style.

Players displayed commitment through making sacrifices and living out their values. About this Garreth commented:

I think that is motivation, in other words, a desire to do what I want to do. There are only a few people that have the commitment to follow through or to turn their desires into values. Then have the commitment to live out those values, in other words, making the necessary sacrifices to actually really be where they want to be (L149-150).

After realising the meaning of the concept of commitment, coaches experienced that only a few of their players were really committed by directing all their focus towards excellence, their task and achieving their goals. Coaches shared that the majority of their players were motivated rather than committed because they only expressed the desire to be the best and perform well.

Riaan experienced many young players to be motivated rather than committed:

I think a lot of the kids are motivated. They all have the desire and want to be the best, but they are not fully ready to commit their full focus towards excellence, regardless of whatever task they are going for...(L59).

Carl shared Riaan's account of motivation being more evident than commitment. He related poor gym attendance to the lack of commitment:

I have seen that with a lot of teams I've coached. It is easy to sit down and say, yes we all want to win on Saturday. We want to be unbeaten at home. We want to have a fifty percent win record for this season. We are motivated to do that. But when we have our gym session on Mondays with the biokineticist, only three guys turn up. Then the rest are not committed to wanting to do that. So the commitment needs to lead to the motivation (L157).

#### **9.4.1.2 Having a vision**

Coaches experienced commitment as having a vision. They shared that motivated players tend to display short-term vision linked to impulsive behaviour and immediate gratification. However, committed players display a long-term vision and engage in actions that last the whole season, i.e. when they persevere and stick to the process until they achieve their goals.

Riaan gave further details:

...I am not after short-term motivated players or guys who are going to act on the spur of the moment. I want guys who are going to be committed for the whole season. These are guys who are making sure that they are doing everything right (A83b).

So I think, we chatted about commitment and motivation. At the end of the day, knowing these are the goals that we are striving for. It is fine if we don't get it right. We will keep on going and persevering. A motivated player is not going to tolerate that situation...Then I have to say listen, if you have a goal and you want to do something, then you really got to go for it. It won't be enough just to be motivated for today (T117-119).

#### **9.4.1.3 Having a purpose**

Coaches experienced being committed as having a purpose. Understanding the purpose or driving force behind engagement in cricket was influential to experiences of being motivated or being committed. Coaches felt that being committed related to understanding the purpose of how current activities were benefitting one's journey in achieving cricket goals.

The game of cricket consists of different formats, e.g. one game can take five days to play. It is often a time-consuming sport and that was why Garreth emphasised that players had to understand the purpose of their engagement:

We first got to know what motivates you. In a sport like, (we going a bit off the topic now), but in a sport like cricket, where it takes so much time and so much effort, uhm, you have to know what motivates you. Why are you doing it? Why do you train three times a day? There has to be a strong motivation to do it. Otherwise there is only a tendency to go through the motions, or there is a tendency to burn out (T75).

Samual realised that understanding the purpose of playing cricket assisted with being committed:

I think that is something that you must love. There is no point committing yourself to something if you think it won't benefit you or you don't like it and, therefore, you just go through the motions (A191).

#### **9.4.1.4 Being responsible**

Coaches experienced commitment as being responsible. Commitment is the responsibility of every person, and significant others such as coaches, parents, teachers or fellow-teammates cannot commit on behalf of somebody else. This means commitment is a choice and players have to decide for themselves about being committed.

Carl explained that each player was responsible for his own commitment making it a private process and personal experience:

Commitment is an internal thing for me. It is an individual thing that players need to commit to. This is ranging from their training schedules, own processes or changed mind sets. So it is not something I like to force on players. It is something I prefer seeing from their point of view. Once you have made that decision, then self-commitment becomes easier because you want to move forward, do well and improve. You are the one who makes that decision and not your dad, teacher or your coach. It is you who is committing to what you are doing. So you end up being responsible for what you are committing to (T279-280).

David struggled to understand that both players and coaches were not willing to take responsibility for their own commitment:

It is difficult for me to get a person, especially the ones that I am working with, to commit to doing their job without someone else threatening them to do something. I can learn from you and you can learn from me, but firstly, you need to be committed to what you do. That is one thing I can't do for you (T178-180).

#### **9.4.1.5 Being over-committed**

In experiencing commitment and motivation coaches also became aware of the condition of being over-committed. Over-commitment occurred when coaches or players spent too much time and energy on one area of their lives (e.g. cricket) to the extent that it became damaging to other areas of their lives (e.g. academics or family). Over-commitment created experiences of being totally absorbed by one area of life.

David experienced over-commitment to his coaching which was to the detriment of his family:

Let's put it this way, the negative of being committed is that I am more committed to my work, than being committed at home. Sometimes that affects my relationship. At the end of the day my lady and my son tend to resent the job that I am doing because I am more committed to my job than to them at home. Sometimes I am over-committed at work rather than being just committed. It is OK to be committed but sometimes I feel I am over-committed and then I don't think about my family (L163-166).

#### **9.4.1.6 Being uncommitted**

In understanding commitment and motivation, coaches also became aware of experiences of being uncommitted. Coaches shared that uncommitted behaviour displayed in various contexts and forms. Coaches experienced themselves as uncommitted when they failed to complete their own goals or see tasks through to the end.

Carl shared an experience of being uncommitted which was displayed in completing only eighty percent of his goals:

I have always done that in my life. I have always got to a point where I haven't really completed my major goals. I have always sort of been goal orientated and goal driven, but in certain aspects, I did eighty percent and felt well that is OK. I have done enough of what I wanted to achieve...(L129-131).

Mpho shared an experience of being uncommitted as displayed in being disorganised:

Yes, it is the organisational part on my side where I feel that I lack commitment. I need to work on that (A71).

#### **9.4.2 Obstacles to being committed**

In learning about commitment coaches became aware that there were obstacles to being committed. This became apparent through six themes: the nature of the task, the training environment, "action speaks louder than words", players with full time jobs and families and lastly, colleagues and teammates.

##### **9.4.2.1 Nature of the task**

The first obstacle to being committed was the nature of the task. Players struggled to commit to tasks that they interpreted as having no purpose and benefits for their performance. Fitness training came up as a prominent obstacle to commitment and was often displayed by poor attendance. Cricket players preferred technical training (batting, bowling, fielding), but disliked fitness training because it was hard work and made them uncomfortable. Players are committed if they felt passionate about and loved what they did, and some tasks simply failed to be experienced as such.

Players engaging or disengaging in the nature of the task (fitness) gave David some ideas regarding the players' commitment:

...The commitment is not there. I don't know whether it is because we are doing fitness now. We have a squad of twenty two players, but we have only four or five guys who are coming to practise on Fridays. If we are lucky we have ten on Saturdays, that is if we are lucky (T138-140).

#### **9.4.2.2 Training environment**

The second obstacle to being committed was the type of training environment. Coaches became aware that training environments characterised by monotonous, boring routines were influencing players' commitment. They felt that well organised training environments characterised by difference, enjoyment and learning were more conducive to players' commitment.

Mpho's shared how he set up his training environment to accommodate players who struggled with commitment:

I find that the boys who struggle with commitment benefit from the environment that I create for them. Then they want to come and also commit themselves to practices (T157).

I mean, we didn't have this commitment problem last year because most sessions were based on enjoyment. Practices were organised and structured. This is something they don't get at their clubs, thereby doing things differently to what they are used to (T205).

#### **9.4.2.3 "Action speaks louder than words"**

The third obstacle had to do with the difference between action and words. Coaches questioned the credibility of players communicating verbally. They could not claim to be committed if their behaviour did not support their commitment.

Riaan struggled to make sense of commitment because for him commitment entailed behaviour he "saw" rather than what players "say":

So yes, I think commitment can be difficult to define because it is judged by what happens out there and not through what you say. I think that is a good thing, uhm, but it can also be quite difficult. I can also say I am really committed, but I am not really showing it...Then they have said, we are committed and we want to play. I replied by saying that I have heard that before. Now if that is the case, I want to see a change in your behaviour. Needless to say that there was very little change in their behaviour (T159-162).

Although coaches were aware that commitment was displayed through actions rather than words, they also warned that observable behaviour can be misunderstood or interpreted incorrectly. Observable behaviour was not always a true representation of the player's internal belief or commitment because it remained a private instead of a public process.

In the following extract, Riaan expressed caution regarding the possibility of misreading or misinterpreting observable behaviour in cricket:

...What you (as coach) see as being committed and what they (as players) believe is commitment can sometimes be very different. Just because a guy is not hitting an extra 50 balls at the end of a practice doesn't mean that he is not committed. Just because his body language isn't good, doesn't mean that he is not committed. I think players can be misunderstood by coaches. They also get misunderstood by their fellow players quite a lot. So I think it is difficult to show that you are a very committed cricketer. You might be doing a lot of things that people don't see. You need to manage the perception of others, illustrating that you are very committed to what you are doing and that you are willing to go through tough times (T146-148).

#### **9.4.2.4 Full time jobs and families**

A fourth obstacle to being committed had to do with senior cricket players who also had full-time jobs and families, indicating that playing cricket was only part of their lives.

Senior players with other, non-cricket related responsibilities struggled to commit to cricket only, as Mpho highlighted:

I have attended two practices with the senior guys on Saturdays. They work during the week, so it is difficult for them to take off from work. That is why we schedule practices on Saturdays...(T159).

Uhm (.) yes the working class guys, the senior guys. I find that very difficult. I mean you work with people who have got families. You work with people who have got jobs. For them to commit to your vision or our vision as the Province cricket it is very difficult. I find it very difficult (T201).

#### **9.4.2.5 Colleagues and teammates**

Colleagues and teammates were identified as a fifth obstacle to being committed. Coaches spend a lot of time on a daily basis with their colleagues and the same applies to players training and playing cricket with their teammates. Coaches felt that their colleagues did not always share the same values or goals, thus challenging their commitment as opposed to supporting it.

David shared a personal experience of giving up smoking which took a lot of commitment to maintain. He experienced his peer group as unsupportive:

It takes a lot of commitment because I work with people who smoke, including my boss. He is a smoker. It is a serious commitment because you have to deal with them smoking. You need to be committed enough to stick with your decision (A156-158).

### **9.5 Summary**

Chapter 9 illustrated how coaches' learning made them aware of mindfulness, acceptance and commitment.

Coaches learned that they were mindful if they were aware and attentive in the present moment. However, becoming aware of a drifting mind informed them that they were mindless and just going through the motions as displayed in unintentional, purposeless coaching actions. Coaches further learned that their own thoughts and emotions distracted them from being mindful. Focusing on one's personal life or trying to live up to parental expectations were distracting, as it allowed the mind to wander off from the task at hand. These frequent requests for engagement with others, as introduced by technological advances of our time are interfering with players being mindful during cricket games.

Coaches learned about the nature of acceptance by sharing that internal experiences were an inevitable part of life. This made acceptance a life style continuously requiring engagement with the acceptance process which means it is not a quick fix technique. Coaches became aware of obstacles to being acceptant and referred to controlling, blocking-out, erasing/forgetting, fighting, finding excuses, lying or denying.

In experiencing commitment coaches became aware of the difference between commitment and motivation and how important each was. Coaches further shared experiences of being over-committed, as well as being uncommitted. There were also obstacles to being committed like the nature of the task, the training environment and that "action speaking louder than words". Players' full time jobs and families influenced their commitment in cricket. Commitment was further challenged if coaches' colleagues and players' teammates were experienced as unsupportive to their committed actions.

Chapter 10 will show the results on how coaches utilized their learning experiences regarding mindfulness, acceptance and commitment in their coaching activities.



## **CHAPTER 10**

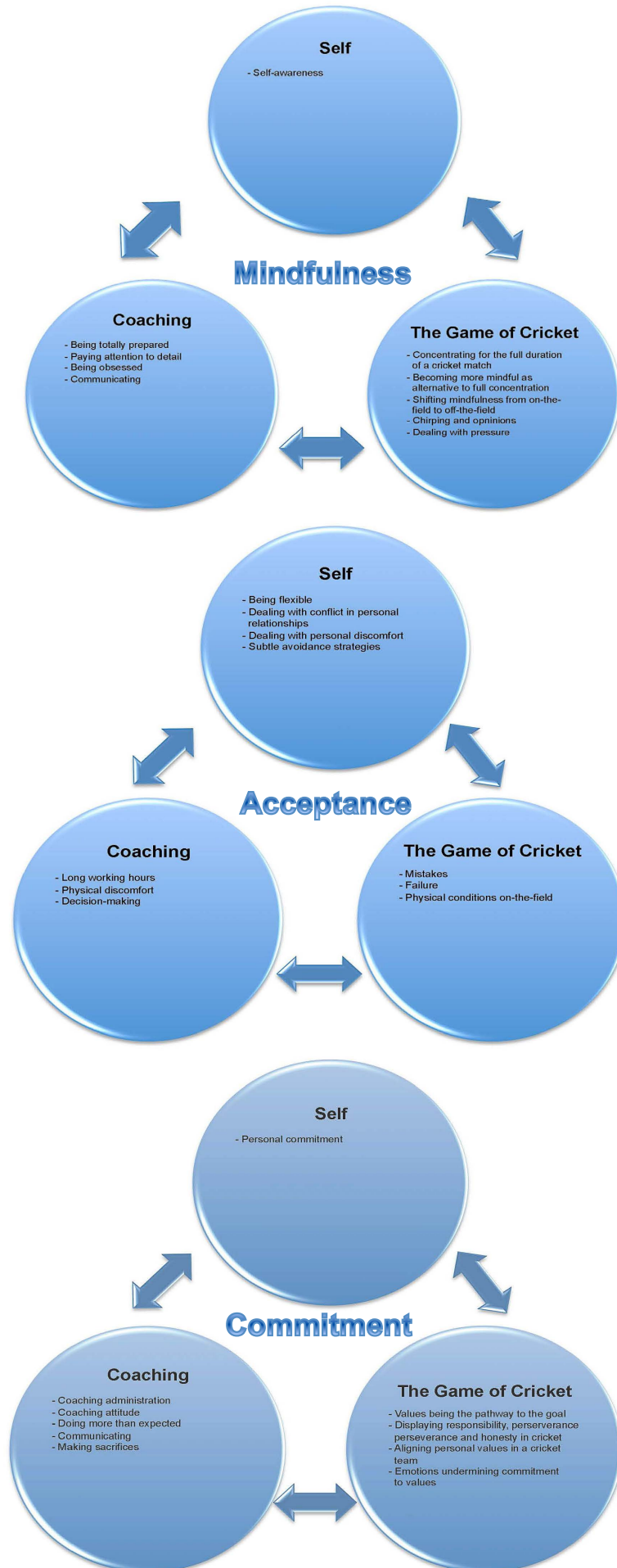
### **Results**

#### **Manifesting the MAC experience**

##### **10.1 Introduction**

Chapter 10 presents and discusses how the coaches' learning experience of mindfulness, acceptance and commitment (the MAC approach) became manifest in three "domains" i.e. the self as person, coaching and the game of cricket. These three "domains", then, are master themes each with its accompanying super-ordinate themes. See Figure 10.1 for an overview.

Figure 10.1. Manifesting the MAC experience



## **10.2 Mindfulness**

In learning about the MAC approach the coaches became aware of the conflicting nature of mindfulness manifesting itself in mindfulness and in mindlessness. What the coaches experienced about mindfulness manifested in three “domains”, yielding three master themes, namely self, coaching and the game of cricket and their accompanying super-ordinate themes.

### **10.2.1 Self**

#### **10.2.1.1 Self-awareness**

What coaches learned experientially from mindfulness made them more aware of the self, i.e. who they were as human beings. This awareness induced understanding of their own thoughts, emotions and behaviour. It would have been incongruent expecting players to display self-awareness if coaches acted without self-awareness in their own lives. Coaches living mindfully understood themselves as human beings occupying the role of coach in a cricket context. Living mindfully, therefore, created shared experiences between coaches and players, understanding and relating to the thoughts, emotions and behaviour of one another.

David was expressive in sharing that he was unable to understand players if he did not understand himself:

It is time to understand the players. Obviously, I can't understand the players, if I don't understand myself (L44).

So mindfulness has influenced my coaching because I started to understand myself. Now it is easy for me to understand my players, especially the way they feel and how they do things. I see things from another perspective (A6).

Riaan described how his own process of becoming more mindful, encouraged his players to also live more mindfully:

I would like to share my knowledge on acceptance and commitment. Then from my own side make sure that I am a lot more mindful and then trying to get players a bit more mindful as well (L89).

### **10.2.2 Coaching**

Mindfulness was also displayed in coaching. Four super-ordinate themes emerged: being totally prepared, paying attention to detail, being obsessed and communicating.

### **10.2.2.1 Being totally prepared**

Being prepared was a super-ordinate theme shared by all coaches. Coaches felt that being more mindful made them also more attentive to their preparation and planning for coaching sessions. Being totally prepared enhanced the quality of coaching sessions, helping them to feel more comfortable with their role as coach and the task of coaching.

Samual shared that being mindful and well-prepared enhanced the quality of his coaching session:

The thing for me is when you prepare for a session. That is where you have to be mindful because you need to make sure that the preparation is good. The way you practice determines what happens. The standard and intensity of the session need to be of the highest level. Let's say, we are throwing a ball to a cricketer. You don't concentrate on throwing, it just happens and then the guy catches it. I don't think you concentrate too much on throwing, but preparation and that kind of stuff needs a lot of concentration (L25-26).

Riaan said that being mindful helped him with feeling prepared:

From my side being mindful of where I am mentally when I am there physically. The preparation by making sure that I have got everything that I need for that specific session that I am going to try and run (uhm) and making sure that I am completely there and being mindful...(A76).

Despite efforts to coach more mindfully, mindlessness was still experienced. Mindless coaching meant coaches being physically present at the training session, but mentally absent due to personal or work related distractions. Mindless coaching made no real contribution to the session or to players' progress.

Carl described a mindless coaching experience:

You are still aware of what you are doing, but you are actually having no effect, no positive effect or impact on the actual situation that is taking place. Although you are aware, let's say being at practise...Practise just continues for a period of time. You actually have made no contribution to the ultimate outcome, which is perhaps winning a game on Saturday. You just allowed players to sort of drift through whilst you are worrying. In my situation you are worrying about something that is going on at school or a certain email from parents that you need to deal with (L42-47).

### **10.2.2.2 Paying attention to detail**

Being more mindful during coaching sessions enabled coaches to pay attention to detail, and therefore, pick up on the small things regarding players' performance. They were aware that, despite their efforts to coach mindfully, mindlessness still occurred. Coaching mindlessly implied a passive attitude of standing back and allowing the training session to just unfold automatically. A consequence of mindlessness was missing important and detailed information regarding players' performance.

Carl said the following about attention to detail:

Yes, very much so. So by being more mindful of a situation, you become more attentive to detail. You become more attentive to making sure that the small things are right because when you are mindless, you are standing back and you rely on the practise. Let's say, when I am standing back, it looks good and things are happening nicely. But the attention to detail and being mindful about the small things doesn't really come to the fore (A30).

### **10.2.2.3 Being obsessed**

Being obsessed with mindfulness was a unique experience shared by Mpho. The general understanding of an obsession is a preoccupation with a fixed or persistent idea. Being mindful, like being obsessed, encouraged constant and consistent engagement with mindfulness. It required practising mindfulness throughout, like having an idea refusing to leave consciousness. This made mindfulness a kind of life style experience in all contexts and not a quick fix technique of the moment, specifically related to cricket. Engaging with and living mindfully provided opportunities for both coaches and players to find their own unique way of being mindful in cricket.

Being obsessed with gym meant practising gym consistently and continuously as Mpho illustrated by observing improvement in players' gym attendance:

One of the main things that I always say to the guys, if you do something like mindfulness, uhm, you got to be obsessed with it in some way, your way OK...The guys really worked hard. If you want to go to the gym, be obsessed with it. Then you will find that you end up going four times a week instead of normally only going once a week. Now you are obsessed with the gym...(T54-58).

### **10.2.2.4 Communicating**

Communicating mindfully meant staying focused in the present moment by really "listening" attentively to players' messages, as opposed to just "hearing" what they say or "hearing" what you as coach wish to hear.

Attentive listening and being mindful in the moment enabled Riaan to recall more information:

If you are more mindful, you will stay in that moment for longer and listen to the underlying message that the guy has to say. Also picking up what he is actually doing, compared to what you think he is doing (L70).

You recall a lot more information about what actually happened. I found that I become a lot better with it. In the past, I needed a lot of to-do lists. However, if I concentrate on what I am doing, I can actually remember the things that I need to get done...( A26b).

### **10.2.3 The game of cricket**

Displaying mindfulness in the game of cricket was a prominent master theme and manifested itself in five super-ordinate themes which will be discussed in 10.2.3.1 to 10.2.3.5:

#### **10.2.3.1 Concentrating for the full duration of a cricket game**

A cricket game can last from several hours to several days depending on the format of the game and number of overs that is needed to be played (T20, a one-day game consisting of 50 overs or a five-day game). Before experiencing the MAC approach, coaches had the impression that players had to concentrate for the full duration of the game. This led to mental fatigue and experiences of failure, as complete concentration was impossible to accomplish. Complete concentration for such a long time also created experiences of mindlessness.

Carl explained mindlessness and having a drifting mind:

I am aware of being mindless. I mean, it is quite easy in cricket to be mindless because you play for such long periods of time. You are maybe not as focused on what is happening in the game (uhm). You can get stuck on the boundary for fifteen overs and not really be involved in the game or not field the ball for ten overs. You can also sit and wait to bat for twenty overs, before you get in. It is easy for your mind to drift and to start talking about other things, you know (T43-44).

Here Riaan described advice about concentration he received as a player:

...I explained to them that when I was growing up all the coaches used to say, come on, keep concentrating, keep concentrating, keep concentrating. I found that made me mentally tired very quickly. The players have really related to that very well because I said in MAC you don't actually have to do that (A12).

I think previously, I am not an old coach per se, but I was definitely not taught anything like that. It was definitely a thing where you had to concentrate from ball one to ball 100 to ball 350, which is impossible for kids to do (A40).

#### **10.2.3.2 Becoming more mindful as alternative to complete concentration**

Playing more mindfully introduced an alternative to previous conceptions of concentrating for the full duration of a game. Coaches manifested their experiential learning of mindfulness by challenging the belief of complete concentration for the full duration of the cricket game. Playing mindfully enabled players to know when to switch-on and focus on the task of batting, bowling or fielding. Then, after completing their task, they switched-off and were allowed to think or focus on non-cricket related aspects. Being more mindful, therefore, becomes an alternative to complete concentration in cricket.

Being mindful enabled Samuel's players to realise that "crossing the line" meant "switching-on":

Now you are aware of mindfulness. Concentrate and be focused on what you are doing. Don't worry about what is happening around you. When you are in a game and you start crossing that line, then you know that you have to switch-on and be in your zone (T316).

David described that switching-off meant thinking about non-cricket related aspects:

...You need to explain to them switching-on and switching-off. That means that after every ball, it is allowed to think about something else. You forget about what happened because once you think about what just happened, you are going to dwell on the mistake...(L92).

### **10.2.3.3 Shifting mindfulness from "on-the-field" to "off-the-field"**

Being mindful of knowing when to "switch-on" and when to "switch-off" were evident in various aspects of a cricket game both on-the-field and off-the-field. Off-the-field playing referred to players still being part of the game, but waiting in the change room or next to the field for their turn to bat. On-the-field playing was the physical game itself where one team was fielding and the other team batting with two batsmen at the crease.

Carl's account depicted experiences of being mindful on-the-field and off-the-field:

Yes, I think, the change room is, well for me, it is such an important part of the game. Yes, you may have been fielding for 50 overs. You are on-the-field and although you are not directly involved in the game, you are on-the-field. However, for half of the game you are sitting, and you are off-the-field, although you still playing, you know? We have little rules like, when to focus and when to switch-on; when to switch-off and how to focus. How do we stay relaxed? How do we make sure that the pressure in the middle is not getting to the change room? Then to make sure that the pressure from the change room is not being reflected in the middle (T51-52).

### **10.2.3.4 Chirping and opinions**

Distractions from playing mindfully came from hearing or listening to the chirping and opinions of others. Chirping occurred when opponents made derogative comments about players' performance or personhood, often ending up intimidating them. Coaches experienced this specifically when working with adolescent cricket players, still being very sensitive about the opinions, approval and recognition of others. Although these players were physically still playing cricket, they were mentally focusing on finding ways to deal with the chirping and opinions of others. Playing mindlessly was detrimental to their performance, as players were not focused on the task of playing cricket.

Garreth shared an account where chirping opponents distracted his players' focus from their task of batting or bowling:

Uhm, well one guy spoke about batting and what to do if the fielders are chirping you whilst you are batting. How do you stay focused on watching the ball and doing what you have practised? Uhm, I think to be honest, they struggled. I think, they took it personally, uhm, depending on the nature of the chirping, but some of the chirping you know...( T26-29).

Carl had experienced mindless players on-the-field when they were mentally dealing with the opinions of others and simultaneously trying to prove themselves:

I think players become more aware of themselves from the age of sixteen. They become more aware of what is happening around them. They become more aware of other people's opinions of them and also have opinions about themselves. Particularly high school boys have that inherent sort of thing of wanting to prove things to people...The opinions of other people really matter to them. It is an important part of their learning and growing phase. But it can also be very detrimental to performance-orientated tasks, whether it is in the classroom or on the sports field or whatever they are doing...(L174-178).

Chirping opponents also distracted David's players from being mindful:

Because you understand, there are times that these players swear a lot. They tell you things about your mother that you didn't even know. At the end of the day, you have to deal with those issues and they are not cricket related...They are bad, but how do you handle all of that? Are you the guy who quickly reacts or are you the guy that we will try and work with yourself and your inner self quietly: Now, obviously I am going to accept this and be mindful about it (L16-17).

#### **10.2.3.5 Dealing with pressure**

Being mindful was introduced as a way of dealing with pressure during cricket games. Involvement in cricket often entails expectations that coaches and players have to perform well and be successful. This creates pressure for them. Being aware of the pressure and focusing their attention on task-relevant information in the present moment made such demands more manageable. Being mindful, therefore, helped coaches and players in knowing that they can deal with pressure.

Mpho shared that being mindful decreased pressure during games when players dealt with one ball at a time instead of thinking about 300 balls at once:

Uhm (.) it is awareness and staying in the present because then guys don't feel so much pressure whilst performing. I mean, if you think about it, when you only have one ball to deal with, then you can think about that one ball. That is the only ball you have to deal with at that time. Then it is so much easier. But if you have to deal with 300 balls at once, then it gets a bit tough. So that is why I tell the guys, you just have to deal with the one ball that is bowled to you at that time. That is so much easier (T35)



## **10.3 Acceptance**

In learning about the MAC approach the coaches became aware of the conflicting nature of acceptance in that both acceptance and avoidance presented itself in their experiences. As with mindfulness, three master themes emerged in which coaches manifested their processes of becoming more acceptant of themselves as human beings, their coaching activities and lastly, the game of cricket. Associated with each of these master themes there were particular super-ordinate themes. See Figure 10.1 for an overview.

### **10.3.1 Self**

Coaches realised that besides coaching, they had personal lives in which the self featured prominently. They shared experiences about this, as well as about the process of becoming more acceptant of using avoidance in their personal lives. Four super-ordinate themes emerged and will be discussed in 10.3.1.1 to 10.3.1.4.

#### **10.3.1.1 Being flexible**

Coaches depicted previous experiences of feeling stuck with limited options to deal with it, as well as challenging situations which created internal conflict and emotional turmoil. Becoming more acceptant of difficult and challenging personal situations in life assisted them to be more flexible by considering other options or solutions. Being flexible allowed coaches to engage in a process of getting closure, knowing that they dealt with past experiences, and therefore, no further mental reflection, energy or time was needed for it. Being flexible provided progress and experiences of relief and calmness.

Being flexible created experiences for Mpho where he felt he was moving forward:

Remember, if you accept your own situation, you will find ways to move forward. If you don't accept, you will never understand your own situation. You will fight your situation and that will hurt you. That will just continue to hurt you, but when you accept, you will understand what you are involved in and then find ways to move forward. Yes, very much, very much like I said, acceptance will help you to find comfort. It will help you to find ways to move forward or find solutions for that matter (A49).

You can't stick with one thing. You can't stick with disappointment. You can't stick with glory. You can't stick with conflict. You have to accept that, in order for you to move forward. That is how I used it (L98).

Accepting situations created options for David to see different aspects of a situation:

Acceptance for me is helpful in a way. Once you accept the situation, you tend to be objective and see things in a different way. It is easier for you to see things and do things differently because you accepted it (A147).

Becoming more acceptant was relieving for David as it took a lot off his shoulders:

Once you learn to accept things, you take a lot off your shoulders basically. You take a lot off your shoulders because at the end of the day, you waste your precious time thinking and trying to change things or people and it doesn't help (A144).

Not all coaches experienced the process of acceptance as providing flexibility. Samuel experienced being acceptant as a difficult process, as that meant accepting bad treatment from others. Samuel, therefore, confused acceptance with not standing your ground, not having convictions, a type of passive and fatalistic process:

Just accept. For example, somebody is doing something bad to me. I find it very difficult because I don't understand why? If you are doing the right thing and somebody else is treating you differently, then it is difficult to accept that. Yes, that it is difficult for me to accept (A31).

### **10.3.1.2 Dealing with conflict in personal relationships**

Coaches were aware of the conflicting nature of acceptance and avoidance. This became manifested in coaches' dealing with conflict in personal relationships by using avoidance more regularly. Avoiding conflict meant ignoring provocative remarks from others.

Here Samuel highlighted the purpose of avoiding conflict. He wanted to buy time for further reflection to establish the source of the conflict first. He did this through conversation after emotions had settled down:

Since the MAC approach, I try to avoid fights or potential situations that can cause fights. I try to become aware. So when she was shouting at me, I tried to ignore that. Then I come back tomorrow and talk to her when she is calm (T242).

### **10.3.1.3 Dealing with personal discomfort**

Coaches dealt with personal discomfort by avoiding situations that created personal discomfort. Avoidance was understood as learned behaviour that coaches employed to protect their self-perseverance, self-esteem and ego.

Riaan accounted how he avoided situations that introduced personal discomfort in his life:

I don't think that you are born with avoidance, but it develops as you grow up. This is either for self-perseverance, self-protection of your own self-esteem or for your own ego. Whatever needs to happen, you sometimes blame it on other things. You do try to avoid situations that you are not particularly going to like. Whatever that might be (L42).

Mpho avoided writing essays because it was an experience that provided personal discomfort, as he felt incompetent for never receiving formal education in writing skills. He shared the extent and intensity of his personal discomfort writing an essay by comparing it to being dropped from a cricket team:

Well, it is actually making sense now, when you ask me these questions and allow me to talk because I am not a big writer. I have never been taught to write essays. So I always avoided that. Well if they say, let's write an essay, then I will rather get dropped from a team instead of writing an essay...(L92).

#### **10.3.1.4 Subtle avoidance strategies**

Being aware of subtle avoidance strategies allowed all six coaches to share experiences of displaying it in their personal lives. Subtle avoidance strategies were creative ways coaches used to escape or “get out” of certain situations.

As Riaan described:

Subtle avoidance strategies basically mean that you are finding ways to avoid a certain situation, whether that be subtly or not subtly. It is a creative way to get out of something, you know?...( L49).

Three different subtle avoidance strategies were displayed:

Firstly, coaches neglected their own personal fitness and gym sessions by employing a subtle avoidance strategy in the form of attending to coaching commitments. This avoidance strategy is subtle because it served the function to create the impression that the coach is sincere, diligent and committed to doing coaching related administration. However, avoiding gym is due to laziness, but instead of admitting that, coaches used this avoidance strategy to justify not going to the gym.

Samual described his subtle avoidance strategy:

It is not that I can't do gym, but rather that I am trying to avoid gym. I use excuses, for example, I have worked hard today and that is why I can't go to the gym today. That is not a good thing. I have learned personally, that I do it often because I am lazy and that is why I am trying to avoid the gym (L51-52).

Carl shared Samual's experience of using coaching related administration as an excuse to avoid gym. He mentioned that he often invents tasks that were not really necessary:

I also try from an avoidance point of view. I mean, doing your emails to avoid going to the gym. Although I am very busy, I can make myself busier most of the time...( L90).

Secondly, coaches reported that they used attending prolonged cricket training as an excuse to miss formal meetings. This avoidance strategy is subtle because it served the

function to create the impression that the coach is diligent and committed by running a longer coaching session than expected. Instead, it was only an excuse to miss formal meetings.

As Garreth described in this extract:

I thought about it. I mean, I sometimes use a subtle avoidance strategy where I deliberately extend team training, so that I don't have to go to meetings at school (L120).

Thirdly, some coaches said that procrastination was a subtle avoidance strategy used to delay starting with new projects. Using this subtle avoidance strategy made them realise that it only lead to postponing the project, increasing the risk of running out of time and not finishing the project at all. Procrastination initially provided short-term comfort (relief from the project) at the expense of long-term benefit (completed projects).

Mpho provided a detailed account of procrastination:

...I have procrastinated with a lot of things in my academics. I have started courses, but never finished them. It has really been a downfall in my life in terms of academics. It is not because I can't do it. It just gets to a stage that I feel disinterested. Then I decide to do it tomorrow or I will do it later or I will just sit there (L77).

### **10.3.2 Coaching**

Becoming more acceptant was also displayed in coaching activities. This manifested in three super-ordinate themes.

#### **10.3.2.1 Long working hours**

Coaching often entails long working hours, e.g. starting at 05:00 in the morning and ending at 20:00 and most games are played over weekends and can include both Saturdays and Sundays. Coaches shared that long working hours was a given and part of their job, thus requiring acceptance as opposed to viewing it as a sacrifice. Becoming more acceptant of these long coaching hours helped them to persevere, even when they were tired, thereby honouring their commitment to coaching and, ultimately getting their job done.

Samual shared that accepting tiredness was part of his coaching workload:

I had to accept my workload. I had to work even though I am tired. I just had to accept that I have to work for long hours and for me that is what acceptance is, not just cricket, but in life as well (A74-75).

Carl accepted that the nature of coaching consisted of more than coaching players physically. It also entailed meetings and serving on cricket boards:

...I mean, having a meeting every night of the week until 20:00 or 21:00...can be frustrating but you have to accept that it's part of who you are because you sit on X-committee or Y-committee or X-board. You accept that is what it is all about. You commit to it and then you go to all of these meetings. It is not about using avoidance tactics and saying, well this is my third meeting in a row. So, listen, I have got something else on tonight, so I am not going to the meeting. You accept that you have to do it and you get it done (A188-189).

### **10.3.2.2 Physical discomfort**

Experiencing physical discomfort, often introduced by fitness training and technical drills, is part of the coaching process. Coaches experienced that players still preferred to avoid physical discomfort, rather than embracing and accepting it. Players' avoidance created short-term comfort at the expense of long-term benefit.

Riaan shared that players who want to avoid physical discomfort during training sessions are likely to experience emotional embarrassment in the future:

Where I think avoidance can be a bad thing when guys, as we saw in the MAC, avoid for the purpose of short-term comfort against the long-term benefit. Then often the "now" overrides the "later". Then the guys struggle to see, that if I catch these one hundred balls now, I am not going to face the later embarrassment of dropping one catch in the match. I will definitely catch that one, but for now it is going to make my hands sore. So what are you going to do? (L43-44).

### **10.3.2.3 Decision-making**

Decision-making is part of coaching, entailing selecting teams and dropping players. Making these decisions often leads to experiencing emotional discomfort. Instead of being acceptant that decision-making was part of coaching, coaches rather avoided making these decisions. Being avoidant enabled coaches to evade taking responsibility for the outcome of their tactical decisions and, therefore, rather leaving it up to fate to make the decision for them. Being avoidant further provided temporary relief and short-term comfort instead of long-term benefit.

Carl avoided having the disappointing conversation of dropping a player from the team. He provided a detailed account of the process of avoiding decision-making:

...I am trying to avoid making decisions too early. I rather let the decisions make themselves. So I choose not to take the responsibility for the decision and this approach works for me. I am a firm believer that the right decisions will enhance the right sort of actions. It is definitely avoiding having the disappointing conversation of dropping someone. Avoiding making the decision of where we are playing or whether we are bowling first. Avoiding picking the team that we want to play for a particular match, or whether we want to play an extra spinner or an extra batter (C80-83).

### **10.3.3 The game of cricket**

Becoming more acceptant was also displayed in the game of cricket. Three super-ordinate themes emerged:

#### **10.3.3.1 Mistakes**

Making mistakes in cricket is a given, a natural part of playing the game and learning to become competent in batting, bowling and fielding. Becoming more acceptant of these mistakes depicted a process of dealing with and learning from it, as well as finding ways of moving forward and refocusing on the task of playing the next ball.

Accepting mistakes, like a dropped catch is part of cricket as pointed out by Samuel:

Accept that it is a dropped catch. There is nothing you can do about it. You have to move on and try to concentrate on the next ball (T108).

Garreth shared that mistakes were an inevitable and normal part of playing cricket and required acceptance:

That would first of all mean that the team is value-driven. Then creating a culture whereby people are allowed to make mistakes. They have to accept that they need to work hard and experience discomfort. That will help them to get where they want to go. So mistakes are not a cop-out for not working hard. We accept that people make mistakes. They are allowed to make mistakes, but always making sure that we are focus-driven and not scoreboard-driven (A73-74).

David gave a detailed account of accepting mistakes:

...He dwelled on the past. So his mind is still on the mistake he created, played or made. So now that affects the next ball that he is going to play. So now mindlessness starts. After making the mistake, this player needs to immediately transfer the information from his brain to his body, by saying, it is done, forget about it and clear your mind (T42-44).

#### **10.3.3.2 Failure**

All six coaches shared experiences of accepting failure in cricket. Failure was described as a naturally occurring phenomenon in cricket. Coaches felt that failure should be directed towards behaviour in a particular game and, therefore, it wasn't necessary to personalise failure. Accepting failure as being part of cricket enabled players to treat it as temporary and only part of that specific day. Accepting failure meant letting go of the failed game situated in the past and refocusing on performing in the present moment.

Riaan anticipated that failure was not a case of life and death, but rather called for a process of acceptance:

...We don't often accept that failure is bound to happen. No one likes to fail. I am certainly one of those, but if you accept the fact that it will happen on the odd occasion and that you are going to fail...and that is not going to be a case of life or death (L35).

Carl depicted failing as not scoring runs in a particular game and has to be treated as temporary:

I think, the major thing is failure. They need to accept that...Let me share an example from the weekend. Alviro Peterson is one of four batters who batted for South Africa. He got no runs and everybody else got over 140 runs. He needs to accept that he is not a poorer cricketer for that situation. He just needs to accept that he wasn't able to contribute to that particular situation (T147).

Being acceptant that failure is part of that specific day was David's advice to his players:

You know, it is OK to fail. Basically, you get days when you don't perform. You will not perform in every game you play. That is the beauty of the game. So you will not perform in every game, but you need to learn to accept that, OK today wasn't my day. So deal with it (L22-23).

Failure was game-specific and being acceptant of it helped moving forward. Mpho explained:

When I am coaching the guys...I have actually tried to install the accepting thing in order to improve their cricket. So when I am speaking to a player, I will tell him, listen, failure is there to happen, but the most important thing is to accept it and move on. You can't stay focused on the game where you have failed yesterday and expect to perform today. So cricket-wise, that is what I was trying to instill in him (A37).

### **10.3.3.3 Physical conditions on-the-field**

Accepting physical conditions on-the-field such as weather, noise, opponents, or chirping are part of cricket. Coaches felt that the presence of these physical conditions was a given. You cannot change it. Becoming more acceptant allowed players to stay focused on their task of playing cricket instead of venturing into the impossible task of thinking about changing the physical conditions on-the-field.

Here Riaan accounted for accepting physical conditions on the field:

That for me as an individual coach has been the most important thing from an acceptance point of view. There are obstacles that are bound to jump in your way. You have to accept that those things are going to be there. There are going to be distractions. There are going to be things that will hinder you to achieve your goal (A50).

So there have been good examples. It has been good for the guys to see that you know the conditions are not going to be perfect all the time. You know, it is a matter of getting to a situation where you can accept that. Then be mindful of the fact that the conditions are a given, but you still need to do your task (T95).

Samual shared an experience of being acceptant of the physical conditions in his office whilst attending to his coaching administration:

You just need to accept that there are people walking around, but you have to focus on the task that you have to do (L99).

## **10.4 Commitment**

In learning about the MAC approach coaches became aware of the process of becoming committed. See Figure 10.1 for an overview. As with mindfulness and acceptance, three master themes emerged:

### **10.4.1 Self**

Personal commitment was a super-ordinate theme shared by coaches.

#### **10.4.1.1 Personal commitment**

Coaches experienced being both motivated and committed in their personal lives. Motivation was experienced more frequently and informed most of their behaviour. Coaches felt that being committed was a selective process that required more time and effort. Engaging in a process of prioritising behaviour or activities in their lives required commitment in order to ensure success.

David shared an account of what being committed meant to him:

From a commitment point of view, I don't think you can be fully committed to everything that you are trying to do. We talked about values and priorities. It is important to commit yourself to one, two or maybe three things that you are really fully into. The rest of the time you got to accept that it is probably motivation that is driving your behaviour, and that you are not fully committed...(L60).

### **10.4.2 Coaching**

Five super-ordinate themes manifest itself illustrating commitment in coaching administration, coaching attitude, doing more than expected, communicating and making sacrifices.

#### **10.4.2.1 Coaching administration**

Coaches' commitment was displayed in their coaching administration, referring to being on time, planning thoroughly and being prepared for every coaching session. Committed coaches were also mindful during coaching sessions by being both physically and mentally present in the moment.



Riaan displayed commitment through being on time and mentally present during coaching sessions:

From my side, I am committing to time management. Focusing on where I am mentally when I am at training sessions. Preparing and making sure that I have got everything I need for that specific coaching session. I am making sure that I am mentally completely there, when I have to be there. That is what I have been trying to do from a commitment side...(A76).

#### **10.4.2.2 Coaching attitude**

Coaches displayed commitment through their coaching attitude, by being energetic and communicating well to both players and their parents. A committed coach believed in his coaching abilities, as well as displaying a caring and genuineness towards his players.

Displaying commitment through his coaching attitude was an experience Mpho became aware of:

The only way to demonstrate commitment to players is through being energetic. You are willing to hear what they say. You consider the way you organise stuff. You can even talk to their parents and thereby, they can see that you are serious about them. Whatever you do, whatever you say, you believe in what you say and you listen to them. That is commitment (L132).

#### **10.4.2.3 Doing more than expected**

Coaches understood commitment as doing more than what is expected of you. They felt that players who were willing to do more than their usual training session or exceeding coaching requirements displayed commitment, for example doing extra training outside of the official training sessions to improve their cricket fitness.

Riaan described a player displaying commitment by doing extra fitness and cross-training at 04:00 in the morning:

We have got one particular cricketer who does a lot of gym work on his own. He also does mixed martial arts. He does a lot of sprint training because his running style is pretty poor. He does that like at 04:00 in the morning. Then afterwards he obviously attends a full day at school. Then we also have our own conditioning that we run here and he needs to be part of that as well because it counts for his individual coaching. So he is a really committed player...(T150).

#### **10.4.2.4 Communicating**

Players communicating the fact that they will not attend coaching sessions displayed commitment in that they did not simply stay away without any notification. Often they had valid reasons for not turning up, and they always notified their coaches about the situation.

Samual recognised committed players through their communication of being unable to attend a coaching session:

I think that is how you commit yourself fully. If you can't make a training session, you just have to give me a call fifty minutes before the time and tell me, coach, I can't make it this week because of one, two, three or I will be late due to the traffic. I know, he can't control the traffic, and I have to understand that. I want them to learn how to act professionally (T180).

#### **10.4.2.5 Making sacrifices**

Coaches said that making sacrifices for the sake of cricket displayed commitment. Coaches felt that committed players were willing to sacrifice their own recreational time and holiday periods with peers or family for playing and practising cricket. Coaches made specific reference to adolescent players making sacrifices, considering the prominent role that peer group involvement plays in social activities during adolescence.

Samual explored commitment as making sacrifices when playing cricket:

I think commitment...Well, I deal with the school cricketers. Most of them probably want to go home after school to play their play-station games, see their parents or their girlfriends. I told them that if you want to be a cricketer and have a cricket career or take cricket to the next level, you need to commit to it...That is what I told them. Sometimes it is not easy or nice to wake up in the morning and go to gym, when you rather want to watch a movie or go to a braai with your friend or girlfriend. Uhm, but cricket is what you are committed to (T163-168).

#### **10.4.3 The game of cricket**

Coaches displayed becoming more committed through four super-ordinate themes:

##### **10.4.3.1 Values being the pathway to the goal**

Coaches described experiences which made them feel committed to a process of setting goals about what their actions tried to accomplish. Goals aimed to prevent drifting aimlessly and guided both coaches and players with their journey to success. This goal-orientated journey was often personalised according to the person's cricket playing values. These values are chosen personal qualities intrinsic to action and provide guidance and direction towards the player's goals. Coaches felt that cricket playing values provided a pathway or reference point for guiding players' behaviour. Choosing, understanding and attaching meaning to these cricket playing values was a personal process that players were committed to. When coaches were confronted with situations where players engaged in inappropriate behaviour, they utilised their cricket playing values to create a reference point for reminding players of their goals.

Carl explained that committing to cricket playing values was a process:

...I enjoyed the goals and the values being a pathway to the goal. Committing to the values is similar to coaching. You commit to the process, as opposed to the outcome. So making sure we know where we are going. But insisting on how we are going to get there includes the values and that was very interesting (L131-132).

Carl further experienced these values as providing a stable base in cricket:

I think values provide a base or referral point to go back to. Values need to be set out up front, in terms of an initial phase. I think values are something we did with the hockey team here. Values created a base for them to go to. It gives you something to move back or refer back to, or lean back on when change is taking place. Effecting the change, I think is very important to the value-driven behaviour (A160-161).

David shared that personal values developed throughout a person's life and guided behaviour:

You know, I think values are guidelines. Previous people in your life had an influence on you through guiding and building you. You grow up with values and that is why you will try to follow them. If values are positive, you will try to follow them and also act on them. Your values guide and direct you to what you want to achieve (A195-198).

#### **10.4.3.2 Displaying responsibility, perseverance and honesty in cricket**

All six coaches shared experiences of displaying personalised cricket playing values such as responsibility, perseverance and honesty.

Coaches felt that the process of becoming more committed in cricket included players who were willing to take *responsibility* for their personal and team performance in both training and competition, irrespective of the nature and demands of the task at hand. Responsible players lead by example and take initiative by thinking for themselves, therefore, not relying on the coach to do things for them.

David was coaching female players and shared how they took responsibility, despite the demands of the task:

You can give her responsibility and she will take it with both hands, irrespective of how hard or sharp the knife is. She is going to hold it by its sharp side and go with it. That is basically the person that we are looking for at the moment (T180).

Garreth used value-driven approach to keep players responsible and accountable for their own behaviour:

...I think the commitment to a value-driven approach is fundamental to coaching. From now on that will be the cornerstone to what I do because it teaches people responsibility, and it gives them ownership of the whole process (T252).

Garreth described committed players as taking responsibility for discipline in the team:

...They are going to take responsibility for their day-to-day discipline issues. Then if I want to address something, I am going to address it through the leadership group...(T226).

I am coaching and feel that we don't develop players who actually think for themselves, but more importantly take responsibility for what they are doing (T229).

Coaches shared experiences of players displaying *perseverance* in cricket. Perseverance was guiding their behaviour as displayed in pushing themselves and fighting to the end of the game. They expressed an attitude of never giving up, irrespective of the outcome of the game. These players persevered until they finished the task at hand.

Here is David's account of perseverance in cricket:

So the guys who go the extra mile are the guys we can take to the battle. We know that they can compete and push themselves to the end. You further know OK, they can fight to the end even if we know that realistically we might not win the game, but we did push ourselves. Then we can say we have applied the word commitment, we tried our best (T29).

Samual shared an experience of perseverance in his personal life at home:

Whatever I do, whether I need to do the dishes or clean the house...I can't sit or do something else until that particular thing is done. That is the kind of person I am. Even when I am tired, I will still push myself to finish the task. Then I can relax from there (A86).

Coaches depicted *honesty* as being truthful about one's own behaviour or reasons for displaying certain behaviour. Displaying honesty in both training and competition, as well as towards coaches and teammates was a prominent experience shared by all coaches.

David related displaying honesty to his players' fitness:

Their value is not to lie. Part of their values is saying, "I am not going to lie to myself through finding an excuse of doing something else because actually I am running away from fitness" (T167).

#### **10.4.3.3 Aligning personal values in a cricket team**

All six coaches spoke about aligning a player's personal values with the team's values. Coaches were aware that, as individuals, all players have their own personalised values. However, playing in a team required cohesive team values that guided all players'

behaviour as a collective whole. This introduced a process of revisiting individualised, personal values with the aim of picking up similarities or differences in relation to the team's values. Establishing one set of team values further contributed to establishing and guiding team culture and team identity.

Riaan made his players aware of how their personal values fit into a cricket team:

...When working with a team, it is important to see what their values are. Everyone as individuals come with their own value set. In a team environment, players' individual values might not perfectly be in sync with the team's values. That is also quite interesting...You basically have to bring out the values of the individual and then bring out the values of the team. Then see how they will all fit together. Make them aware that you might not have that value for yourself, but it has definitely one of the team's values. So you need to behave in accordance with that...(T125-127).

For Garreth team values further defined team culture and identity:

And then positives, having a set of values that is starting to define the team culture and team identity. So without knowing it values are forming that culture, as well as their identity. So it is very positive (T204).

#### **10.4.3.4 Emotions undermining commitment to values**

Coaches felt that the process of becoming more committed to personal cricket related values was often undermined by emotions. Coaches shared experiences where decisions in cricket were still based on players' emotions, instead of their personal values as displayed in players' behaviour on-the-field. Players' whose behaviour were guided by their cricket playing values have the ability to stay focused on the task at hand, despite experiencing emotions.

Chirping evoked players' emotions and influenced their decision-making. For Mpho it was important to encourage players to stay value-driven despite experiencing these emotions on-the-field:

...So you get emotional decisions in cricket. So when you get chirped and it gets upstairs in your head, then you can actually decide to do things that you are not supposed to do. The players guided by their values will stay focused on the task at hand. That is why you will find that some people are more successful...So you can actually tell the guys listen, this is an emotional decision and it is short. This is a value-driven decision because he is focused as displayed in how long he is batting. Look how many runs he has scored (T179-181).

Coaches making emotion-directed decisions experienced short-term comfort and immediate gratification, although the consequences of their decisions had long-term implications. They also experienced difficulty in considering the long-term consequences of emotional decisions in the heat of the moment.

Riaan experienced making wrong decisions in the past because it was guided by his emotions instead of his personal values:

There have been many times in the past where I've known what the right or the wrong thing was to do. I then chose the wrong thing at the end because I made an emotional decision...There have been many times where I know that I probably shouldn't go there, but you go and do that anyway. You anticipate that the consequences might not be that bad. So you go with the emotional decision of acting "now" rather than the "later", long-term sort of outlook. But again, putting that into perspective, you often find that your value-driven stuff is more beneficial to you instead of your "emotional-in-the-now" stuff (L63-64).

## **10.5 Summary**

Chapter 10 provided rich data on coaches manifesting mindfulness, acceptance and commitment in three "domains", i.e. the self as a person, coaching and the game of cricket.

Coaches felt that being mindful helped with understanding themselves as human beings. Coaching mindfully made them more prepared for their coaching sessions. Paying attention to detail during coaching activities and communicating to players were amongst the activities that coaches became aware of. Mindfulness, being an obsession was a unique experience shared. Displaying mindfulness in a cricket game challenged traditional beliefs that players had to concentrate completely for the full duration of a game. Becoming more mindful in cricket created experiences of players dealing with pressure, as well as chirping on-the-field.

The process of becoming acceptant depicted coaches being flexible. Dealing with conflict, as well as personal discomfort was part of displaying acceptance. Coaches also became aware of using subtle avoidance strategies in their personal lives. Displaying acceptance in coaching was linked to long working hours, physical discomfort and decision making. Accepting mistakes, failure and physical conditions on-the-field were experiences shared by coaches.

The process of being more committed was displayed in coaching administration, coaching attitudes, doing more than expected, and making sacrifices. Becoming more committed to personal values being the pathway to the goal was utilized in cricket. Responsibility, perseverance and honesty were specific values displayed in cricket. However, coaches were mindful that emotions still undermine the process of being committed to values.

Chapter 11 will depict the results on how coaches conveyed their learning experiences about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to their cricket players.

## CHAPTER 11

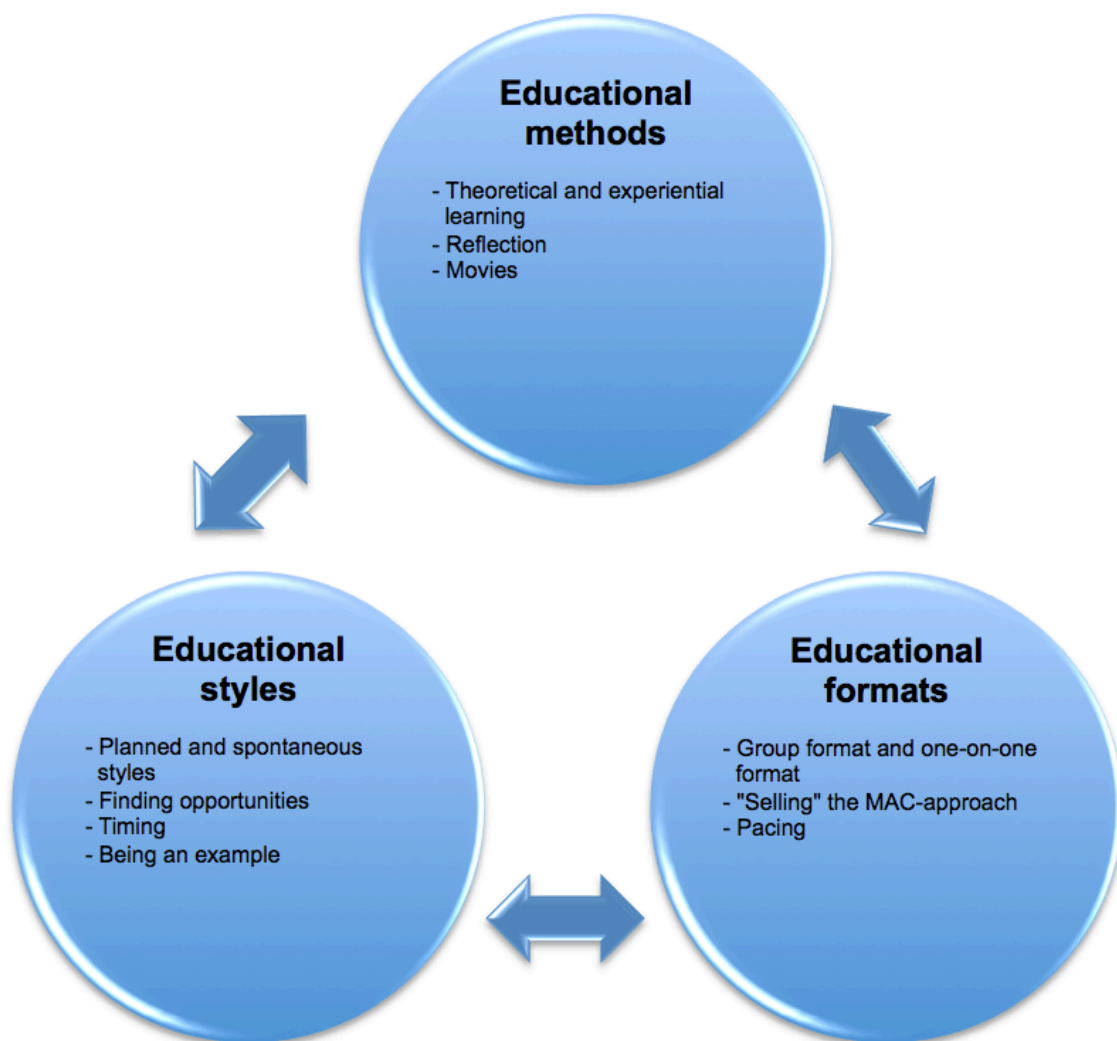
### Results

#### Conveying the MAC approach

##### 11.1 Introduction

Chapter 11 discusses the process of conveying coaches' experiential learning from the MAC approach to their players. Three interrelated master themes emerged: educational methods, educational styles and educational formats. Figure 11.1 presents an overview of each master theme with related super-ordinate themes.

Figure 11.1. Conveying the MAC approach



##### 11.2 Educational methods

Coaches used different educational methods to convey mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to players. These methods became evident through three super-ordinate themes: theoretical and experiential learning, reflection and movies.

### 11.2.1 Theoretical learning and experiential learning

Coaches described theoretical learning as a process of conveying mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to players by providing them with information and theoretical knowledge. Sharing theoretical learning positioned coaches as knowledgeable figures, occupying the central role of being responsible for teaching and players learning about the MAC approach. Coaches experienced theoretical learning as a process of sharing too much theory, often leaving players feeling overwhelmed, bombarded and occupied with using the right terminology. Coaches preferred fostering mindfulness, acceptance and commitment during cricket games, as opposed to players knowing the MAC approach theoretically.

Conveying the MAC approach through experiential learning involved a process of allowing players to participate in exercises, emphasising learning by doing. Coaches experienced that being comfortable with the process of learning by doing created opportunities for players to make sense of the MAC approach for themselves. Involving and keeping players interested by physically participating in an experiential process, as opposed to only hearing theoretical concepts was an educational method coaches related to and preferred to use.

This is how Garreth accounted for his preference of using experiential learning in conveying acceptance:

...To be honest, the exercise almost became about mindfulness. That was fine because I decided before the time I am not going to bombard them with theory. So, I didn't want them to worry about terminology like, "what is this now called"? I just wanted them to experience mindfulness...(T91).

Uhm, with all three - the mindfulness, acceptance and commitment - uhm, I have tried to do at least one practical task from the manual to start the process. That is what I decided, but I don't know if that was the right decision. We will see. I decided that I didn't want to get too theoretical with the boys. So I didn't want to give them a workshop on the MAC approach because I know they will be bored (T3-5).

Mpho shared an activity of becoming more aware and attentive in cricket:

The guys sit in a relaxed position, focusing their eyes on a certain part of the ball, uhm, then allowing the mind to wander. The most important thing that they have to realise is how quickly you can bring your mind back. So the more you do it, the quicker you can bring it back, and that means you are improving (L34).

Garreth described using the "sweet eating" activity to become more acceptant:

...With the "sweet eating" activity just focus on the physical characteristics of the sweets and then notice any kind of thoughts that enter the mind...Notice any kind of judgements, maybe pre-judgements of what it can taste like or anything like that. I was trying to get them to accept those thoughts (T86).



Acceptance is probably when those emotions are negative, uhm, letting them pass instead of trying to control them (T99).

Riaan's exercise aimed to create awareness of personal strengths in cricket:

Uhm, I said to the guys listen, you got to get on with the job. The job has to be done. We did quite a nice exercise with them in trying to find ways to do things. You know, instead of coming up with ways why you can't do them rather try and find ways why you can do them (T86).

Garreth facilitated an activity of raising awareness with regards to players committing to their personal values, as he felt that only hearing about collective values at school was inefficient:

Uhm, we started off with individual values. So I got them to circle and just to go through the values quickly. Then they had to circle or mark anything that made an impression on them and anything that they identified with. Once we have completed that, I asked them to rank their values from one to ten. We just used ten. Then at the end to try and identify their top three values (T168).

They never thought about what their core values were and what they stood for. So yes the activity was very positive (T185).

### **11.2.2 Reflection**

Coaches made an effort to encourage reflection as a process of creating awareness and recognising experiences becoming knowledgeable. This was accomplished by asking questions and having discussions with players after experiencing MAC activities.

Garreth conducted a "listening" activity which required task-focused attention accompanied with humorous distractions from others. He felt that asking these questions encouraged reflection:

Uhm, we actually spoke about that afterwards. We spoke about what they had learned. What they could have done better. How they benefitted from that exercise. That is what we spoke about. Even if the "listening" activity was funny, it was possible to try and focus on listening to the detail (T22).

Riaan received inquisitive responses from his players after experiencing a mindfulness activity. Players asked questions about being more mindful in cricket:

There were a few questions flying around. Well, I think they understood the concept which was good. Say coach, about mindfulness, you know, how can I do it in this situation? Or can I use it there? Or whatever it is. They said, oh I was just mindless today. Then I can say, well why were you mindless? So I definitely think more questions will follow (T21-23).

Garreth challenged his players to be more reflective with regards to committing to their personal values:

I think the way of getting around that is by monitoring their behaviour and constantly question them on whether they feel their behaviour is in line with their values (A67).

Coaches also became aware of their own reflective processes by asking themselves questions. Riaan shared his internal dialogue:

The tactic of saying; Am I feeling emotional now? Am I feeling angry? Am I feeling sad? Am I feeling disappointed? Why I am feeling that thing? That will provide that little split second, no matter how long it takes to say, OK well I just remembered. If you do that, then this is going to happen. If you do this, that is going to happen. That is a good strategy for myself personally, and I want to convey that to the players that I am coaching. Let's say I want to throw my bat. Now I got to think about "why I am feeling angry." By unpacking that, you will probably find that you get less angry (L66-67).

Coaches' reflective processes involved self-analysis by pausing and then rationally analysing their current emotional state before acting on it. As Garreth described:

If you are emotional and you can sort of stop yourself. Then get back and think let's just analyse the situation rationally before making a decision about how you can act. I think that would be the distinction between value-driven and emotion-driven because your behaviour then is linked to your values and not to your emotions (L164).

### **11.2.3 Movies**

Movies were an educational method coaches used to create awareness of being mindful, acceptant and committed in cricket, especially when working with adolescent players. Movies about sport, or the life stories of famous sporting heroes provided opportunities for coaches to share in the adolescent's world consisting of technology and multi-media. Adolescent players responded to movies because they related to them and it kept them engaged.

Riaan felt that movies engaged players in the process of becoming more mindful:

How the message comes across, you know, kids respond a lot to videos and that type of stuff. So if I use the same format like you did, then the guys have a chance of staying engaged...(A32b).

Movies assisted David in the process of becoming more committed and motivated in cricket:

You try and get something that will motivate them and let them believe in themselves. So I use videos that will get the best out of them basically. It will be something that they will smile about, but at the end of the day it will have an impact (L123).

### **11.3 Educational styles**

Coaches employed different educational styles when conveying mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to their players. Four super-ordinate themes emerged: planned and spontaneous styles, finding opportunities, timing and being an example.

#### **11.3.1 Planned and spontaneous styles**

Coaches identified two types of educational styles, namely planned and spontaneous. Coaches viewed a planned educational style as a pre-organised classroom set-up where coaches scheduled a specific time slot to teach the MAC approach to their players.

A spontaneous educational style was about having more incidental conversations with players about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment. It involved a process of spontaneous discussions and took place in passing. Coaches felt more comfortable using spontaneous educational styles, as they experienced players as being more relaxed and willing to learn about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment.

Garreth shared an account about both planned and spontaneous educational styles, although expressing a preference for spontaneous discussions:

...So I think I have done it more informally than formally. I said to the guys that we are going to talk about a few of these things, but it was more an informal discussion than a formalised sit down discussion, where I am directive by saying, this is what happens. So it has been quite cool...I think informally is probably the best for them because they seem to be more relaxed. Even if they know those things are coming, they seem to be OK with it (A21 – 23).

Spontaneous conversations provided space for reflecting on the process of becoming more mindful in cricket. Riaan indicated how he would enter into a conversation with one of his players:

When you have discussions by accident...For example, I think the next time I bump into a guy, I am just going to discuss this with him. So he thinks it is by chance, and then I will try and feed him the information on let's say, mindfulness, in an informal way. Not necessarily feed him the information, but chat about it...(L55).

#### **11.3.2 Finding opportunities**

Coaches were looking for opportunities during training sessions to have conversations with players about becoming more mindful, acceptant and committed in cricket. Opportunities included discussing and conveying the MAC approach to players during spontaneous, naturally occurring moments, often presented during training sessions or

cricket games. Finding opportunities allowed players to make sense of and become more aware of mindfulness, acceptance and commitment in their own time.

Riaan felt that finding opportunities allowed him to discuss his players' experiences whilst it was still fresh in their minds:

....I don't think the right thing to do would be to say OK, today I am really going to find a way to bring in this mindfulness. You should rather say, here is an opportunity for me to do it. Call the guys together and let's discuss mindfulness while it is still fresh...( T177).

Waiting patiently for opportunities during coaching sessions was a process that David employed to increase players' awareness of being mindful, acceptant or committed:

I noticed that most of the time, when I am coaching, I tend to wait for you to do something. I wait so you do it first time, you do it a second time, and now I take note of it. Then we will come back and approach it. I read the situation and wait for a situation to occur first, before I can tackle it (T67-70).

So that is basically how I transferred acceptance. Hence the way I transfer the information is I wait for things to happen or for situations to occur, and then we take it from there (T99).

Conveying the MAC approach was also experienced as a difficult process not necessarily involving the coach. Commitment was an internal and private process implying that players had to be responsible and take initiative for their own commitment, as it wasn't the coach's job or main priority. Coaches felt more involved with the goal setting process to which players had to commit to.

Carl shared a detailed account where being committed was the player's priority and a process excluding the coach:

...I think for me transferring commitment is not a priority. It is a very internally based thing that needs to come from within. I think, it is important that you as a coach get players to commit. Are we getting them to commit to being successful? Are we getting them to commit to enjoyment? Are we getting them to commit to (uhm) two practices a week? Are we getting them to be committed? So once they can commit to that and find out what they are committing to, I think that will be a big process. So from a coaching point of view transferring commitment (uhm) is very difficult. A coach has other priorities that do not include transferring commitment to players (T305-306).

### **11.3.3 Timing**

Coaches were aware that picking an appropriate time to convey the MAC approach influenced players' susceptibility and willingness to engage in the learning process. Utilizing mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to enhance performance then became each player's responsibility.

Riaan felt that players tend to remember information better if experienced at the right time: I think that is one of those things, you just have to know when to pick the right time to hit these guys with the information. Hopefully that will be enough. Guys will remember that. So, make sure it has an effect at the right time, it will make a big difference (T185).

#### **11.3.4 Being an example**

Coaches were mindful that players were paying attention to and noticing their behaviour and conduct on a daily basis. By being an example, coaches became the medium or model for conveying the MAC approach to players.

Mpho himself displayed commitment during coaching sessions to set an example for the players. He created learning opportunities about being committed:

So players see your commitment as coach in terms of how you do your own things. How you handle yourself. How you carry yourself around them. How you organise your stuff. If they see that as part of your commitment, they will fall into the same mentality. That is what you want, and they will see that. I think that is very vital (L130).

David felt that his behaviour spoke louder than his words:

Now as a coach you don't have to say anything. If you were there early, the players see that OK, my coach is always here early. So without you saying a word, they get to understand, OK we need to be here on time (A201).

### **11.4. Educational formats**

Three super-ordinate themes were associated with the educational formats that coaches used to convey the MAC approach to players and these will be discussed in 11.4.1-11.4.3.

#### **11.4.1 Group format and one-on-one format**

Working in group format meant delivering the MAC approach to the entire team at the same time. Delivering the MAC approach in one-on-one format meant speaking to one player at a time. Coaches experienced the one-on-one format as making players more attentive in understanding the MAC approach.

For Samuel the one-on-one format was the preferred educational format:

But when you talk to them in a group, you don't get their attention and stuff like that. When you talk to them as a group, they are listening, but they are not mentally there. But when you talk to them one-on-one, they are listening and trying to understand what you are trying to convey to them. That is the strategy I use. Yes, that is the strategy I use. I can see it is helping. I think that is the best way of conveying information to be all honest with you...( T68-71).

### **11.4.2 “Selling” the MAC approach**

“Selling” the MAC approach to players as a new and different approach made it credible. Part of this “selling” process was relating and linking the MAC approach to other professional cricket players also using it in their cricket careers.

Riaan found that mindfulness gained credibility by relating it to other professional players:

...I am trying to sell mindfulness as something really new. Also, a lot of the professional guys are using it and that obviously increases credibility as well (A13b).

### **11.4.3 Pacing**

Coaches acknowledged that players have different learning tempos and that this would require pacing them accordingly in conveying the MAC approach. Players came from different socio-economic backgrounds which influenced their education, schooling and learning processes. Coaches accommodated slower learners by being patient and slowing down the educational format, as well as the learning pace.

Samual expressed awareness of pacing players’ learning of mindfulness by following a gradual information sharing process:

.....Like I said some of the guys are quick to learn. Some of the guys are very slow. You just need to be patient with some of the guys who are not adjusting as quickly as you want them to. But overall it is going OK. Now it is just taking one step at a time and not trying to push them too much in that department. But it is going OK. Keep the player’s background in mind. Due to different backgrounds, players don’t learn the same way. So, you have to be patient with slow learners because what they go through in their homes is not the same like the healthy and rich kids (sorry to use that word) (T7-10).

## **11.5 Summary**

Chapter 11 provided rich data on conveying the MAC approach. The coaches used different educational methods, educational styles and educational formats to convey mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to their players. All the coaches used experiential learning, as well as movies, but highlighted that they always look for opportunities and teaching moments instead of artificially forcing it onto players.

Chapter 12 will include the discussion of all the results, as well as recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 12

### Discussion

#### 12.1 Introduction

The aim of my study was to move from an individualistic utilisation of resources to an ecological and more holistic approach to performance development, by working with and educating coaches as central figures in sport to become an extension of the work that sport psychologists do. This was done by creating a performance development experience for cricket coaches through participation in a MAC program, which was mainly facilitated through experiential learning. The extent to which experiential learning occurred was established through analyzing semi-structured interviews with coaches using IPA. The aim of my study led to the research question: Did participation in an experiential learning process of the MAC program develop mindfulness, acceptance and commitment of South African cricket coaches?

Chapter 12 discusses and synthesizes the results of Chapters 8-11 and relates the results to the existing body of knowledge. The discussion will proceed in accordance with the themes as they emerged in my study. The theme under discussion will be displayed in bold letters.

#### 12.2 Exploring cricket coaches' experiences of the MAC program

##### 12.2.1 Significance of the MAC program

The MAC approach follows a systematic framework and is characterized by a structured outline, consisting of mindfulness, acceptance and commitment. Within this framework, **flexibility** is possible in order to allow for an individually tailored MAC intervention (Gardner & Moore, 2007). Coaches experienced the MAC program as flexible, even challenging the proposed mindfulness-acceptance-commitment linear presentation sequence. The coaches' experiences suggested starting with commitment to values, followed by accepting that discomfort is part of cricket. Mindfulness is then applied to be aware and stay attentive in the present moment, despite experiencing discomfort.

The MAC program is **accessible** to all performance populations and was developed to reduce work-site stress and enhance athletic performance. It further aims to maximize performance and enhance human potential by giving people from a variety of occupational, recreational, and general life domains access to learning and gaining knowledge about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

This makes the MAC program also applicable for coaches, forming part of the performance population due to the amount of time, focus and energy spent on achieving and obtaining results on a daily basis (Erickson & Cote, 2013; Fuoss & Troppmann, 1981; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Lorimer & Jowett, 2013; Olusoga et al., 2009). Coaches also experienced the MAC program as **accessible**, to be used by the whole cricket community, consisting of people from different backgrounds, cultures, ages, educational levels, genders and performance levels.

Coaches experienced the MAC program as a psycho-educational process providing them with **psychological “tools”** and a **continuing framework** to work with and develop human beings in the form of reflection, creating change and addressing the psychological side of players. According to Gardner and Moore (2007), developing human beings and enhancing human performance is one of the aims of the MAC program. This is introduced by means of engaging in a process of psycho-education, where the emphasis is on understanding how internal human processes interact with external demands. Psycho-education equips individuals and groups with skills and competencies to empower them in the process of developing human potential (Roos, 1997). Psychologists occupy an important role in this psycho-education process by getting involved and developing people (like coaches in cricket), in order to extend their curative, preventative and developmental work within broader systems (Pretorius, 2012).

Coaches articulated that the MAC program contributed to their need of gaining **knowledge in sport psychology** that can be utilized when working and dealing with the psychological components of cricket. This need for coaches to gain more knowledge of sport psychology was also recognised by Williams and Kendall (2007) and Sullivan and Hodge (1991). Coaches want more knowledge of sport psychology to be able to convey that in their coaching contexts (Pain & Harwood, 2004).

The development of mindfulness is a primary and central feature in the MAC program and can be viewed as a form of heightened “present-in-the-moment” awareness (Gardner & Moore, 2007). The coaches in my study indeed learned about “**awareness**”. In doing so they realised that “awareness” formed the foundation and golden thread that ties the three individual principles (mindfulness, acceptance and commitment) together into one MAC program. Increased awareness, therefore, helped coaches to stay focused in the present moment by accepting situations as they happen, and in the process, staying committed to value-driven goals.



### 12.2.2 Duration of the MAC program

The five distinct phases in the MAC-protocol include, psycho-education, mindfulness, values identification and commitment, acceptance and integration and practice and they are presented in an eight session, 1.5 hour per session protocol (Gardner & Moore, 2004a). That was later changed to a seven module MAC approach presented over a course of six weeks (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

The MAC program, as utilized in my study, was presented in an eight hour workshop. Although two coaches felt eight hours was sufficient, the majority of coaches felt more time was needed to debrief, reflect and explore activities further. One day left them feeling overwhelmed because it was too much information to absorb for one day. The majority of coaches, therefore, confirmed the suggested longer time frame of either eight sessions or a six week period as outlined by Gardner and Moore (2004a, 2007).

### 12.2.3 Presentation of the MAC program

All coaches noted that learning about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment as **separate parts** allowed them to grasp and understand each principle first, before working with the **whole MAC program** in totality. Coaches, therefore, needed to grasp their experiences of mindfulness, acceptance and commitment first, before transforming their experience into a personalized and meaningful representation of the MAC program as a unit.

The MAC program was presented to coaches through a process of **experiential learning**. Coaches **enjoyed** this process because it involves an active, hands-on experience, which is contextualised and applied, rather than a passive process (Chambers, 2011; Priest & Gass, 1997). However, coaches made a suggestion for more MAC activities to be experienced on-the-field during training and games. These activities should be more specifically designed for cricket and then included in future MAC programs as part of the experiential learning process. The **manual** handed out during the workshop provided some background and context to the MAC approach. Coaches used the manual to revisit the theoretical aspect of the MAC program because experience and reflection are less effective in the absence of the foundational knowledge that coaches usually receive through formal learning (Reade, 2009).

## 12.3 Describing cricket coaches' process of learning about the MAC approach

### 12.3.1 The nature of mindfulness

Mindfulness is an awareness that emerges when one is purposefully paying attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental way by allowing experiences to unfold on a moment-to-moment basis (Brown & Ryan, 2003, 2004; Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007, 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 2005; Schwanhausser, 2009). The cricket coaches also indicated that for them the nature of mindfulness consisted of **awareness**, **attention**, **present moment** and **space-time**. They felt that staying focused in the present prevented the mind from wandering to past memories and future expectations.

Coaches further described that mindfulness sometimes entails a mindless state, which they referred to as **going through the motions**. This mindless state referred to a “drifting mind” where coaches were physically in the moment, but mentally occupied by memories of the past or anticipation of the future. Coaches' understanding of mindlessness was consistent with that of Gardner and Moore (2004a, 2007, 2010). However, the coaches' description of “going through the motions” and “drifting” were unique depictions of being mindless during coaching sessions. Picking up such unique linguistic descriptions is an important advantage of using qualitative research methodologies (Dale, 1996; Schutz & Gessaroli, 1993; Sparkes, 1998; Streaan, 1998; Streaan & Roberts, 1992).

#### 12.3.1.1 Distractions to being mindful

In learning about mindfulness, coaches became aware of a variety of **thoughts** and **emotions** present during coaching sessions, which distracted their minds to drift away from the coaching task at hand. The nature of coaching makes dealing with emotions a prominent internal experience that coaches face on a daily basis (Potrac et al., 2013). These thoughts and emotions are internal experiences, distracting performers from their task, leading them to experience mindlessness. Coaches did not experience their bodily sensations as a distraction to being mindful, although this internal experience occupies a central role within the MAC program (Aherne & Moran, 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007, 2012; Hasker, 2010; Kee & Wang, 2008; Schwanhausser, 2009; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010).

Instead, coaches experienced their **personal lives** as a greater distraction to being mindful. Fuoss and Troppman (1981), as well as Olusoga et al. (2009) noted that the coaching profession affects coaches' personal lives. This can be strenuous on their

relationships with spouses, family and friends as support structures because they are often away from home for long periods of time.

In the coaches' experience there was an awareness that **parental expectations** distracted young, adolescent players from being mindful and playing mindfully. Living up to parental expectations and ambitions, in conjunction to dealing with performance pressure, made playing cricket a duty instead of a pleasure. The young players' minds, therefore, wander away from playing cricket, to rather finding ways of living up to their parents' expectations to perform (Kay & Bass, 2011; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011).

### 12.3.2 The nature of acceptance

Acceptance refers to the process of noticing and accepting one's internal experiences (thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations) in a non-judging way (Aherne & Moran, 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007, 2010; Hayes et al., 1999; Hayes & Strosahl, 2004; Wolanin & Schwanhauser, 2010). Learning about acceptance guided coaches in becoming aware that **internal experiences** were an inevitable part of their personal and cricket lives. Coaches experienced acceptance as both a **process and a lifestyle**, as opposed to an overnight quick fix technique with limited sustainable value. Coaches' accounts of acceptance being a life style were a unique feature that emerged and illustrated how qualitative research methodology allows for personal experiences to be captured in language (Dale, 1996; Schutz & Gessaroli, 1993; Sparkes, 1998; Strean, 1998; Strean & Roberts, 1992).

#### 12.3.2.1 Obstacles to being acceptant

Coaches became aware that the nature of acceptance was conflictual, as both acceptance and avoidance presented itself in their experiences. They identified and described obstacles that made acceptance difficult through the tendency to avoid problematic internal experiences and/or external events/happenings. These obstacles to being acceptant consisted of subtle coinciding attempts of **controlling, blocking-out, erasing, fighting, lying**, as well as **denying**. Avoidance is an attempt to control, block-out, erase, forget or fight internal experiences or external distractions. Avoidance amplifies problems due to its paradoxical effect (Hayes et al., 1999), which means that coaches and players tend to focus more on the experience that they actually want to avoid. This is explained by Hayes and Strosahl (2004, p. 7) where they state that "control the problem, not the

solution". Coaches' description of avoidance being **lying**, never featured in Gardner and Moore (2007) as a form of avoidance.

### 12.3.3 The nature of commitment

Both commitment and motivation were experienced in the coaching context. Committed coaches did everything one hundred percent, which left no place for short cuts or easy ways. **Commitment** brought an obligation and responsibility to make sure that behaviour is in line with one's personal cricket playing values. This includes facing unpleasant internal experiences in pursuit of following performance values and value directed choices (Aherne & Moran, 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gardner & Moore, 2007). Commitment was about **having a vision** and coaches felt that committed players have long term vision and engage in actions that tend to last for the whole season.

**Motivation** refers to the simple desire for something and most individuals are motivated to perform better. However, not all individuals are actually committed to experience discomfort to perform better (Aherne & Moran, 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gardner & Moore, 2007). Coaches' accounts confirmed that more players were motivated, as opposed to being committed. Motivated players often have a **vision**, although it is short-term and linked to impulsive behaviour and immediate gratification.

Coaches experienced being committed as **having a purpose**. Understanding the purpose or driving force behind engagement in cricket was influential to experiences of being motivated or being committed. Coaches felt that being committed related to understanding the purpose of how current activities were beneficial to the journey in achieving cricket goals. Being committed was the **responsibility** of every person and significant others such as coaches, parents, teachers or fellow-teammates who could not commit on behalf of somebody else.

Learning about the nature of commitment made coaches aware of experiences of being both over-committed and uncommitted. **Over-commitment** was about spending too much time and energy on one area of life (e.g. cricket) to the detriment of other areas (e.g. academics or family), leaving coaches feeling totally absorbed by this one area. Experiences of feeling **uncommitted** were displayed in various contexts and forms such as failing to complete personal or professional goals. In line with this Olusoga et al. (2009) state that experiences of being over-committed and uncommitted seem to be a common

feature in coaching, but coaches struggled more to work with uncommitted players. The MAC approach utilizes the concept “poise” to get rid of the influence of control-based approaches distinguishing between over-committed and uncommitted behaviour. Poise refers to the ability to perform and function as required and desired, despite experiencing thoughts, emotions or bodily sensations that are triggered by any given situation (Gardner & Moore, 2007). This implies that performance can continue, despite experiencing over-commitment or uncommitted behaviour.

### **12.3.3.1 Obstacles to being committed**

**The nature of the task** was an obstacle to being committed because players struggled to commit to tasks that they interpreted as having no purpose and benefits for their performance. Fuoss and Troppmann (1981), Krebs (2009), as well as Wrisberg (2007), noted that tasks with no purpose are molecular activities and influence players’ commitment, persistence, motivation, attention, interest and readiness to learn. Coaches identified that **the type of training environment**, characterised by monotonous routines, was another obstacle to being committed. That was confirmed by Kidman and Hanrahan (2011) who described that if the training environment is characterised by trust, variety, diversity and positive communication, it enhances commitment to performance and growth.

Coaches observed that players with **full time jobs and families** also struggled to be committed to their cricket related tasks. This is supported by Fuoss and Troppman (1981), as well as Olusoga et al. (2009) who stated that both players’ and coaches’ personal lives can be strenuous on them and influence their commitment. This acceptance and commitment to values, with the aim of staying task-focused and accepting one’s personal life are also very relevant in cricket (Gardner & Moore, 2007; Hayes et al., 1999; Hayes & Strosahl, 2004).

Commitment is demonstrated when players regularly and consistently display specific behaviours (as opposed to talking about it), and that is more likely to result in optimal performance (Gardner & Moore, 2007). This was also articulated by coaches who depicted that **“action speaks louder than words”**. They questioned players who claim their commitment verbally, instead of displaying it through their behaviour.

## 12.4 Exploring how cricket coaches manifested mindfulness, acceptance and commitment

What the coaches experienced about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment became manifest in three “domains”, namely the self as a person, coaching and the game of cricket. The following discussion relates to the themes outlined in Chapter 10.

### 12.4.1 Mindfulness

#### 12.4.1.1 Self

What coaches learned experientially from mindfulness made them more aware of the self, i.e. who they were as human beings. It would have been incongruent expecting players to display self-awareness if coaches acted without self-awareness in their own lives. Awareness, therefore, induced a process of understanding coaches’ own thoughts, emotions and behaviour (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

#### 12.4.1.2 Coaching

Mindfulness is being purposefully attentive and aware of what is taking place in the present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Schwanhausser, 2009). Coaches experienced that utilizing mindfulness during coaching enabled them with **being prepared** and **paying attention to detail**. Mindfulness, therefore, empowered coaches to attend to an individual player’s needs, thus making a difference to a player’s performance (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011).

In the literature survey no studies were found in which mindfulness or mindlessness were applied to coaching as an occupation. The majority of findings dealt with athletes as participants (Aherne & Moran, 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007, 2012; Hasker, 2010; Kee & Wang, 2008; Schwanhausser, 2009; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010).

Despite efforts to coach more mindfully, mindlessness was still experienced. Mindless coaching was explained as physically being present at the training session, but mentally absent (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007, 2012). Mindless coaching made no real contribution to the session or to players’ progress.

Mpho, one of the participating coaches in my study added an important dimension to the understanding of mindfulness in coaching with the analogy that mindfulness is like an obsession. This seemingly unique aspect could be further explored in similar research

settings (Dale, 1996; Smith et al., 2009). Being mindful, like **being obsessed**, encouraged constant and consistent engagement with mindfulness. It required almost constantly practising mindfulness throughout, like a fixed idea refusing to leave consciousness. That made mindfulness a lifestyle utilized in all contexts (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 2003, 2005) and not a quick fix technique specifically related to cricket.

Coaches **communicating** mindfully meant staying in the moment, focused by being more attentive to players' messages. This led to improved communication by really "listening" attentively to the players' messages conveyed, as opposed to "hearing" what they say or "hearing" what the coach wishes to hear.

Burton and Raedeke (2008), Kidman and Hanrahan (2011), Lorimer and Jowett (2013), and Martens (1987) describe communication as a crucial skill in coaching. Competent and highly skilled coaches will have no effect on players if they are unable to communicate or convey cricket-specific knowledge to them. Communication creates an environment where players build competence, confidence, character, relationships and sense of community (Walsh, 2011).

#### **12.4.1.3 The game of cricket**

Coaches had the impression that **concentration had to be for the full duration of a cricket game**. That led to mindlessness and experiences of failure as complete concentration was impossible to accomplish. Aherne and Moran (2011) confirmed that being so focused and having to concentrate for extended periods of time caused mental fatigue. Coaches probably got this impression in their exposure to control-based approaches such as PST.

Playing more mindfully introduced an alternative to previous conceptions of concentrating for the full duration of a game, and players had to know when to switch-on and focus on the task of batting, bowling or fielding. Then, after completing their task, they switched-off and were allowed to think or focus on non-cricket related aspects.

In the PST-approach coaches made players aware of knowing when to switch-on and when to switch-off whilst playing the game. This implies a sense of controlling of one's concentration and attention (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Moran, 2010), and is contrary to what mindfulness is all about (Gardner & Moore, 2007, 2012; Hasker, 2010). After

exposure to new information, learners (coaches) should receive regular feedback and guidance from group leaders and facilitators when displaying and conveying new learned skills, such as mindfulness, to others. This necessitates follow-up discussions and reflection on utilizing mindfulness in the game of cricket, otherwise coaches, as new learners, are likely to revert back to what is known to them, e.g. PST (Gass, 1985; Gould et al., 2013). This was also the case in my study.

Mindfulness was also displayed during cricket games in dealing with **chirping and opinions for others**. Although players were physically still playing cricket, they were mentally focusing on finding ways to deal with the chirping and opinions of others. It is a general finding that playing mindlessly was detrimental to performance as players were not focused on the task of playing cricket (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007, 2012).

Coaches utilized mindfulness as a way of **dealing with pressure** during cricket games. Cricket games are often characterised by expectations of winning, subsequently creating pressure for coaches (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Olusoga et al., 2009). Being mindful enabled coaches to focus their attention on task-relevant information in the present moment, as opposed to multi-tasking often required in the coaching context. Mindfulness was, therefore, experienced as a way of making pressure more bearable. Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction is commonly used in medical, psychiatric and non-medical populations, with the aim of helping people to cope with pressure, reduce their stress and improve their physical health status (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn 2005; Shigaki et al., 2006). This opens up the possibility for Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction to also be used in the sport context and particularly coaching, in order to cope with the pressure experienced in competitive cricket.

## **12.4.2 Acceptance**

### **12.4.2.1 Self**

Coaches depicted previous experiences of personally feeling stuck with limited options to deal with challenging coaching situations. They experienced internal conflict and emotional turmoil. Becoming more acceptant allowed coaches to actively embrace experiences of discomfort, as opposed to controlling it (Hayes & Strosahl, 2004). The process of acceptance, therefore, made coaches feel **flexible**, by getting closure, knowing that they dealt with past experiences and, therefore, no further mental reflection, energy or time was needed for it. Being flexible provided movement and experiences of relief, calmness and peace of mind.



Coaches were aware of the conflicting nature of acceptance and avoidance. Coaches dealt with **conflict in personal relationships**, as well as **personal discomfort**, by avoiding these situations. Avoidance was, therefore, employed as a means of ignoring conflict and protecting their self-perseverance, self-esteem and ego. Coaches offered rich descriptions of avoidance by sharing how they displayed **subtle avoidance strategies** in their personal lives.

Subtle avoidance strategies assist people with experiential avoidance (Gardner & Moore, 2007). Coaching experiences included using coaching commitments as a subtle avoidance strategy for neglecting their own personal fitness and gym sessions. The necessity of attending cricket training was also reported to be a subtle avoidance strategy for missing formal meetings. Some coaches shared that procrastination was a subtle avoidance strategy used to delay starting with new projects.

Coaches often avoid cricket related administration and meetings because they feel they lack the necessary management skills such as planning and organising. They feel more comfortable with their role as coach, as opposed to administrator (Fletcher & Scott, 2010; Washington & Reade, 2013). However, Gardner and Moore (2007) pointed out that the utilization of subtle avoidance strategies as patterns of avoidance and denial would interfere with the development of certain skills necessary for performance (like administration skills). The primary reason for avoidance is also short-term comfort instead of gaining long-term benefit. Although each experience of avoidance was unique and differed from one coach to another, it is a significant theme because recognizing avoidance in one's own life as a person will help to recognize avoidance in players' lives.

#### **12.4.2.2 Coaching**

Becoming more acceptant was also displayed in coaching activities. Coaches accepted that **long working hours** were part of cricket coaching, thereby honouring their commitment to personal values (Gardner & Moore, 2010). However, coaches shared that they were still avoiding **making decisions** in coaching such as selecting teams and dropping players because it leads to experiencing emotional discomfort. Coaches also observed that during coaching sessions, players avoided experiencing **physical discomfort**, often introduced by fitness training and technical drills which were part of the coaching process. Being avoidant further provided both coaches and players with temporary relief and short-term comfort instead of long-term benefit (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

### 12.4.2.3 The game of cricket

**Mistakes, failure** and **physical conditions** during cricket is a given, natural part of playing the game and is, therefore, difficult to change (Fuoss & Troppmann, 1981). Coaches felt that mistakes and failure should be directed towards the behaviour in a particular game and not to personalise these experiences. Becoming more acceptant of mistakes and failure during cricket games entails a process of treating these experiences as temporary, thereby finding alternative ways of letting go of the past and refocusing on performing in the present moment, instead of venturing into the impossible task of trying to change it (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007). Mistakes, failure and physical conditions on-the-field need to be accepted in the present moment, as a given, and not through preconceptions or expectations often informed by peoples' past experiences or futuristic ideas (Hayes et al., 1999; Hayes & Strosahl, 2004).

### 12.4.3 Commitment

#### 12.4.3.1 Self

Coaches experienced being both motivated and committed in their personal lives. Motivation was experienced more frequently and informed most of their behaviour. **Motivation** refers to the simple desire for something and most individuals are motivated to perform better. However, not all individuals are actually committed to experience discomfort to perform better (Aherne & Moran, 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gardner & Moore, 2007). Coaches felt that being committed was a selective process that required more time and effort. Engaging in a process of prioritising behaviour or activities in their lives required **personal commitment** in order to ensure success.

#### 12.4.3.2 Coaching

Coaches' commitment was displayed in their **coaching administration**, referring to being on time, planning thoroughly and being prepared for every coaching session. These administrative duties are crucial skills that underpin effective coaching and goal achievement of players (Stafford, 2011).

Coaches further viewed commitment as when players were **doing more than expected** and **making sacrifices**. They felt that players who were willing to do more than their usual training sessions, exceeding coaching requirements and also sacrificing their own recreational time displayed commitment. Commitment in this regard refers to a willingness to accept discomfort of both the mind and body experiences, in order to achieve performance goals (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

Players displayed commitment by **communicating** the fact that when it comes to coaching sessions, they did not simply stay away without any notification. Often they had valid reasons for not turning up, but they notified their coaches about the situation. Communication in the coach-player relationship, therefore, creates an environment where players build competence, confidence, character, relationships and sense of community. However, a lack of communication would destroy the latter in a moment (Walsh, 2011). Communication, therefore, underpins the coach-player relationship and needs to increase understanding of one another (Lorimer & Jowett, 2013).

#### **12.4.3.3 The game of cricket**

Coaches described **values as being the pathway to the goal**. These values are chosen personal qualities intrinsic to action and provide guidance and direction towards the player's goals. Choosing, understanding and attaching meaning to these cricket playing values was a personal process that players were committed to. Personal values serve as an anchor point for behavioural decisions in order to achieve one's goals (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2007). Coaches described experiences which made them feel committed to a process of setting goals. Goals were aims of actions and prevented coaches and players from drifting aimlessly. Coaches, therefore, felt that in cricket these values provided a pathway or stable reference point for guiding their behaviour.

However, choosing and attaching meaning to these values was a personal process exemplified by the different experiences they shared about **responsibility, perseverance** and **honesty** in cricket. This process enabled aligning and revisiting **personal values** with the aim of picking up similarities or differences in relation to the **team's values**. Establishing one set of team values further contributed to establishing and guiding team culture and team identity (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011).

Coaches felt that the process of becoming more committed to one's values was often **undermined by emotions**. Emotions are a natural human condition and per se not the enemy of performance. It is players' attempts to control, deny or eliminate these emotions that hinder performance because they are not focused on the task at hand (Gardner & Moore, 2007). Coaches also felt that performance suffered because decisions in cricket were still based on players' emotions instead of their personal cricket playing values. This was displayed on-the-field as coaches became aware that players' behaviour guided by

their values has the ability to stay focused on the task at hand, despite experiencing emotions. These players displayed poise, the ability to act in the service of values and goals, despite experiencing strong emotions (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

## **12.5 Exploring cricket coaches' conveying mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to their cricket players**

The following discussion relates to the themes outlined in Chapter 11. It needs to be noted that coaches arrived at their conveyance “methods” by themselves because the MAC workshop did not offer any formalised training with regards to conveyance. Coaches used their own experiential learning of the MAC approach as guidance to convey mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to their players. This highlights the work of Gould et al. (2013) that coaches are more likely to convey skills addressing the psychological component of their sport to players after experiencing their own learning process, which took place in an appropriate context, in a positive group environment with a supportive group facilitators or program leaders.

### **12.5.1 Educational methods**

Coaches used **theoretical learning and experiential learning** to convey mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to players. Coaches experienced **theoretical learning** as a process of sharing too much theory, often leaving players feeling overwhelmed, bombarded and occupied with using the right terminology. **Experiential learning** is “learning by doing” (Priest & Gass, 1997) and was an educational method that coaches related to because of the interactive and complex involvement of learners. It created more opportunities for coaches to challenge and question players' actions in an attempt to encourage learning (Moon, 2004). Coaches felt it kept players interested in the learning process, as opposed to only hearing theoretical concepts.

Experiential learning in coaching follows a player-centred approach, but coaches also need continued support. The absence of support increases the risk of coaches reverting back to more known and traditional ways of direct, didactic, instructional coaching, thereby rejecting the player-centred approach (Moon, 2004). This may not serve in the best interest of players or long-term development of the coach (Roberts, 2011). Gardner and Moore (2007) use both theoretical learning and experiential learning, although they don't explicitly call their MAC related activities and related forms experiential learning.

**Reflection** is part of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle. Coaches made an effort to encourage players' reflection as a process of creating awareness, and recognising their MAC experiences as facilitating becoming knowledgeable. Gass (1985), Law et al. (2007), Miles (2011), Moon (2004), as well as Wikeley and Bullock (2006) emphasised the importance of reflection after experiencing an event because mere exposure to a concrete experience cannot on its own bring about learning. Reflection involves a process of asking questions and having discussions with players after experiencing MAC activities. Asking meaningful and effective questions encourage the learning process because it makes players aware of what they have learned (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Roberts, 2011).

Coaches also used **movies** about sport or the life stories of famous sporting heroes as part of experiential learning because it involves more active learning rather than a passive process (Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004). Movies or films are often used in sport to communicate or display skills to players (Fuoss & Troppmann, 1981; Wrisberg, 2007).

### 12.5.2 Educational styles

Cushion (2011) stated that the majority of learning in sport occurs in **informal settings**, as opposed to **formal** learning environments. Coaches in my study also confirmed that they preferred informal settings, which allow for **spontaneous**, incidental conversations with players about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment. They felt that players were more relaxed and willing to learn in informal settings, as opposed to formal learning environments that are **planned** and take place in a pre-organised classroom set-up where coaches scheduled a specific time slot to teach the MAC approach to their players. Such formal learning environments position the coach as the expert to provide and control the flow of information (Cassidy et al., 2009).

Coaches were looking for learning **opportunities** offering spontaneous, naturally occurring moments, as well as the right **time** during training sessions or games to have conversations with players about becoming more mindful, acceptant and committed in cricket. Kidman and Hanrahan (2011) confirmed that players learned better and have higher retention rates when provided with opportunities to digest information and, thereby, discover for themselves why and how to perform a skill. These opportunities present "teachable moments" for coaches because players are ready to benefit from receiving education and feedback (Cushion, 2011; Cushion & Nelson, 2013). These "teachable

moments” can also spontaneously come from players themselves, as opposed to coaches always enforcing or deciding for players that they need it (Wrisberg, 2007). Gardner and Moore (2007) also highlighted the importance that players need to be ready to engage in a psycho-educational process.

Coaches were mindful that players were paying attention to and noticing their behaviour and conduct on a daily basis. By **being an example**, coaches became the medium for conveying the MAC approach to players. Specific reference was made to commitment because coaches found it difficult to teach commitment to their players. Coaches preferred to rather display and convey commitment through being an example, which introduces observational learning into the coaching domain. Children and adolescents use observation in sport to model themselves on significant adults in their lives such as coaches, teachers or parents. They will copy behaviour according to what they see significant adults do or ways in which they behave (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011).

### 12.5.3 Educational formats

Coaches thought that delivering the MAC approach in **group format** to the whole team at the same time may be less beneficial in that little recognition is given to the diverse needs of players (Cassidy et al., 2009). Delivering the MAC approach in **one-on-one format** meant speaking to one player at a time and coaches experienced their players as being more attentive then. The individualised attention received from one-on-one interaction further allows players to express uncertainty with regards to the content of the program (Cassidy et al., 2009).

Coaches felt that “**selling**” the **MAC approach** to players as a new and different approach provided opportunity for players to “buy” into the psycho-educational process. This was also outlined by Gardner and Moore (2007) that when players understand how they can benefit from a psycho-educational process, they are more prepared and ready to engage with it.

Coaches took players’ learning **pace** into consideration when conveying the MAC approach because there were both quick and slow learners in a team. Coaches accommodated slower learners by being patient and slowing down the educational format and pace. Kidman and Hanrahan (2011), Renshaw (2010), as well as Wrisberg (2007) highlighted that coaches need to accommodate players’ differences regarding age,

gender, learning styles, learning pace, physical, technical, psychological abilities, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, as such factors influence the pedagogical aspects of coaching.

## **12.6 Summary**

Chapter 12 discussed the results of Chapters 8-11 and related the themes, as they have emerged in my study, to the existing body of knowledge. The cricket coaches' experiences of the MAC program as flexible, accessible, providing psychological "tools" and facilitating knowledge gains in sport psychology are in line with ideas raised by Pain and Harwood (2004), Sullivan and Hodge (1991), as well as Williams and Kendall (2007).

Coaches' learning of mindfulness, acceptance and commitment was consistent with the findings of Gardner and Moore (2004a, 2007, 2010). The coaches' learning experiences of the MAC approach became manifest in three "domains" i.e. the self as person, coaching and the game of cricket. This supports Gould et al. (2013) and Kolb's (1984) findings that personal theories and knowledge gained through experiential learning should be utilized and conveyed to other contexts of the learners' lives.

Reflection seemed to play an important part in these different educational methods, educational styles and in the educational formats that coaches used to convey the MAC approach to their players. This supports the idea that reflection is a process of creating awareness and recognising personal experiences as "knowledgeable" because exposure to a concrete experience cannot on its own bring about learning (Gass, 1985; Kolb, 1984; Law et al., 2007; Miles, 2011; Moon, 2004; Wikeley & Bullock, 2006).

Chapter 13 will discuss the conclusion of my study.

## CHAPTER 13

### Conclusion

#### 13.1 Introduction

In Chapter 13 I reflect on the effects of the research process on myself as researcher, as well as on the research process itself, the contribution to the body of knowledge of sport psychology, limitations of the research and suggestions for future research.

#### 13.2 Effects of the research process on myself as researcher

My professional experience over the past 10 years as a sport psychologist made me aware of the individualistic approach to performance development, and that it is usually directed towards the players. The time and logistical constraints discussed, outlining the research problem in 1.3, highlighted that sport psychologists are unable to reach all these players. This individualistic approach neglects taking cricket coaches as role players into account, when they are in the position to reach more cricket players than sport psychologists can. Cricket coaches can, therefore, be empowered to become an extension of the sport psychologist's performance development work.

My research further emphasised the need to extend performance development to cricket coaches. The rich and diverse amount of themes generated through my IPA on how mindfulness, acceptance and commitment of South African cricket coaches developed through participating in an experiential learning process of the MAC program, made me realise how they can reach and empower their players more regularly and consistently than myself as a sport psychologist. In this regard my research emphasized the benefits of following a more holistic ecological approach to performance development.

My study, therefore, became more than just a research project to me. It also influenced and reshaped my way of practicing psychology in sport, therefore, contributing to my personal and professional development as a sport psychologist.

Although my research project made me realise that we have to change the current format of delivering sport psychology services, it also made me aware of the immense task of confronting a pervasive system often characterised by an individualistic-centred approach.



### 13.3 The research process

The IPA methodology allowed me an in-depth exploration of how mindfulness, acceptance and commitment of South African cricket coaches developed through participating in an experiential learning process of the MAC program. Each interview was analysed rigorously with a view of engaging interpretively with the “texts” so as to generate rich meanings.

I was mindful of the “double hermeneutics” of IPA. Double hermeneutics have two positions. The first is “Etic” and refers to an “outsider” interpretive stance where I attempted to make sense of the coaches’ experiences and concerns. The second position is “Emic” and refers to an “insider” phenomenological (experiential) position. In my research this position was provided by the coaches’ accounts, stories and views about their learning the MAC approach experientially. Furthermore, double hermeneutics guided me to write and re-write my findings as a sense-making process.

The rich and diverse amount of themes generated through the IPA left me with a great sense of appreciation and respect for the coaches’ willingness to engage with the research process. The research project made me intensely aware of my hope that more coaches will be put in the position to experientially learn about the MAC approach and benefit from the psycho-educational nature of a MAC workshop. Yet, I need to emphasize that I was often struck and humbled by how uniquely the coaches utilized mindfulness, acceptance and commitment in their cricket coaching.

How coaches conveyed the MAC approach took me by surprise because they arrived at conveyance “methods” by themselves. The MAC workshop did not offer any formalised training with regards to conveyance. Coaches, therefore, used their own experiential learning of the MAC approach in conjunction with previous personal and cricket coaching experiences as guidance to convey mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to their players.

My personal reflections on the research process brought awareness of certain challenges and frustrations I encountered along the way. My deliberate use of qualitative methodology was informed by my view that good research in sport psychology does not necessarily require the application of quantitative research methodology, consisting of large sample sizes and proving or discarding a hypothesis. I chose IPA precisely because of its emphasis on the richness of each individual case and not big samples sizes (Smith et al.,

2009). This view was not enthusiastically shared by colleagues favouring quantitative research methodology and large sample sizes. Colleagues and research committees encouraged me to rather use 10 coaches and be on the safe side of research approval. I decided to respect these views and conduct interviews with 10 coaches although my original proposal consisted of working with six coaches. It was during the analysis part of my research journey and applying quality assurance principles specifically dependability and conformability that I decided in conjunction with my late supervisor (Prof Dave Beyers) to defend my original choice. This also guided my decision to use only six of the 10 coaches' data (three interviews per coach, a total of 18 interviews). This experience once again made me realise how the dominant research story of large sample sizes used in sport psychology can easily influence students doing research in the sport context to believe that "more is better".

Although the MAC program is psycho-education, my intention was never to do a program evaluation, since that would have required a formal quantitative pre-and post-test design, using a large sample of coaches. I was interested in an in-depth exploration and understanding of coaches' experiences participating in the MAC program. Using IPA complied with these research needs.

Throughout this research project, I was continuously confronted with the reality of deadlines and trying to finish my PhD. This experience was intensified by becoming aware of the time-consuming nature of IPA. Utilizing the MAC approach during these experiences made me aware to pay attention in the present moment in a non-judgmental way, by allowing and accepting my experiences to unfold on a moment-to-moment basis through commitment to personal values, therefore, assisting me with my own process of coping with performance pressure.

My personal reflections on the research process left me feeling overwhelmed by the amount of data generated through engaging in the IPA process. By analogy I compare my engagement in the IPA process with organising a World Cup cricket tournament. The organisers start with an overwhelming task that ranges from building cricket stadiums, drawing up playing fixtures, organising umpires, support staff, medical personnel, accommodation, marketing, and so on. It takes years to prepare.

Then the actual World Cup tournament starts and all the teams arrive and start playing against one another. Teams get knocked out as they lose matches and others progress to the next round. The tournament progresses through the play-offs, quarter-finals and semi-finals. Then the last two teams play in the final; one team wins and gets the trophy for being the champions. The only thing remaining after all of this is a specific team's name engraved on a small golden plate on the winner's trophy. After all the planning, preparation, hard work, energy and commitment, you are left with a single name on a trophy, but without all the above mentioned aspects, winning a tournament cannot happen.

IPA is analogous to the above process. It takes an immense amount of work for long periods of time to reach a phase where themes of coaches' experiences can be reported. Without the time spent and ground work done, it would have been impossible to report these themes on coaches' experiences of the MAC program, what they experientially learned, how the MAC approach manifested in the different domains, and how they conveyed mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to their players.

#### **13.4 Contribution to the body of knowledge of sport psychology**

As will be evident in 13.4.1 to 13.4.6 my study made various contributions to the body of knowledge in sport psychology.

##### **13.4.1 Ecological approach**

My study contributed to the field of sport psychology by applying an ecological perspective to psycho-education, as opposed to the individualistic approach often used in sport psychology. My study supports Pretorius' (2012) moral plea that a psychologist's skills entails much more than one-on-one therapeutic work and should include curative, preventative and developmental skills in the form of group work, program development and community intervention. This was illustrated in the results sections reflecting coaches' experiences of the MAC program (Chapter 8), the extent to which coaches learned about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment (Chapter 9), the diversity of contexts in which the MAC approach manifested (Chapter 10), and the spontaneous process of conveying the MAC approach to their players (Chapter 11). Hence, more players were reached, educated and empowered through performance development, as opposed to limiting service delivery from the individual sport psychologist to individual players. The ecological nature of psycho-education may indeed contribute to the growing needs in the South African context by practicing psychology in a more holistic sport context.

### **13.4.2 Psycho-education**

My study addressed coaches' need for more knowledge and assistance with regard to dealing with the psychological side of players by becoming educated in sport psychology, so that sport psychology principles can be utilized in a coaching context. This is in line with ideas raised by Pain and Harwood (2004), Sullivan and Hodge (1991), as well as Williams and Kendall (2007). Participating in the MAC program, as a psycho-educational process, empowered coaches to address the psychological needs of cricket players. Psycho-education programs can, furthermore, assist coaches in combatting stress and preventing burn-out because it provides knowledge, leaving coaches empowered and equipped to deal with challenges provoked by the coaching domain.

### **13.4.3 Performance development approaches**

The MAC approach as an acceptance-driven performance enhancement program is much more innovative compared to traditional control-driven PST programs. The results sections (Chapters 8-11) illustrated how mindfulness, acceptance and commitment of South African cricket coaches developed through participating in an experiential learning process of the MAC program. "Awareness" seems to be present in mindfulness and acceptance, as well as in commitment and constitutes the "thread" that binds these three separate principles together into the MAC approach. Being so fully aware, therefore, assisted coaches to be more reflective in their coaching practices.

Coaches further experienced mindfulness as a means to relieve pressure and stress, often present in the coaching context. Considering the value of Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction in relieving pressure and stress within the medical and non-medical population, it should be considered as part of coaching education as well. As discussed in 5.3, Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction can assist coaches with coping skills in dealing with the stressful demands of coaching and prevent conditions such as burnout.

### **13.4.4 Participants**

As far as I could ascertain, my study was the first one using cricket coaches as research participants in MAC related research. The trend, moreover, is to use players rather than coaches in MAC research.

All previous MAC related research included sporting codes other than cricket such as weightlifting and swimming (Gardner & Moore, 2004), canoeing (Garcia et al., 2004), field hockey and volleyball (Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010), springboard diving (Schwanhausser, 2009), archery and golf (Kaufman et al., 2009), long distance running (De Petrillo et al., 2009), swimming and golf (Bernier et al., 2009), basketball (Gooding & Gardner, 2009) and archery, golf and long-distance running (Thompson et al., 2011).

#### **13.4.5 Experiential learning**

The MAC program was mainly presented by means of experiential learning, as opposed to didactic teaching methods. Experiential learning allows for coaches' own sense-making processes to unfold. This was illustrated throughout the results sections (Chapters 8-11) with coaches' unique descriptions and accounts of mindfulness, acceptance and commitment. The experiential learning process as outlined by Kolb (1984) allowed coaches to firstly, experience the MAC program. Then they engaged in a process of reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation to utilize mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to themselves as human beings, their coaching and the game of cricket, and then conveying this to their players.

#### **13.4.6 Methodology**

My research seems to be the first application of IPA in the MAC context. The idiographic nature of IPA allowed the voices of individual coaches to be heard, and this is indeed a unique contribution in the cricket context.

### **13.5 Limitations**

On-going reflection on the research process brought the following limitations to the fore, as well as ways to address this in future research projects.

#### **13.5.1 Experiential learning**

The practical activities used in experiential learning were generic and occurred in a board room, which is a controlled environment. This could be interpreted as a limitation, thereby hindering the utilization and conveyance of the MAC principles in cricket-specific coaching contexts. To overcome this limitation, more MAC activities to be experienced on-the-field during training and games should be chosen.

### **13.5.2 Duration of the MAC program**

The MAC program was presented in one day (eight hours) because that was the only time available during the coaches' education program. This could be seen as a limitation because more time is needed. Coaches' suggestions that more time should be allocated to psycho-education in the form of either a two or three day workshop should be considered. The call for more time is supported by Gardner and Moore (2007) who developed the MAC program as a six week intervention.

### **13.5.3 Presentation of the MAC program**

The individual components (mindfulness, acceptance and commitment) of the MAC program were presented separately and in the same sequence in the workshop. This linear structure of addressing mindfulness, acceptance and commitment separately was kept throughout the interviewing process to allow each of these components to be experienced and explained properly. This can create a fragmented understanding of the MAC approach. Greater effort is needed to explain how mindfulness, acceptance and commitment function as a whole, meaning how all three components interact continuously. More regular follow-up discussions with coaches on utilizing the MAC approach can overcome this limitation.

### **13.5.4 Limited opportunities for participants during the research project**

There were only three interviews conducted every two months after the coaches' initial experience of the MAC workshop. This can be experienced as limited opportunities for coaches to discuss their experiences, utilization and conveyance of the MAC approach in cricket. More on-going and consistent reflective conversations are required when introducing a new approach during coaches' education. Sport psychologists should provide continuous opportunities, supervision and consultation to coaches when implementing performance development programs, as this will also assist with any potential ethical dilemmas arising (Weinberg & Gould, 2011).

### **13.6 Suggestions for future research**

More research is needed to explore coaches' in-depth experiences of psycho-education programs, such as the MAC approach. Coaches are central figures in cricket, spend a lot of time with players, and can either hinder or enhance performance. Qualitative analyses through IPA could address this need and should also focus on the MAC approach considering that the majority of research is done with PST.

Another suggestion for future research is to do a longitudinal follow-up study with these same cricket coaches after one year to explore their experiences some time after being exposed to the MAC approach. Conducting interviews with the players that are being coached through the MAC approach will also provide insight on how players respond to the MAC program.

### **13.7 Summary**

The aim of my study was to move from an individualistic utilisation of resources to an ecological and more holistic approach to performance development, by working and educating coaches as central figures in sport to become an extension of the work that sport psychologists do. This was done by creating a performance development experience for cricket coaches through their participation in a MAC program, which was mainly facilitated through experiential learning.

The richness and depth of the results illustrated how coaches experienced the MAC program. Their learning through experience enabled each coach to uniquely utilize mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to themselves as human beings, their coaching and the game of cricket, which they feel passionate about. Coaches arrived at their conveyance “methods” by themselves because the MAC workshop did not offer any formalised training with regards to conveyance. Coaches used their own experiential learning of the MAC approach as guidance to convey mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to their players.

Research with coaches can contribute to understanding psycho-education and coaches’ education in cricket, ecologically. Furthermore, it illustrated that cricket coaches can be empowered to become an extension of sport psychologists in South Africa.

My study, therefore, contributed to the field of sport psychology by applying an ecological perspective (as opposed to an individualistic view) to psycho-education by using the MAC approach (as opposed to PST) to educate coaches (as opposed to players) to deal with the psychological demands of cricket.

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## Appendix A: Permission letter (hpc)

Appendix A



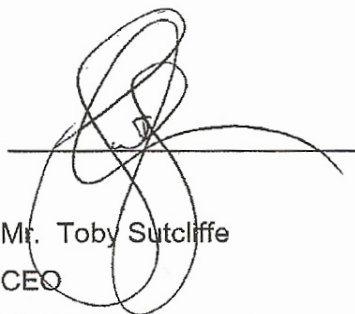
01 September 2011

### Letter of Consent

I, Mr. Toby Sutcliffe (CEO, High Performance Centre) hereby grant permission for Monja Human (student no: 94261408) to use the premises of the High Performance Centre to conduct the relevant interviews needed to complete her PhD (psychology) research project with the proposed title of:

***A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach for performance development of cricket coaches in South Africa.***

For any inquiries please contact me on (012) 362 9800



Mr. Toby Sutcliffe  
CEO  
High Performance Centre

TuksSport (Pty) Ltd. t/a hpc | Reg. No. 2001/020098/07 | Burnett St. | Pretoria | P.O. Box 14622 | Hatfield | 0028  
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Directors: A. M. de Klerk | N.J. Grové | C. Koornhof | S. Vil-Nkomo



## Appendix B: Permission letter (CSA)



**CRICKET**  
SOUTH AFRICA

Cricket South Africa (NPC)  
Wanderers Club  
21 North Street, Illovo 2196  
PO Box 55009, Northlands 2116  
Tel: +27 (0)11 880 2810  
Fax: +27 (0)11 880 6578  
Website: www.cricknet.co.za

01 September 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**RE: Letter of Consent**

I, Mr. Anton Ferreira, CSA Manager: Coaching, hereby grant permission to Monja Human (student no: 94261408), to present the MAC program to cricket coaches attending the CSA Coach Acceleration Program (CAP) and to conduct the relevant interviews required to complete her PhD (psychology) research project with the proposed title of:

***A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach for performance development of cricket coaches in South Africa.***

For any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me on (012) 362 9892.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Anton Ferreira'.

Anton Ferreira  
Manager: Coaching  
**CRICKET SOUTH AFRICA**  
(012) 362-9892

Cricket South Africa (NPC):  
Dr M Nyoka (President), Mr A K Khan (Vice President), Mr J Bester (Finance & Commercial Committee Chairman),  
Mr G Majola (Chief Executive Officer)

Cricket South Africa (Non-Profit Company)

## Appendix C: Consent Forms

### Section A Research Information

Dear Cricket Coach,

The following information is important regarding the research project: “A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach for performance development of cricket coaches in South Africa.

Once you have read through the information and are willing to participate in the research project, please complete Section B.

#### Information:

I, Monja Human, am currently registered for my PhD (psychology) degree at the University of Pretoria, where I am required to do a thesis. I am interested in coaches’ experiences of a performance enhancement approach. This is the topic of my thesis. Prof. Dave Beyers from the Department of Psychology and Prof. Ben Steyn from the Department of Biokinetics, Sport and Leisure Science at University of Pretoria are the study leaders of my research.

The study is qualitative in nature, and entails interviews with coaches’ about their experiences of a performance enhancement program.

#### Title:

The title of my study is: “A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach for performance development of cricket coaches in South Africa.

#### Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to empower the cricket coaching community by creating a performance development experience for cricket coaches through their participation in a MAC programme, which will be facilitated through a process of experiential learning.

#### Procedures:

The performance enhancement approach will be presented in a one day workshop. After experiencing the workshop you will be required to participate in 3 interviews with regards to your learning, application and transference of the MAC programme.

**The procedures for this research are:**

**1. Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) programme**

The participants will then attend the value-driven MAC programme of a one-day workshop (8 hours).

**2. Reflection interview**

Within 7 days after attending the MAC workshop each of the participants will participate in a second semi-structured interview of one hour each. The emphasis of this interview will shift to their MAC- experience and what they have **learnt** about performance development.

**3. Reflection interview**

Within 2 months after attending the MAC workshop each of the participants will participate in a second semi-structured interview of 30 minutes each. The emphasis of this interview will be on how they have **applied** their experiential learning to their own coaching.

**4. Reflection interview**

Within 4 months after attending the MAC workshop each of the participants will participate in a second semi-structured interview of 30 minutes each. The emphasis of this interview will again be on how they have applied their experiential learning, what this has meant for themselves and their coaching and how they have **transferred** their experiential learning to their cricketers.

The interviewing process will be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcribing the interview accurately for the purpose of analysis. After the interviews, I will transcribe the interview. The audio data will be destroyed by deleting the audio recording after the research process.

**Risks:**

There are no perceived physical risks for you while participating.

**Benefits:**

There are no financial gains for participating in the research, but you may benefit personally by sharing your experiences. Your experiences can also benefit other people and/or coaches, as well as assist professionals in understanding people's experiences of performance enhancement approaches.

**Rights:**

Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from participating at any time and without giving any reasons for doing so.

**Confidentiality:**

All information will be treated confidential. Anonymity will assured and the data will be destroyed if you wish to withdraw your participation.

**Material:**

After completion of the research, the transcribed material will be stored in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years.

**Researcher:**

If any clarity or more detailed information is needed, my contact details are as follows:

Name: Monja Human  
Cell no: 082 826 1012  
E-mail: monja.human@hpc.co.za

Researcher:	(Mrs. M. Human)	_____
Promoter:	(Prof. D. Beyers)	_____
Co-promoter:	(Prof. B. Steyn)	_____
Head of Department:	(Prof. M. Marchetti-Mercer)	_____

## Section B

### Research Consent

I, \_\_\_\_\_(Full name and surname)  
hereby acknowledge that I have read and understand the above-mentioned research  
information. I hereby agree to participate in the above-mentioned research project. I  
accept and agree with the conditions as stated above.

Coach: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Coaches Manual

"This manual is available from Monja Human at the following email address:

[monja.human@hpc.co.za](mailto:monja.human@hpc.co.za)"

## Appendix E: Reflection Interviews

### REFLECTION INTERVIEW 1: Schedule

#### 1. Introduction

- a) How did you experience, in your role as a coach, being the recipient of a performance development workshop?
- b) What did the MAC approach do to your knowledge of performance enhancement?

#### 2. Mindfulness

- a) What did you learn about yourself following the mindfulness section of the MAC program?
- b) Following your experience with mindfulness, describe what mindfulness can do for your coaching?

#### 3. Acceptance

- a) What did you learn about yourself following the acceptance section of the MAC program?
- b) Following your experience with acceptance, describe what acceptance can do for your coaching?

#### 4. Commitment

- a) What did you learn about yourself following the commitment section of the MAC program?
- b) Following your experience with commitment, describe what commitment can do for your coaching?

#### 5. The Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment Experience

- a) How would you like to use you're the MAC program when you are coaching?

#### 6. General

- a) How did you experience the presentation of the MAC workshop?
- b) Is there anything else that you want to discuss that has not yet been covered in this interview?

## REFLECTION INTERVIEW 2:

### Schedule

#### 1. Mindfulness

- a) Describe how mindfulness has influenced your coaching in the past two months?
- b) Is there anything regarding the application of mindfulness to your coaching that you are finding difficult?

#### 2. Acceptance

- a) Describe how acceptance has influenced your coaching in the past two months?
- b) Is there anything regarding the application of acceptance to your coaching that you are finding difficult?

#### 3. Commitment

- a) Describe how commitment has influenced your coaching in the past two months?
- b) Is there anything regarding the application of commitment to your coaching that you are finding difficult?

#### 4. The Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment Experience

- a) How would you like to display mindfulness, acceptance and commitment together when you are coaching?

#### 5. General

- a) Is there anything that you would like to add that you feel is relevant to this study?



## REFLECTION INTERVIEW 3

### Interview

#### 1. Mindfulness

- a) Describe how you have transferred mindfulness to your cricketers?
- b) Is there anything regarding transferring mindfulness to your cricketers that you are finding difficult?

#### 2. Acceptance

- a) Describe how you have transferred acceptance to your cricketers?
- b) Is there anything regarding transferring acceptance to your cricketers that you are finding difficult?

#### 3. Commitment

- a) Describe how you have transferred commitment to your cricketers?
- b) Is there anything regarding transferring commitment to your cricketers that you are finding difficult?

#### 4. The Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment Experience

- a) How would you like to convey mindfulness, acceptance and commitment together when you are coaching?

#### 5. General

- a) Is there anything that you would like to add that you feel is relevant to this study?