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Coaching Critically: Engaging Critical Pedagogy in the Forensics Squad Room*

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Abstract

Forensics coaching philosophy, like competition, is continually being evaluated and interrogated, whether by scholars, coaches, or competitors. This essay introduces critical-pedagogical philosophy into forensics coaching, in order to move coaching further from practice and ever closer to praxis. This move is accomplished through looking at a sample of the current forensics activity literature, locating a space within the dominant discourse where coaching-as-critical praxis can serve the forensics community, presenting examples of praxis-centered coaching, and identifying possible results of this particular coaching approach.

Keywords: coaching, critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire, praxis, competition

Introduction

During my first few years as a high school speech coach, I worked with an oratory student who was also a policy debater. During one particular coaching session, she mentioned that she and her partner were "running Foucault" as a case in policy. "What do you mean you are 'running' Foucault," I asked? She then informed me how the work of Foucault and other critical and cultural theorists was being employed in the competitive policy debate world as "kritiks." My student explained that she and her partner were using Foucault because it was "the way" to win rounds: "all of the good teams are running kritiks." No real explanations of Foucauldian concepts – e.g., the development of technologies as methods of power and oppression, the using of discourse as systems of cultural control, histories as exemplars and expressions of hegemony – were presented or taught by her coaches in practice or detailed by her competitors in rounds. None of these formative and revolutionary ideas were actually engaged, employed in detail or explained, or taught to the debaters. Debaters simply stated "as Foucault points out ..." in their 1AC and that was it.

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This anecdote demonstrates that ideas and arguments from critical theory, cultural studies, and critical pedagogy are already being used in forensics. Traditionally, critical and cultural theories have been employed to help understand the world we live in through investigation, inquiry, and identifying those ideologies and systems that are hegemonic and oppressive, finally moving to dismantle those oppressive systems. Turning such a lens towards the current practices that make up "forensics coaching" illuminates ideological structures and systems of thought that may need to be revisited. Though forensics coaching most often occurs at the application level (whether this is because of time, funding, or the philosophical leanings of the coach is not in question here), an opportunity exists to coach forensics through a theoretical, praxis-centered paradigm.

When examining cuttings or resolutions, coaches recognize that preferred methods of interpretation or analysis exist at the secondary school competitive level¹. As certain stylistic moves win rounds, and those style preferences are adopted by teams and coached or trained to the team members, other styles of presentation and technique -- interpretations that may be equally compelling but do not "win" -- fall out of favor. This pedagogical decision may come from knowing the judges, the competitive circuit, and the practices that have been adhered to because "they work." I argue here that accepting what "is," without a critical interrogation of those normalized practices, allows for the essentialist re-production of those same dominant cultural practices and ideologies without question. As a result, coaching is less about theoretical investigation, education, or philosophical inquiry, and more about utilizing the methods that make winning most possible.

Unfortunately, any critical examination of these practices within the frame of forensics coaching has been forced to the periphery of squad room discussions, though they are alive and well within academic circles. These critically reflective conversations do occur in judges' lounges, during the van or bus rides between school and tournament location, or after a particularly taxing coaching session. However, even as the shortfalls of coaching to win may be recognized, coaches are quickly reminded that funding for this most important educational activity often relies on the success or failure of the team during a competitive season. Even as coaches deconstruct their own positions and roles, trying to understand what it means to be a "good" or "great" coach, dominant outside forces will insist that winning is the ultimate goal, regardless of the means by which that particular outcome is achieved.

Other coaches may simply feel that critical engagement of coaching is not their "job." Lindemann (2002) contends that "some forensic educators may argue that they are not teachers of literature; in other words, it is not

¹ Though the focus here centers on secondary school levels of forensics coaching strategies, the same strategies -- and realities of the coaching community -- may also hold true at the collegiate level.

their duty or place to teach literary theory" (p. 46); such arguments can be extended to include argumentation, rhetoric, and critical theory. Regrettably, such a perspective implies that coaches have lost sight of the educational foundations of the activity, though this is often not the case. In limiting the coaching experience in these ways, however, the structures of power and normalization are accepted without question or critique.

The argument cannot assume that all coaches engage and support this hegemonic thought. In that light, coaching strategies can be enhanced through the *application* of various theoretical methods, ensuring that those same hegemonic systems are properly interrogated. One need only examine the educational philosophy literature to begin locating *different* ways of teaching and, by extension, coaching. John Dewey, while writing as part of the American Pragmatist theoretical movement, recognized that educational experiences, what Brookfield (1990) calls "teaching moments," should be based on the experiences of the teacher as well as the student. Though this is often seen as a rallying cry for simulations and out-of-classroom laboratory experiences for traditional teaching environments, educational experiences can also occur during coaching sessions.

After being oppressed by his own country's political and educational systems, Paulo Freire (1970) recognized traditional educational systems as ideological states that further cement existing systems of oppression. Freire (1970) argues that the teacher should not simply employ the teaching methods by which he or she was taught, as doing so reproduces existing systems of oppression. Rather, the teaching – or in this case coaching – experience should be driven by the talents (e.g. skills, thoughts, ideas, background) of the competitor as well as the coach.

Critical theory and pedagogy allow for traditional coaching practices to be deconstructed and re-constituted in a new emancipatory light – that is the position under interrogation here. This essay explores praxis-centered coaching (PCC) as an epistemic transition, allowing for new approaches to coaching within currently structural and essentialized² system of practices. The essay looks at the current forensics coaching literature, explains what praxis-centered coaching could look like, then presents the inherent limitations to such an approach as well as opportunities for future research and engagement.

Forensics Coaching – The Current Conversation

The position of Forensics and, therefore, the coach within the academic community often oscillates between *co-curricular* and

² "Essentialized" here refers to the lack of apparent flexibility that may exist within coaching practices. This may be due less to the perspective of the coach and more the limitations placed on the coach due to time limitations, budget constraints, etc.

extracurricular. Under the latter, the goals of the coach and the program shifts towards winning tournaments with forensics pedagogy and education perceived in a secondary or tertiary role. If the former categorization, co-curricular, is dominant, the identity of forensics becomes much more murky.

The forensics community has often wrestled with this question. Keefe (1989), when addressing the PKD annual developmental conference, recognizes the power of the adjective "co-curricular" as one that has "a responsibility to consider the issues pertaining to pedagogy and research" (p. 45) as well as those of competition. Dean (1991), when presenting various developmental and educational theories as preferred approaches to forensics coaching and administration, and in response to what he sees as "a numbers game" (p. 89) to promote and legitimate forensics to school-level administrators, argues that "emphasizing the glitter of trophies cheapens the true educational purpose and ultimate value of the activity" (p. 89).

Coaching philosophy can be further critiqued when looking at forensics philosophy overall. Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) call for the forensics community to recognize that it has moved from an educational opportunity to a competitive activity and that, from this new vantage and position, the pedagogical implications of forensics can be brought back into forensics. The "myth" that there is a balance between education and competition, in the authors' eyes, is false. Rather, "the forensics community [should] embrace competition; only then, can forensics, become more educational" (p. 13). The authors further that, though forensics can teach aspects of life to both competitors and coaches, "forensics can educate well beyond that which is gained from competition" (p. 19).

In his response to Burnett, Brand, and Meister's position, Hinck (2003) agrees that the activity should recognize the dialectic tension that exists between competition and education, and develops his argument around the educational benefits of competition as well as through four identified tensions. Hinck does recognize that, sometimes, "the problem for some students and some coaches is that the status markers, the titles ... creates pressure for us to behave in ways that contorts what many of us take as common ethical starting points for an educational activity" (p. 72). Hinck finalizes his position by presenting "both/and"³ arguments, demonstrating both educational and competitive benefits from forensics as a way to create balance within the dialectic and calling for future research and discussion surrounding the position of forensics. It is this same dialectic that Littlefield (2006) responds to when viewing forensics as an epistemology.

Littlefield (2006), when presenting "forensics as epistemic," introduces a third point of view into the conversation. Rather than forensics

³ "Both/and" refers to theoretical moves offered by Stuart Hall, among others, who want to allow for all possible options and realities to be explored, rather than denying possible emancipatory options based on an "either/or" empirical mind set.

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being either educational or competitive, he would see forensics (and the various forms that it takes) leading "to a higher level, which should be the ultimate goal; that higher level is knowledge" (p. 6). It is such a philosophical move within Littlefield's argument that would match well with a praxis-centered approach to forensics coaching by taking into account the dialectic Burnett, Brand, and Meister uncover and Hinck responds to. If a critical pedagogical approach to forensic coaching is to be explored and, perhaps, adopted, then the structures that support both "excellence" and "winning" need to be interrogated and, if necessary, torn down and rebuilt in a new way. Littlefield (2006), and the day-to-day responses to his position that could be engaged through praxis-centered coaching, may present one of many forensics re-formations possible.

It is the position of this essay that the ideal role of the coach is one of educator and mentor, allowing for the competitor to explore and experience various perspectives of her or himself while constructing, rehearsing, and presenting competitive forensics artifacts. Whether the importance is placed on competition, exploration, or epistemic discovery, a critical inquiry into coaching practices has been and continues to be vital to the pedagogical success of the forensics community. By embracing a praxis-centered coaching pedagogy, focusing on the emancipatory power and possibilities within the forensics activity and community, such inquiry and action are possible. The following section presents a possible approach that may aid in that inquiry.

Praxis-Centered Coaching

Constructing a new coaching paradigm, one that is based on theory and action, is a burden that has existed within education since the first teachings of Socrates in the olive groves, if not before. Freire reminds teachers (coaches) that, once the old pedagogical methods are interrogated and emancipated, coaches are no longer the "oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both" (1970, p. 44). Emancipation does not have to be an awesome display of resistance and revolution, but can occur at various levels and in various locations. Emancipation must be adhered to as an epistemic and philosophical position at all levels, including coaching.

To accomplish this shift in coaching, the forensics community must do away with the old standards of coaching and replace them with a theory-centered approach, one that places education (or the discovery of knowledge, per Littlefield (2006)) over competition. It is true that a variety of coaching strategies can and do exist throughout the community. Speaking from my own experiences within the region I coached, I have also recognized that those coaching strategies and pedagogies can fall prey to the pressure to "win" versus the opportunity to "learn" and "uncover."

As former competitors, coaches may tend to coach the way they were coached. This act further solidifies the dominant ideological moves adhered to, which may not allow for re-examination of old coaching strategies and the exploration of new coaching pedagogies. Competitors run through speaking exercises, have selections chosen for them, are told what it means to be a "winning" competitor, and then coach towards that end. In this process, however, the pedagogy – the act of educating and teaching – is lost or at least diluted. Is this necessarily bad? After all, the goals of coaching and forensics have traditionally been rooted in competition. Yet, forensics exists within an educational environment. Forensics competition is intimately joined with the school that supports it. Its roots are – or at least ought to be – educational.

Critical pedagogy asks the practitioner of pedagogy – the coach – to look at exactly what he or she is doing when coaching competitors (which, after all, are students). What decisions are being made on the competitor's behalf? What are the underlying discourses of the coaching process? The act of coaching can be emancipating for both the student and the teacher if it is not oppressive or normalizing in, simply re-producing the same ideologies and systems of hegemony. This downward spiral moves forensics away from an emancipatory praxis and towards simply another way of determining winners and losers.

The benefits are pedagogical and constitutive in nature. By moving away from prescribed coaching strategies, both the coach and the competitor are able to explore new options and possibilities that would have normally been ignored or not recognized by utilizing structured coaching methods. Also, competitors are able to enact their own *voice* and *agency* through their piece selection, case construction, and practice. This may be particularly helpful in the ever-present challenge of keeping students interested and engaged with forensics, particularly if they have a less-than-successful competitive season developing. This coaching praxis engages the student in the process of discovery rather than the process of competition, something from which all students and coaches can benefit. Such changes in coaching methodologies in no way belittle current competitive practices. Instead, they add to and enhance them. In this way, the coach and the student both benefit at multiple levels.

The benefits to the coach and competitor move well beyond the tournament. Recruitment for forensics on a school campus may often include statements about preparing for college, to become a lawyer or politician, or perhaps a stronger citizen in a democratic society. Engaging our coaching through a critical perspective, where dominant ways of thought are interrogated and either re-tooled or dismantled, could be one of the most beneficial aspects of the activity. Are our competitors prepared for such engaging futures? It is possible. However, such an emancipatory move as detailed here would do nothing but enhance that possibility further than considered in the past.

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Thoughtful action (Freire, 1970) is the hallmark of critical pedagogy and could be the hallmark of the forensics activity.

Re-constructing what it means to be a "coach" may illuminate some new practices for the forensics community. By defining the coach as advisor and co-learner, encouraging agency for the competitors, and moving away from assigning categories and cuttings or cases, the coach and the competitor can both learn and grow from the competitive forensics experience. Two alternative perspectives that may allow us to further explore this process are: *Coach as Advisor* and *Peer Coaching*.

Coach as Advisor

As a coach, we are asked to take competitors with little, some, or an abundance of "talent" and mold them into competitive orators, debaters, or interpretive performers. During this process of construction and disciplining, certain techniques are presented and drilled: breathing, use of body (e.g., gestures, eye contact, facial expression, body language), use of voice (diction, rate, volume, expression), and rhetoric (writing, development, argument). Typically, coaches rely on what has worked in the past, that is, what has won. Unfortunately, this process creates a strong power differential between the coach and competitor. Consequently, the relationship can range from fulfilling to, unfortunately, verging on abusive. It is this latter relationship description that can be eliminated if the role of coach is rearticulated with critical praxis in mind.

The coach need not be a "coach" in the traditional, authoritative sense of the word. Rather, the role of the coach should be defined and performed as advisor or mentor. Such a position has been argued previously (White, 2005), and has been demonstrated theoretically to be a preferred option if enacted properly. When education – and rhetorical training – was first formalized, the educational process was not a top-down structure but, rather, individual learners were mentored through Socratic dialogue and questioning. The only difference between the learners is that one (the mentor) had engaged similar material and subject matter before.

Within forensics coaching, the same can be true. The coach knows various ways of achieving a winning performance, but the competitor must find her or his own path. The first step in this is an initial conversation between the two learners – "What do you want out of this experience? Do you want to learn, grow, and become while competing ... or do you want to compete solely?" The former affords the competitor an opportunity to learn, make decisions, make mistakes, continue to learn, and become finally successful by her or his own measure. The latter allows the coach to follow what has been done before and mold the student as a competitor, but articulates the relationship into one that is based on power and the desire to win. By allowing the competitor to make this choice, he or she realizes her or his stake in the

experience. The central move within emancipatory theory is that choice is not given but allowed. By providing agency to the competitor, the coach presents the road ahead for both of them without requiring a preferred direction. This philosophical approach to coaching begins to remove the hegemonic structures that so easily develop in competitive coaching environments and guides the coaching process for both individuals toward a more egalitarian and fulfilling experience.

Peer Coaching

A central force in critical pedagogy is the learner's responsibility for her or his own learning, with or without the guidance of the teacher. Though the teacher employs specific pedagogical techniques, the learner must step into uncharted territories (though, of course, the teacher falls into the quagmire of the unknown often as well). An effective way to allow the learner to work on her or his own, as well as others, with the guidance of the teacher, is through *peer teaching*, or in this case, *peer coaching*.

Peer coaching is not new to forensics. Particularly in this age of budget cuts and failed referendums, peer coaching often becomes a means by which a team grows even though its coaching staff does not. In critical pedagogy, peer work is more than simply giving a task to a group and assigning a grade or reward to their efforts at the end. It is the process of exploration and learning that is as important – if not more important – than the end result itself. Peer coaching allows for all members of the team to have *voice* and *agency*.

When the peer moves from passive receiver of information to active participant in knowledge discovery, he or she enacts the role of agent. By reconstituting coaching pedagogy as emancipatory praxis, a space is co-constructed by all agents where the opportunity to act exists. The coach should never be in the position of “provider” here, instead philosophically participating as fellow agent within the space.

An example of a praxis-centered approach to peer coaching might look like the following scenario:

Random groupings of competitors, not from the same categories, are placed together. Their goal is to teach each other about her or his respective category through the presentation of her or his specific cutting, piece, or speech. The dialogue within the group is not to be one of judgment or ridicule, but one of critique and exploration. Questions like “why did you choose to interpret that line that way” or “what thought process did you go through to select this topic” would replace statements like “I just don’t get this” or “I would not have done it that way at all.” By being asked

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— nicely — to defend the choices made, each competitor will begin to recognize her or his own agency and can grow through asking questions like “how might you approach my piece differently than I?” Again, this process is less about judgment and more about appreciation. Afterwards, the coach-as-advisor debriefs with the competitors individually about her or his experiences and what he or she learned from the peer coaching process.

It could be argued that peer coaching may, in fact, lead to a further repression of the competitors, as seasoned competitors share “tricks-of-the-trade” with the first-time orator or debater. This is a possibility. It will be up to the peers themselves, once the coach has not only introduced her or his rationale for this approach but also the responsibility to not simply restructure the same oppression (Freire, 1970), to work through this dilemma, experiencing the reality of the learning as well as the theoretical rationales.⁴

Both philosophically and pragmatically, the competitors must understand their choices as their choices. They must embrace them, own them, defend them, and discard them if need be. Never does the coach become the excuse. Rather, the coach as advisor helps to clarify any questions the competitor has, determine how the peer coaching experience can uncover new options or directions, and assist in developing a course of action to follow for the competitor. Always, the coach allows the competitor to make the choices about her or his own piece. Always, the coach allows the competitor to express and engage her or his own agency.

Praxis-Centered Case Construction and Piece Selection.

Agency is one of the hallmarks of critical pedagogy. Freire (1970) implores educators to move away from making decisions about what is “right” or “correct” for students and to allow students to understand through their own exploration, experiences, and consequences. Within coaching, this can be accomplished when coaching staffs stop writing speeches, designing cases, choosing pieces, or locating evidence for competitors and place this responsibility firmly on the shoulders of the competitors themselves. The traditional practice of “the binder” for IE competitors or coaches creating case templates for debate teams only hinders the educational process for the competitor. The only power the competitor is allowed is in the interpretation of the pre-chosen material.

⁴ An additional avenue to consider, when looking at peer coaching at the competitor level, is peer training at the coaches’ level. In my own experiences, I often was “coached” in coaching by my DOF or other member of the coaching staff. The same guiding principles to the peer-coaching philosophy presented in this article could be applied to ensure that new coaches, while learning how the particular systems they are engaging work, are allowed to opportunity to discover their own coaching “voice.” As each competitor is unique, so too is each coach, regardless of what system they come out of.

Unfortunately, as the coach selected or constructed the piece, a "preferred" interpretation of the piece is also attached, which means the molding of the competitor is already preset. This does not advocate allowing the competitor to go into the research process blind; quite the contrary. It becomes the responsibility of the coach to ensure that competitors know how to conduct research, create guidelines about what makes a "good" piece for them, and construct arguments as well as cases. Though the coach presents certain epistemic and ontological approaches, the agency is still held by the competitor as it is up to her or him to engage the process to her or his own ends. This praxis allows the competitors to own a central aspect of what is forensics, giving the competitor a chance to rise or fall on his or own merits and work.

A Possible Example

By its very nature, critical pedagogy does not encourage prescriptive methods or structures, as this would instill a "right way" of "doing" coaching. Rather, a praxis-centered approach would ask that the coach and the competitors meet and determine the best course of action together. Having said this, a possible syllabus is provided here as a way to see how such a coaching approach can be engaged.

During the first meeting of the team, the coaching staff will open the meeting explaining the philosophical position the coaching staff has decided to adopt, as it will offer a unique and long-lasting experience for the entire team. Each member of the team is asked to decide how he or she would prefer to be coached, as a what will be called in this example "traditional" competitor or as a student who, as part of her or his identity, embraces competition as one facet of her or his total personal philosophy. Once the students make their decision, the coaches now know how they can best serve the needs and preference of each student. In this way, there is no "wrong way" to be coached. All students receive instruction and guidance in the way that best suits their individual needs.

For the coaching staff, there may be members that want to coach towards competition, while others wish to engage coaching through a praxis-centered approach. Coaches are then linked with the students that have chosen a particular strategy, with the knowledge that, at any time, the competitor may work with coaches that concentrate on a different perspective than her or his own. Through such an approach, each aspect of the coaching paradigm can be

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As the competitors meet with the coaching staff, the philosophical and epistemological positions that guide the praxis-centered approach are discussed. While students coach each other, work in teams or as individuals with the coaches, they are continually asked to explain why a certain discovery or piece of knowledge is important, not only to forensics competition but at a larger, "real world" level. These dialogues are essential, as the competitors are presented with the space to enact their agency further, and their needs and considerations are given voice.

Although this is just one sketch of a possible praxis, it does demonstrate the philosophies behind the approach and the dialogues that may come about because of it. It will be up to each coach and student in this scenario, regardless of her or his position, to accept the approach and make part of hers or his own praxis. Only in this way will such an approach be truly successful for all parties involved.

The Reality vs. The Ideology of Praxis-Centered Coaching

"Old habits die hard" is the expression; within the realm of forensics coaching, it is quite appropriate. The standard ideologies and practices that forensic coaching holds onto are seen as the "things that work." For many teams at all levels of competition, this perception is accurate. Certain types of pieces, styles of delivery, and paradigms of analysis have become the dominant systems that win rounds and tournaments. In turn, these systems bring with them ways of coaching that are established and well vetted.

The overarching question, theoretically, is "but are they right?" Right for the student? Right for the activity? If the purpose of forensics is to create winners, then the answer to each of these questions is a triumphant "Yes!" However, if the purpose is something else—a further understanding of the world, an insight into literature and culture, even a stronger sense of self, then the answers to the questions become complicated. When a critical lens is applied to what is overtly assumed to be a very structuralist and essentialist perspective on forensics (the goals and ideals of forensics), the ruptures within the dominant discourse become illuminated. It is these ruptures, or gaps in the traditional and normative ways of coaching, that critically pedagogical approaches to forensics coaching can give light to and bring to the same level of the otherwise established dominant ideology.

The big question, of course, is "would this approach work?" Could competitors be coached in such a way as to be learners and innovators, changing ways of doing in response to intrinsic motivators, and still "win?" because, in competition, it is all about the "win," right? Critical theory has

been shown to collapse on itself when moved from the theoretical to the applied, as the oppressed system becomes the dominant and, therefore, the oppressing system. This is the limitation of ideological critique. However, if the role of the coach is to not simply practice coaching "the old way," but to find new and better ways, would not a re-tooling of the old practices be a logical first step?

The follow-up question to "would it work" is "how would you judge a tournament where the coaching practices of various teams do not stress specific rhetorical and competitive strategies?" This is a question that, until the changes are made within coaching pedagogy practiced by forensics teams, cannot be answered. What I argue for here is a first step – resistance through micro-practices, incremental moves made within the dominant ideology with the purpose of promoting diverse ways of praxis. A complete re-tooling of competition may not be possible (competition, at the end of the day, is the normalized goal of forensics). However, how students learn and prepare for that competition can be engaged through a more emancipatory paradigm.

Even if these critiques of coaching may present practices that may not guarantee competitive success, why even bother? The answer is this – if forensics is grounded in education, then it logically follows that the competitors are first and foremost students. Therefore, if students are meant to learn, and experiential and emancipating methods of educational praxis are best suited for learning, then a pedagogy grounded within the ideology of critical theory is the appropriate path to follow.

Does this somewhat controversial path guarantee a winning season? No. In fact, by embracing a position that does away with the old coaching practices, a rough couple of seasons can almost be guaranteed. However, no coaching system guarantees perpetual winning seasons. But if forensics is truly meant to be an educational experience, the "win" may not be as important as the world of forensics would have the citizens of that world believe. By applying different and unique approaches to the art and science of forensics coaching, new results could emerge, and new knowledge about the self and the activity might just be uncovered.

Crystallization

Often, as a forensics coach, I ask myself if the practices and disciplined behaviors I perform and reinforce still make sense. Over the past two decades of forensics practice (as coach, judge, and competitor), there has been little change, little true innovation, in the way coaching is performed. Before taking a leave from my home forensics circuit, I noticed that many of the conversations I was having with other coaches centered around the critique of coaching methods and whether or not the final product even resembled what forensics is "supposed" to look like.

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As forensics competition continues to evolve, the coaching strategies and philosophies engaged need to shift as well. Coaching practices should be investigated and critiqued. Moreover, each forensics coach and director needs to clearly know what is philosophically expected of them by the funding administration, what they expect of themselves, and what should be expected of their competitors. If the expectation is competitive success, then the path is clear. If, on the other hand, the expectation is one of education and critical awareness of oneself, then a different approach is needed. A more critically pedagogical and praxis-centered approach may be that approach.

This essay is an attempt to take the conversation beyond the coaches' lounge, the tab room, and the late night meetings after the competitors have gone home for the evening. This essay is meant to aid in our own critical awareness of our coaching philosophies and practices. This conversation is in no way complete. However, by presenting one possible epistemology, along with corresponding practices and approaches to this entity known as forensics coaching, my hope is that, perhaps, other coaches and researchers within and outside the forensics community will begin to question their own practices. Asking, "why something is done the way it is done?" not only aids in the progression of the discipline and of competition; the questioning is the core of what forensics is all about.

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