

# PhD Opportunity

## Value Creation Stories in Coach Developer Social Learning Spaces

### Supervisory Team

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**Research Group:** [Coach Developer and Performance Analyst Research Group](#)

### The PhD Opportunity:

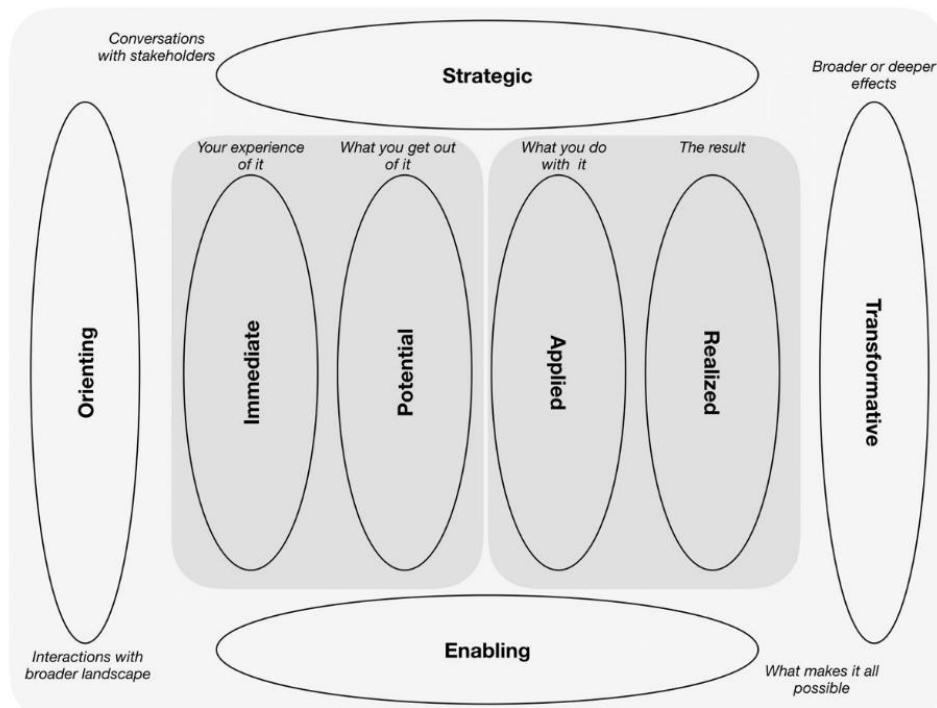
Research concerning Coach Developers has steadily increased in volume over the last decade (e.g., Stodter and Cushion 2019; North 2010; Kraft, Culver, and Din 2020). A small number of studies have explicitly investigated how Coach Developers learn and have sought to inform the field as to how such practitioners might be best supported (e.g., Campbell, Fallaize, and Schempp 2021; Culver, Werthner, and Trudel 2019). These studies have demonstrated notable deficiencies in the learning provision offered to Coach Developers, commonly suggesting their training amounted to little more than prescriptive instruction of how to deliver coach education courses – a practice starkly in contrast to the espoused theoretical underpinnings of many of the courses themselves (Stodter and Cushion 2019; Culver, Werthner, and Trudel 2019). Insightful research on broad function of coach development has been conducted in numerous countries around the world including New Zealand (Fyall et al. 2023), the USA (Kuklick and Mills 2023) and Brazil (Ciampolini et al. 2022).

### Value Creation in Social Learning Spaces

It is first important to outline the theoretical constructs on which the proposed study is based. For the purposes of the present investigation, we will adopt Wenger-Trayner et al.'s (2015) social theory of learning. Building on previous iterations of their thinking (Wenger 1998; Lave and Wenger 1991), Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020, 34) proposed their social theory of learning to feature "value creation in social learning spaces" as the central construct. A social learning space is a group of practitioners who come together because they care to make a difference in a particular context, engage their uncertainty, and pay attention to data (Kraft and Culver 2021). This is a discrete concept from a Community of Practice (Wenger 1998), which is a more distinct, stable, and abiding social structure. Within social learning spaces, value creation is the negotiation of meaning assigned by an individual to either explicit or tacit phenomena (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020). Therefore, individual practitioners determine what is of value. Such phenomena could be, for example, a promising idea, getting to know a useful contact, or adopting a new tool that fundamentally re-shapes their practice (Culver,

Kraft, and Duarte 2020). Social learning is ultimately concerned with the becoming of the person within the context of the difference they care to make (Vinson, Simpson, and Cale 2023). For Coach Developers, becoming refers to learning that transcends the accumulation of knowledge and qualifications, embraces all social interactions, and is concerned with the fulfilment of their human potential (Jarvis 2009).

Numerous studies have been conducted investigating the effectiveness of learning communities through the concept of value creation. Several of these studies have utilised the Value Creation Framework (VCF) to help frame their respective investigations (e.g., Duarte, Culver, and Paquette 2021; Bowles and O'Dwyer 2021). First published by Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat (2011), the VCF was intended to assist stakeholders in better understanding the contribution social learning experiences have in helping a practitioner to make a difference in their chosen context. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) extended the underpinning theoretical justification for value creation and confirmed the extension of the framework from five to eight value cycles (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: The Value Creation Framework (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020, 75)**

Research utilizing the VCF to date has generally affirmed the usefulness of the tool, although the authors of each study reported their own respective significant limitation. Value creation stories have been utilized in research spanning the fields of leisure (Hanley, Baker, and Pavlidis 2018), educational technology (Booth and Kellogg 2015), financial governance (Wenger-Trayner 2017), and adult education (Guldberg et al. 2021), and have been shown to demonstrate potential to capture short and long flows. Value creation stories, represented as longer value flows, have not commonly been utilized in sport research. Value creation stories are a narrative of what, and how, value has been generated. Our recent research (Vinson, Bradshaw, and Cale 2024) has demonstrated the potential of this framework to advance the field of Coach Developer learning. However, considerable further work and refinement must be

undertaken in order to capture effective ways to illustrate and evidence value creation. Therefore, the first aim of this investigation is to better understand the value created for, and through, participants recruited to Coach Developer learning programmes. The second aim of the present study is to investigate ways in which to meaningfully convey value creation stories in both academic and applied contexts.

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**Application Process:**

To begin the application process please go to

<https://www.worc.ac.uk/research/research-degrees/applying-for-a-phd/>.

**The Interview:**

All successful applicants will be offered an interview with the proposed Supervisory Team. You will be contacted by a member of the Doctoral School Team to find a suitable date. Interviews can be conducted in person or over Microsoft Teams.

**Funding your PhD:**

For information about Doctoral Loans please visit: <https://www.worc.ac.uk/study/fees-and-finance/doctoral-loans.aspx>

During your PhD you can access the Research Conference Support Scheme to support the costs of presenting your research at an external conference.

**Research at the University of Worcester**

Research is central to the University's mission to make a difference in everything that we do. We are committed to delivering excellent research which extends the boundaries of human knowledge but which also improves people's lives by enabling better health outcomes, improving food security, developing environmentally sustainable solutions for crop production and socially sustainable solutions to our ageing population, enhancing public knowledge and understanding of the past and present.

The University hence focuses its research around five high-level challenges facing society, locally, nationally and globally:

- [\*\*Human Health and Wellbeing\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Sustainable Futures\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Digital Innovation\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Culture, Identity and Social Exclusion\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Professional Education\*\*](#)

The success of our research is reflected in our continuous improvement in external research assessment processes. In the most recent Research Excellence Framework, REF 2021, the University saw a near 50% increase in the scale of its research and 12% increase in quality, building on its performance in REF 2014 when it was the UK's most improved university in terms of Research Power, a combination of scale and quality.

**Research Degrees at Worcester**

Our research students are central to our overall mission for research. They are working at the cutting edge of their disciplines and driving forward the quality of our research whilst enriching our research culture. We are looking to increase our research student numbers as a strategic imperative.

Our commitment to our students is reflected in the results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2025 in which we ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> for overall research student satisfaction nationally. Key to our success in this area is the Doctoral School, a focal point for all our research students.

It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team.
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station.
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors.
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars.

### **Research Group**

The Coach Developer and Performance Analyst Research Group focuses on contributing to the professional education and role development of these emerging professions. The group draws on a range of educational and social psychology theories to facilitate sport coaches' and performance analysts' learning. Often generating collaborative research with some of the UK's most influential National Sport Organisations (e.g., UK Sport, UK Coaching), National Governing Bodies (e.g., The Football Association, British Rowing) and professional clubs (e.g., Wolverhampton Wanderers), this research group also seeks to shape how sport coaches' and performance analysts' roles evolve with the ever-changing nature of contemporary sport.

### **Widening Participation:**

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience.

**For further details, please contact Professor Don Vinson,  
[d.vinson@worc.ac.uk](mailto:d.vinson@worc.ac.uk), who will be Director of Studies for this  
opportunity.**