

## OpenLearn animation

*Broken Pipeline for Black Coaches in World Football*

### Narrator:

Sport is massive in Africa, the Caribbean and especially the African-Caribbean communities in the UK. Football is more than just a game, it's a religion, a way of life. It's a passion that starts at a young age and consumes entire communities. For many people, it has become a way out of poverty and a ticket to a better life. Think of Jay-Jay Okocha, Samuel Eto, Dwight Yorke, Marcus Rashford to name a few.

Meet Coach Ade, a former footballer turned coach, who has dedicated his life to the beautiful game. For him, football is not just a game, it's a tool for social and cultural change. However, there are societal structures that are hampering his progress as a coach in the UK. Although Black players account for 43% of all those playing in the Premier League and 34% of all EFL players (Szymanski, 2022). Yet, in England less than five per cent of professional football coaches in the top four divisions are Black.

I grew up playing football and was good enough to earn a very good living from being a professional footballer (by the time I retired the wages in the EFL was between £20,000 - 40,000 per week). While I was playing I was encouraged to attain my FA coaching badges and move into coaching.

Despite his success as a player, Ade has faced many challenges, including racism and discrimination when applying for coaching jobs in the professional leagues in Europe and UK. Ade till this date has applied to 27 professional clubs and hasn't even been asked back for an interview. Despite holding the highest FA coaching badge qualification (UEFA pro licence), it's very clear that racial discrimination and myths such as Black players cannot be successful leaders or coaches are holding him back (Duffey, 2018). As of the 2023-24 campaign, there have been a total of just 11 black managers in the history of the Premier League. ([Goal.2023](#))

It was tough, but I knew I had to keep pushing. I wanted to show the World that African coaches could succeed at the highest level as much as their White peers. Coaching is my way of giving back to my culture and community. I want to inspire the next generation of Black British African and Caribbean coaches and help them overcome the same challenges I faced.

His White peers are now head coaches in the top leagues in Europe and Ade has yet to secure an interview for any of the jobs he has applied for. Despite these setbacks Ade has been able

use some his financial resources and backing from friends and he has opened a youth academy in Togo. Ade's coaching philosophy goes beyond the pitch. He believes that football can be used as a tool for social change.

“Football is more than just a game. It teaches us discipline, teamwork, and perseverance. These are skills that can be applied to all aspects of life”

We are yet to know if Ade's coaching methods will be successful, although the big question is what would be seen as success?

For Ade, seeing his players succeed is the ultimate reward. However, because I have been hampered by institutional, societal and structural barriers, there has been a lack of opportunities to coach in the highest echelons of the game. For this cycle not to be repeated there has to be an institutional and structural change, so numerous and viable pathways will be accessible for Ade, and coaches from backgrounds just like his, to one day coach at a top professional academy or football club in the UK or Europe.