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Culture, development mechanisms and characteristics: building the profile of the optimal youth football coach.

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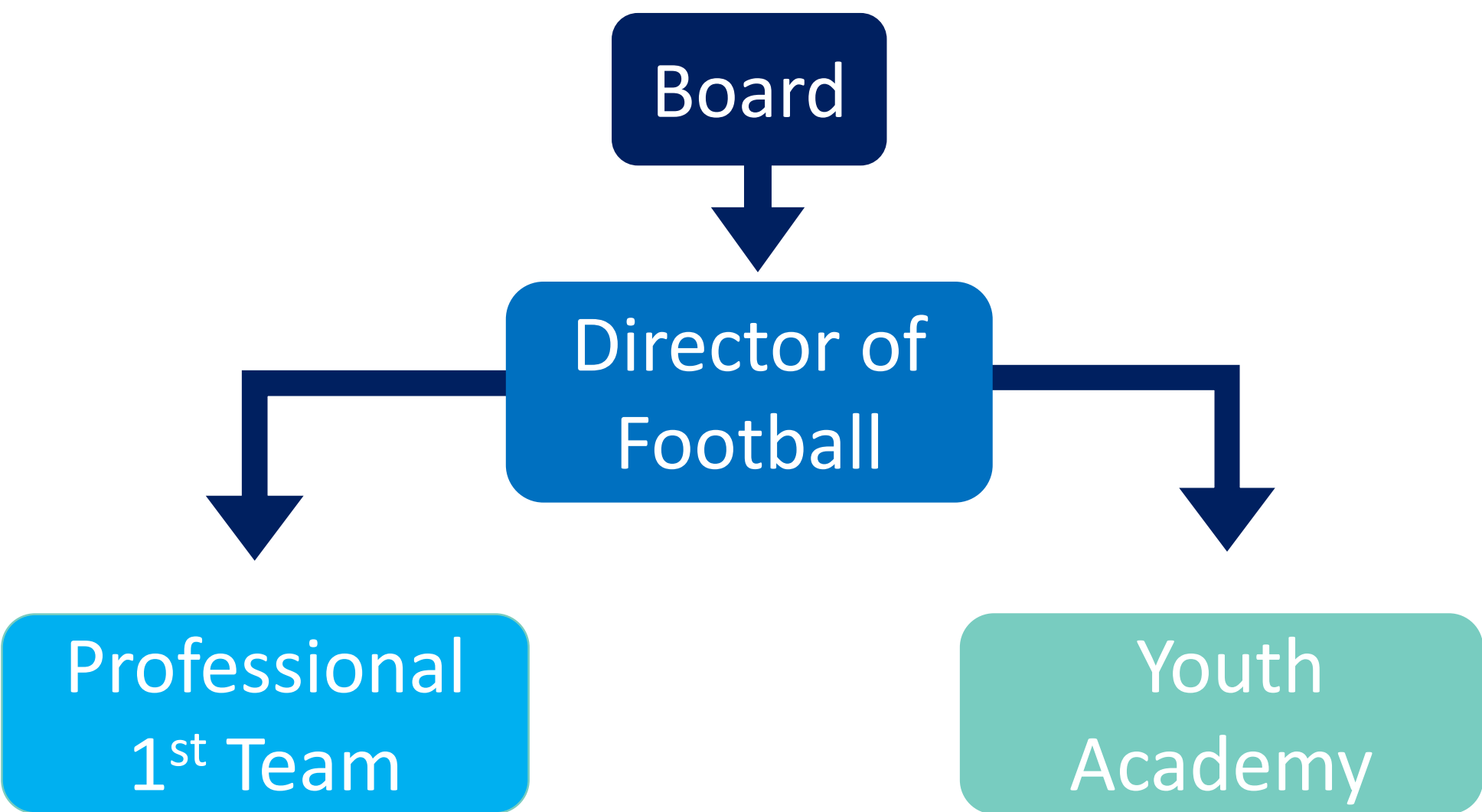
CULTURE, DEVELOPMENT MECHANISMS AND CHARACTERISTICS: BUILDING THE PROFILE OF THE OPTIMAL YOUTH FOOTBALL COACH

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RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION

- The Head Coach is a vital component of any football club as it encompasses vast and varied responsibilities including; (1) strategy (playing style and player organisation), (2) tactics, (3) talent nurturing, (4) hiring and firing of staff (players and coaches) and most importantly (5) teams results (wins / losses).
- Due to the impact a Head Coach has on a football club / organisation, acquiring the right person is critical to the success of the club as whole: a decision usually made by the clubs Director of Football (DoF).



- Social interaction and relationships lie at the heart of the coaching process. Coaches are no longer limited to developing and maintaining relationships between themselves and the players (coach-athlete relationship) but are instead exposed to connections within a much “wider web of complex cultural relations” all within the ever-changing and demanding culture
- However, relationships can be hostile and untrusting between all three key components of a professional football club which have been identified based on the critical relationships which exist and the structural hierarchy enforced; players, coaches and director of football.
- While each relationship significantly impacts a head coaches suitability for the role and thus their ability to successfully perform, research has yet to explore the concept of the optimal coach based on the perspectives of all three key components.
- Furthermore, building an understanding of the relationships between the head coach and key roles within the organisation / club based upon their shared perspectives of the optimal coach could help inform the currently neglected recruitment process which to date remains based on the ‘grapevine’.



RESEARCH QUESTION

Do relationships exist between any of the three different components of a football organisation, based on their views and opinions of the optimum coach?

Aim

To explore what constitutes the optimum football coach through the perceptions of players, coaches and the director of football.

Objectives

- To investigate how each component of a professional youth football organisation; (a) players, (b) coaches and, (c) director of football, identifies the optimal coach.
- To identify and examine the similarities and / or differences of what constitutes the optimal football coach based on the perceptions of the three components of a professional youth football organisation.

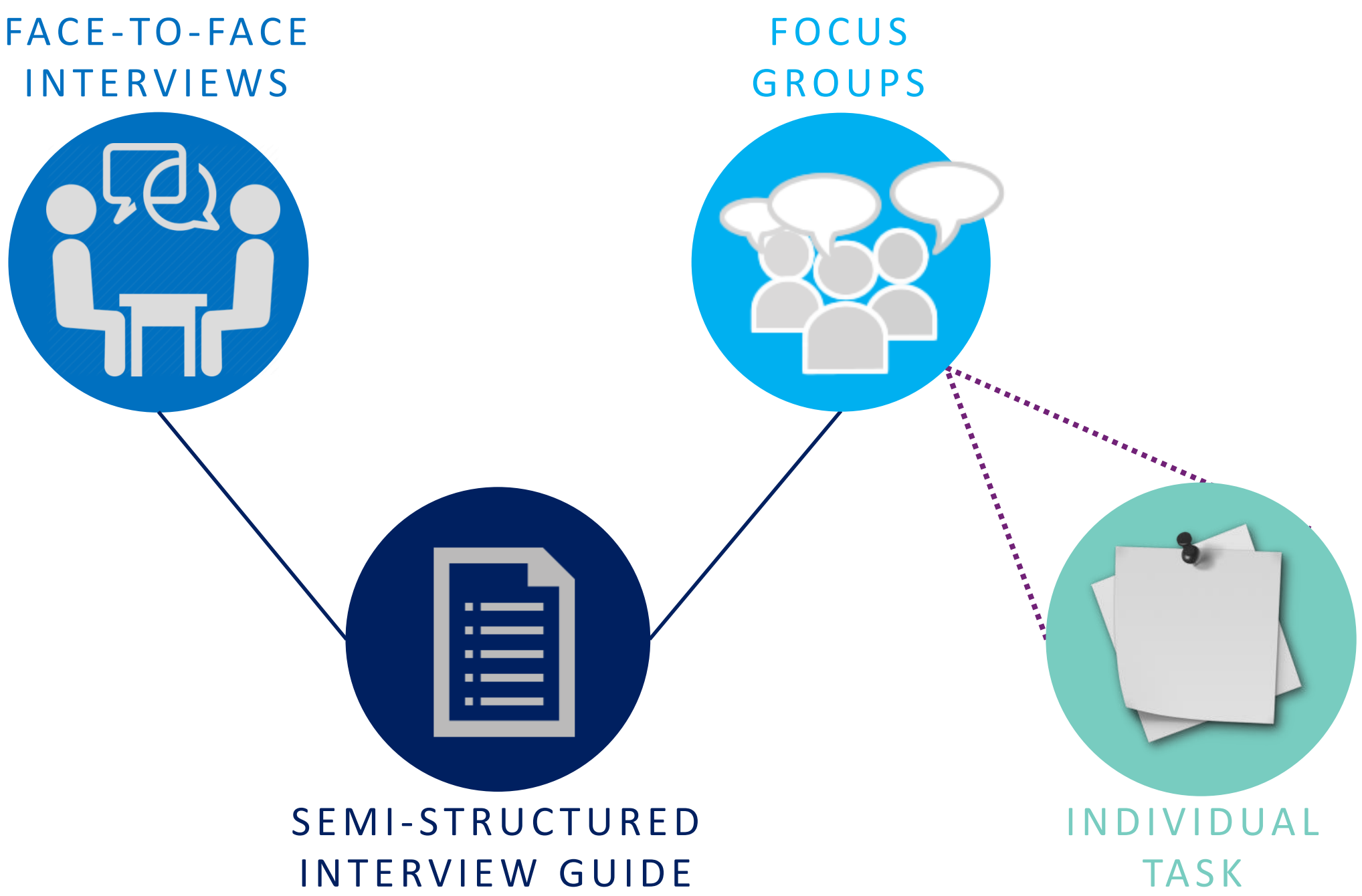
METHOD

Participants

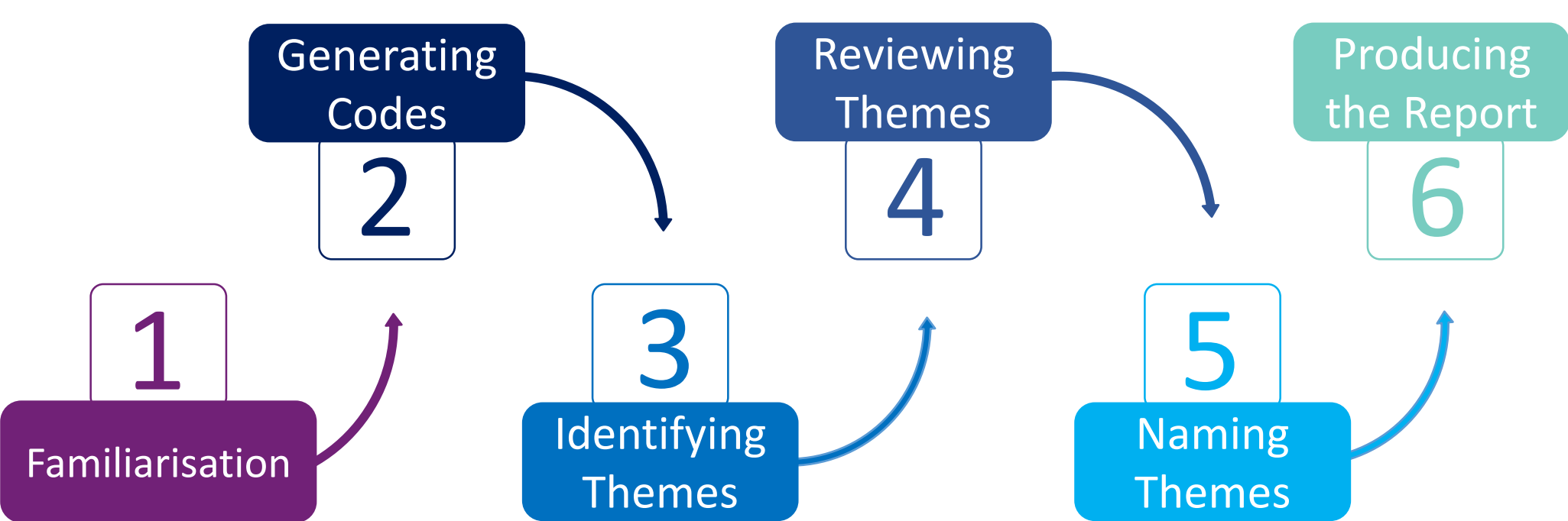
Purposeful Random Sampling was utilised to recruit all participants from within the same professional youth football organisation.



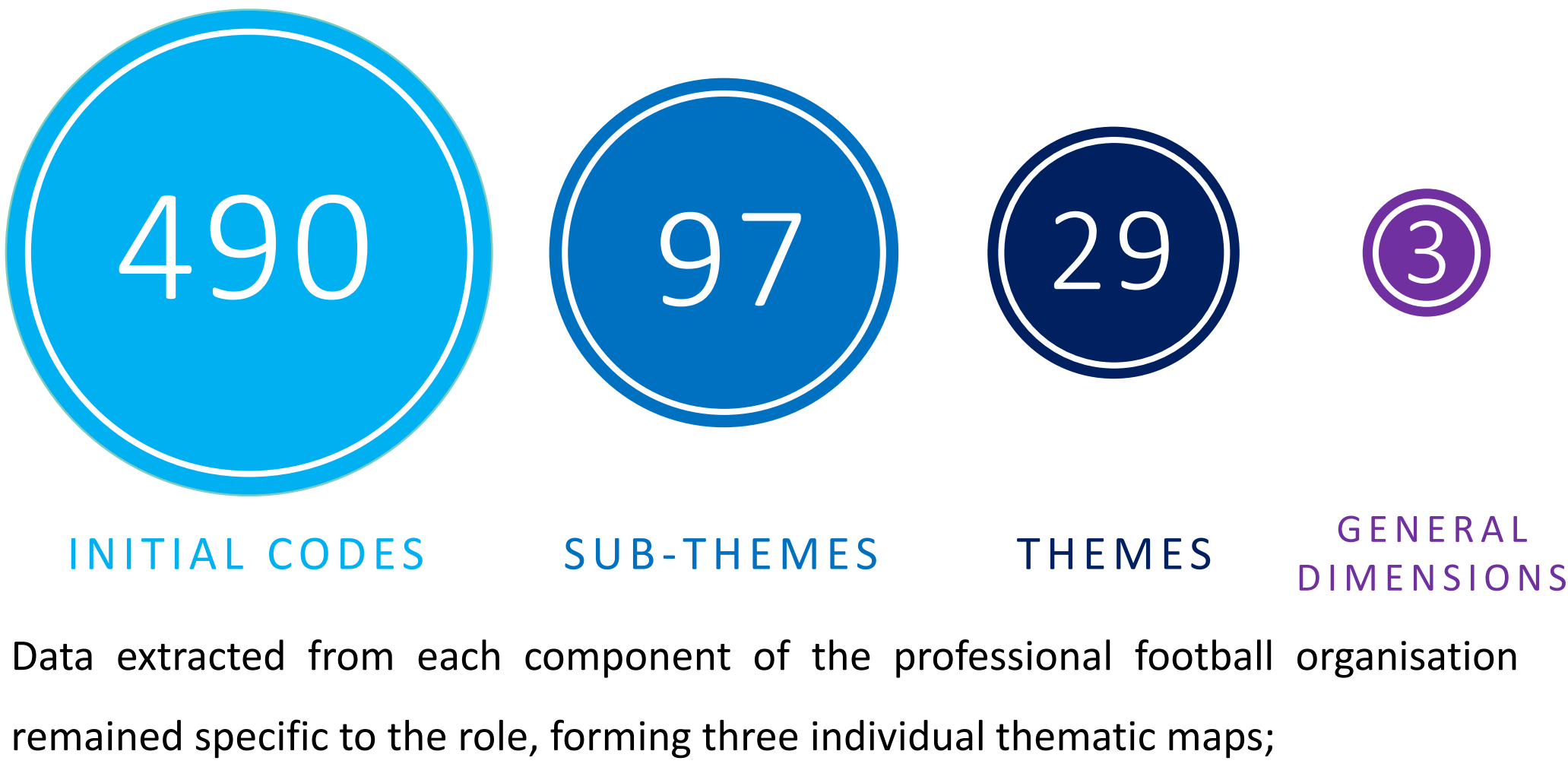
Data Collection



Data Analysis



RESULTS



Director of football

coach talent identification and selection
CULTURE valuing the person over the player
COACHES DEVELOPMENT MECHANISMS integration of coach within club philosophy
COACHES CHARACTERISTICS universal club philosophy
coaching context dependant
experiential learning
value & importance of communication
no blueprint for the optimum coach

Coaches

coach recruitment
essential **CULTURE** coaching experience is fundamental to quality
qualities of the optimum coach valuing the player as a person first
COACHES CHARACTERISTICS communication
integration of coach within club philosophy
continual experiential learning
COACH DEVELOPMENT MECHANISMS universal club philosophy
prerequisite playing formal coach education experience

Players

formal learning
experiential learning
valuing the player as a person
COACHES CHARACTERISTICS universal club philosophy
COACH DEVELOPMENT MECHANISMS importance & implementation of coaching styles
coaches roles & objectives within club philosophy
key coaches qualities

DISCUSSION

Three general dimensions emerged from the research:

COACHES DEVELOPMENT MECHANISMS: Majority of themes focused on skill acquisition of coaches exploring the popular forms of coach learning; formal, informal and experiential. While all three components of the club expressed a desire for the optimal coach to have obtained years of practical coaching (experiential learning), debate surrounding the importance of coaching qualifications (formal learning) emerged. In accordance with previous findings formal learning was considered necessary for displaying competency and availability for employment opposed to quality. Recruitment also emerged within the thematic maps of the coaches and DoF, in which the experiential learning was identified as the most desirable quality for the optimal coach to possess especially previous head coach experience as it ensures the coach has knowledge and understanding of the demands of the role.

CULTURE: The concept of creating a universal club philosophy developed from all three components of the club. Central to the creation of a high performance culture was 1) the inclusion of everyone and 2) the impact a head coaches individual philosophy and coaching styles played in developing and maintaining the environment. Inclusion of everyone was built upon ensuring people, regardless of role (players, coaches and DoF), were aware of what was expected of them (ownership of learning) and provided with a voice to have their say. As discussed, head coaches have the ability to influence the entire club and therefor results discovered that coaches should be employed who's personal philosophy and coaching styles are compatible with that of the club. All three components of the clubs proposed that without this compatibility the coach regardless of other qualities would be unable to become the optimal head coach for the specific club.

COACHES CHARACTERISTICS: In agreement with previous research on characteristics of successful coaches, the theme of communication was produced strongly by each component of the club to create and maintain essential positive relationships. Emotional control and the ability to value everyone as a person opposed to their role (player / coach / director of football) was also considered essential for the optimal coach. To gain the trust, respect and ‘buy-in’ from people the coach is expected to demonstrate that they care for them as a platform from which to build. Lastly, internal motivation was required as the optimal coach was profiled as a life- long learner, in order to remain at the forefront of their profession.