MOOC 2
Child-Centred Coaching & Physical Literacy

Introduction to MOOC 2 and Physical Literacy

INTRODUCTION TO MOOC 2

VIEW AND/OR READ

You can view this section on the online MOOC: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6O93_7rot7A&t= or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

Hi there Coach! It is great to see you again.

Welcome to MOOC 2 of the FREE iCoachKids e-learning suite! iCoachKids is co-funded by the Erasmus+ fund of the European Commission and led by Leeds Beckett University and the International Council for Coaching Excellence with another six partners.

Co-funded by the
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of the European Union

MOOC 1: Developing Effective Environments for Children in Sport

In MOOC 1 we took a detailed look at how to set up our coaching environment to guarantee positive experiences for children.

One of our most repeated catch phrases was **"Children Are Not Mini-Adults"**. Coaching kids using approaches and methods designed for adults is a guarantee for disaster!

Children Are Not Mini-Adults!

MOOC 2: Child-Centred Coaching and Physical Literacy

In **Child-Centred Coaching and Physical Literacy**, we are going to give you all the knowledge and tools you need to make sure your coaching meets the needs and wants of the children you coach.

Not only that, we will also explore the very popular idea of **Physical Literacy** and how coaches can promote its development. We will help you support children towards becoming motivated, confident, competent and knowledgeable lovers of sport and physical activity.

Physical Literacy = Knowledge + Motivation + Confidence + Competence

To do this we will cover the following topics:

Chapter 1
Motivation in Sport

This chapter will give you some great ideas to keep kids happy and to maximise their levels of enjoyment, commitment, effort and determination.

Chapter 2
Making Sport Inclusive

Here we will help you understand what inclusion really means in a sporting environment and offer some great tools to make it happen in your sessions.

Chapter 3
How Children Grow and Develop

Chapter 3 will give you all the knowledge you need to get your head around the different stages of development children go through. This way, you will be able to adapt and customise your sessions based on what they are able to do and what they need at different times.

Chapter 4
Motor Skill Development and Conditioning for Children

Finally, in Chapter 4, we will explore the key elements involved in making children confident, competent and safe movers. This chapter will also debunk some long-standing myths around the idea of strength and conditioning work with children.

There you have it. What do you think?

We hope you will enjoy the course and look forward to seeing you in the next section!

Until then: Keep Calm and Coach on!

MOOC 2 – Introduction – Understanding Physical Literacy

VIEW AND/OR READ

You can view this section on the online MOOC: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qe36fGLIHmU&t= or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

Hi again Coach!

As we have read in MOOC 1, good coaches coach sport, but great coaches coach people. These coaches also understand that the vast majority of children will not become international athletes, but they all have the potential to remain involved in sport and physical activity for life!

Good coaches coach sport, but great coaches coach people

These coaches create fantastic environments where children gain the motivation, confidence, competence, knowledge and understanding to stay involved in sport and physical activity for life. In other words, these coaches help children to become **Physically Literate**.

- **Motivation**
- **Confidence**
- **Competence**
- **Knowledge**
- **Understanding**

Physical Literacy

Physical Literacy is not a new concept, it dates back to the 1930's, but despite the earlier mentions of physical literacy in educational journals, Dr Margaret Whitehead is credited with popularizing Physical Literacy by developing the concept in the early 1990's.

Physical Literacy is an evolving and debated concept, and therefore multiple definitions have been created by different sectors and countries.

The most widely accepted definition of Physical Literacy is that of the International Physical Literacy Association, who define it as follows:

Physical literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life

Although the various definitions have differences between them most usually agree the Physical Literacy comprises of 3 elements:

1. **Affective** – Motivation and confidence
2. **Physical** – Physical competence
3. **Cognitive** – Knowledge and understanding

Physical literacy is not only about physical competence

Contrary to common perceptions, Physical Literacy is about much more than just becoming physically competent. In other words, a person may be physical competent, but if they lack the motivation, confidence, or knowledge and understanding it is possible that they may not remain physically active for life.

It is important to remember that, Physical Literacy is not a destination, but a lifelong journey. The physically literate child of today is not guaranteed to remain so in their adult years, hence the emphasis on personal responsibility.

Physical literacy is a lifelong journey

This journey is important, because research shows that active people live longer and healthier lives that lead to a whole range of individual and societal benefits.

All three elements, **Affective, Physical and Cognitive** are important and all are interconnected. How important they are, and how they interconnect varies across the lifespan. Understanding this is the focus of much of the current research in this field.

Coaching Implications

Okay, so what has all this got to do with coaching?

Well, in the past, sport and coaches have been accused of not making too much of a contribution to the development of Physical Literacy. There are two main reason for this:

Sport has been seen as focusing only on talented and gifted athletes and not caring much about the promotion of active lifestyles across the lifespan for all.

Sport has mostly been concerned with the development of sport-specific skills rather than a broad foundation of physical competencies, which support lifelong engagement.

Thankfully, over the last two decades, things have changed and the sport movement in many countries has started to take more responsibility for the promotion and provision of **Physical Literacy**.

In fact, sport is now considered to have great potential to support the development of new generations of physically literate individuals across the globe. To do this, especially with children, sport has to be delivered in a particular way.

To support Physical Literacy sport has to be delivered in a particular way

We could argue that the whole point of the iCoachKids programme is to give coaches the tools so they can deliver sport to children in a way that promotes and fosters **Physical Literacy**. The iCoachKids Pledge we described in MOOC 1 represents this paradigm shift, which reinforces and highlights the contribution coaches can make to Physical Literacy and to the well-being of every child in their sessions.

Coaching in this very holistic way, will impact on all 3 elements of **Physical Literacy**. By developing the whole child, by being Child-Centred, we can customise our delivery to the needs of the child.

Other examples include being inclusive and engaging parents positively to enhance the affective component as well as the physical competence.

You can find many more examples in the downloadable MOOC 2 Study Guides for the various chapters of this course.

Ok, so, as mentioned earlier, the rest of this MOOC will provide you with the knowledge and skills you need to bring **Physical Literacy** to life in your sessions.

Thank you again for engaging with MOOC 2. We hope you enjoy it and that it helps you become an even better coach!

Keep Calm and Coach On!

Study Guide Task

Complete a 250-word reflection on your personal experience of sport and whether you consider yourself physically literate and why?

Chapter 1
Introduction

VIEW AND/OR READ

You can view this section on the online MOOC or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

Welcome

Welcome to iCoachKids! We are very happy you have decided to join our growing family.

iCoachKids (iCK) is a not for profit initiative co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission which aims to support the development of a Specialist Children and Youth Coaching Workforce across the EU. The final objective is to make sure all children and youth sport participants have a positive experience led by suitably trained coaches leading to a lifelong love for sport and physical activity and healthier and happier lives.

iCK is led by Leeds Beckett University (UK) and the International Council for Coaching Excellence and brings together another six world-class organisations with a common desire to support youth coaches and a proven track record of doing so. These include Sport Ireland Coaching, the Hungarian Coaching Association, the Netherlands Olympic Committee, the European University of Madrid, Lithuanian Sport University and the Royal Belgian Football Association.

Why iCoachKids?

Sport is the most popular extracurricular activity for children. In Europe alone, millions of children play sport every day and they do so for multiple reasons. For most of them, it is just a fun and healthy activity they enjoy doing with friends and family. Some others, however, dream of emulating their sporting heroes and becoming the next Leo Messi or Serena Williams.

Whatever the reason for children to join a sports programme, coaches have a responsibility to safeguard the flame of “sport enjoyment” to ensure that children stay involved in Sport and Physical activity throughout their lives. Only a very select few will ever reach the

Olympics or play in a professional league. All children, however, should enjoy their sport experience and develop a love for sport and physical activity that will help them grow into healthy and active adults.

It is probably important to clarify that iCK focuses on coaching children between the ages of 5 and 12 years. However, it is our belief that a lot of the principles and ideas we are going to share with you apply to the coaching of older kids and indeed adults. So even if you coach older participants, we think you will benefit from doing this course.

What has iCoachKids done so far?

iCK has developed a website full of resources from all over the world to help children's coaches get access to all the information they need to create positive experiences for children in sport.

But there is more, as you know now, iCK has developed three FREE, Massive Open Online Courses or MOOCs to provide aspiring coaches and those already coaching with key concepts ideas and best practice when it comes to coaching children. The three courses deal with different topics:

MOOC 1 – Developing Effective Environments for Children in Sport
MOOC 2 – Child Centred Coaching
MOOC 3 – Coaching Children: Planning, Doing and Reviewing

This is **MOOC 1 – Developing Effective Environments for Children in Sport.** Creating the right environment lays the foundation to make sport a positive experience, and this is the most important job for children's coaches and club/school/community group officials.

Yes, that's right! It is not only about teaching sport techniques, tactics or incredible movement skills. Our top priority should be to create an environment that delivers sport to children in a way that meets their needs and desires. This online course, **iCoachKids MOOC 1 Developing Effective Sport Environments for Children**, will help you do just that by covering the following topics across 6 chapters:

Chapter 1: The role of the children's sport coach
Chapter 2: What is a coaching philosophy and why it is beneficial to be clear about yours
Chapter 3: How to create a suitable vision for your team or your club
Chapter 4: What sport means for children and what it can do for their personal development

Chapter 5: What are the ingredients of a positive sport environment
Chapter 6: How to safeguard and protect children and young people in sport

Each of these topics will be treated in a comprehensive yet practical way. The materials and videos will provide tried and tested theories in these areas as well as sharing practical tips you can start using straight away with the children you coach:

THEORY + PRACTICE = LEARNING

You will also hear/read stories from real coaches, children and parents and be able to connect the content of the course to your own coaching reality and practice. This will be achieved through the provision of regular opportunities to reflect on what has been taught and through the completion of small pieces of work grounded on the application of the theory to your actual practice to help you join the dots.

It is important that you reflect on what the contents of the MOOC mean for you in your environment, with the children you coach, and complete the coursework. Research shows that reflection and practical application of the knowledge given on any course leads to higher retention of information and increased skills in the field.

Here is our promise to you:

Anything we ask you to do in this course is part of being a coach, not 'homework', but things that great coaches do regularly as part of their day to day coaching.

At the end of each Chapter, there will also be a Quiz to help you make sure you have retained the relevant ideas and principles.We hope you enjoy the course and that it helps you continue to grow as a sports coach so you can make an even greater difference to the children you coach.

All the best from the iCK Team!

PRE-CHAPTER ACTIVITY

Let's start by understanding why children do sport and why they drop out. Please complete the following interactive activity.

ACTIVITY 0.1 – STUDY GUIDE TASK: Why children do sport and drop out

Spend a few minutes thinking about these (even taking account of your own likes/dislikes when you did/do sport). Then rank your Top 5 reasons that children do sport and drop out from the 10 options on the lists below:

Why children do sport	Your top 5	Why do children drop out	Your top 5
1. Win at all costs		1. When they don't feel confident and competent	
2. Fun and enjoyment		2. They are much better than the others	
3. Empress the coach		3. When the main focus is on winning	
4. Become a high performer		4. When coaches have favourites	
5. Feeling competent		5. Never in the newspaper	
6. Learning new skills		6. Training times don't suit	
7. Being with friends		7. When parents and coaches are pushy	
8. Get their name in the paper		8. The season is too long	
9. Cheered by spectators / supporters		9. When it becomes too serious	
10. Attitude of parents		10. Get beaten too many times	

Now read Chapter 1, Section 1. Part 1 examines why children do sport. Part 2 looks at why they drop out. After finishing each Part, review this task and your ranking for each. What do you notice? Reflect on your own likes/dislikes – are these included in what was highlighted for children?

Chapter 1, Section 1, Part 1
Why children join and stay in sport

VIEW AND/OR READ

You can view this section on the online MOOC or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

In part 1 of this section we are going to explore the reasons why children join and stay in sport. In this way, you will be able to develop your own strategies to attract kids to your sessions and keep them there.

In 2013, Professor Richard Bailey and colleagues conducted a review[1] of all the available evidence about the reasons why children join and stay in sport sessions and clubs and why they drop out. What they found may surprise you.

They found that children's participation in sport depended on five primary factors:

1. Fun and enjoyment
2. Feeling competent
3. Learning new skills
4. Being with friends
5. Attitude of parents

1. Fun and enjoyment

First, fun and enjoyment are, without question, the most important factors when it comes to sustaining participation in sport. Children have a natural attraction to PLAY. They love playing and sport is, of course, a form of play. Now, answer this question coach? Do you want to be a fun maker or a fun killer?

[1] Bailey, R., Cope, E. J., & Pearce, G. (2013). Why do children take part in, and remain involved in sport? A literature review and discussion of implications for sports coaches. *International Journal of Coaching Science*, *7*(1), 56-75.

Some simple FUN MAKERS include playing good old playground games, giving drills and games funny names, using stories and narratives around the activities and running mini competitions. All this can really contribute to livening up your sessions.

By contrast, FUN KILLERS in sport are things like coaches talking too long, players waiting for ever in lines between turns or having to repeat the skill or drill till it gets really boring.

2. Feeling competent

The second important element that helps keep children in sport is when they feel competent. Basically, children need to feel that they can do what's required of them during sessions and that they can cope with whatever is thrown at them. The main thing is to make sure that you set the activities and tasks at the right level. If you are constantly asking them to do things they are not ready for yet, they will get frustrated, fearful and even bored. From here to dropping out there is only one short step!

3. Learning new skills

Third on the list is learning new skills: children love learning new things. Have you ever seen them playing videogames and how excited they get when they master a new move or go to the next stage of the game? Videogame designers are very good at setting up progressive challenges and 'hooking' kids with learning and rewards. Coaches should do the same and find ways to show the kids that they are getting better and reward them for it. That´s how you make the learning and improvement visible.

4. Being with friends

The fourth point is about being with friends. This is a no brainer! Children come to sport to either be with their friends, or to make new friends. So, as a coach, please be flexible. Sometimes they may be chatty or a bit distracted but let them interact with each other and build those friendships. It's not the Olympics or the World Cup! Also, give them a chance to make new friends by making sure they get to work with different partners in drills and games.

5. Attitude of parents/guardians

The final point on the list, but by no means less important, is the attitudes of parents/guardians. They are obviously important for their kids, but perhaps, sometimes we don't realise how much! For instance, parents/guardians who are themselves involved in sport are more likely to have their children involved in sport for longer. But also, children of parents/guardians with positive attitudes in sport, like good sportsmanship or unconditional love regardless of success, tend to stay in sport for longer too.

ACTIVITY 1.1 - STUDY GUIDE TASK – What you can do to keep children in sport

We have highlighted a few tools and ideas to help children stay in sport. Please consider how you may include a number of them with the children you coach and make a list of what you will try.

Tool/idea to encourage children to stay in sport	How to include them with the children you coach
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Chapter 1, Section 1, Part 2
Why do children dropout of sport?

VIEW AND/OR READ

You can view this section on the online MOOC or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

In part 1 of this section, we looked at the top 5 reasons why children join and stay in sport. Here, we are going to look at the opposite, the things that put them off.

Well, some of these may surprise you too. Children drop out of sport for 5 main reasons:

1. When they don't feel confident and competent
2. When it becomes too serious
3. When the main focus is on winning
4. When coaches have favourites
5. When parents and coaches are pushy

1. When they don't feel confident and competent

First, when children don't feel confident and competent they are at a higher risk of dropping out. If the activities we do with the kids don't give them sufficient levels of confidence and competence, we are going to struggle to keep them engaged and happy. From that point to dropping out there is only a very small step!

2. When it becomes too serious

Second, children say that when sport becomes too serious, they don't like it. This is another reminder that sport belongs to the children and that PLAYING is their main motivation. Pep Guardiola, the legendary football coach, says that young children should do three things PLAY,

PLAY and PLAY. So, coaches should make the most of the children's desire to play.

3. When the main focus is on winning

The third reason why children drop out is an excessive focus on WINNING: it is not that children don't care about winning, but study after study shows that it is not the most important thing for them. Adults who are fixated with keeping score and the win-loss record are actually doing children a disservice and increasing their chances of dropping out!

4. When coaches have favourites

Fourth on the list, children don't like it when coaches have favourites – every child deserves our full attention. No matter how skilful or gifted, coaches must ensure that all children feel valued. Coaches, please, make sure to learn every child's name and say hello when they come in, and please, please, please give every child a little bit of your time in every session.

5. When Parents/Guardians and coaches are pushy

Finally, the last major dropout factor identified by children is, Pushy Parents / Guardians and Coaches. Forcing children to train more than they want is a big NO, NO. Stopping them from doing other things they like, such as spending time with friends, watching TV or doing homework has a big impact on dropout rates. Even for children who move into the performance pathway, we should be careful not to expect too much too early.

ACTIVITY 1.2 - STUDY GUIDE TASK – What you can do to stop children dropping out of sport

We have highlighted some areas that don't encourage children to stay in sport. Please identify if any of them occur with the children you coach. Make a list and indicate how you may address them.

Areas that don't encourage children to stay	How to address them with the children you coach
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Summary

So, to summarise, positive sport experiences for children are not about winning or becoming a pro. Those are things that some adults value and want from sport, but children want to have fun, feel competent, learn something, be with friends and share something with their parents/guardians. And they don't like it when it is too serious, when winning is the most important thing, when coaches have favourites and when parents/guardians and coaches push them too hard.

It is that simple! We have to be very careful not to suck the enjoyment right out of sport. Our attitudes influence what they make out of it: if we value winning they will fixate on that; if we value learning, friendships and enjoyment, they will too… Just remember:

CHILDREN ARE NOT MINI ADULTS!

FURTHER VIEWING/READING

Watch the on-line video to hear some views of children.

In addition, you could have a look at these resources:

Parents: Let's Talk about your child in sport. A video on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZqgo-Y2Yxs

10 Reasons why children play sport
(from UK Sports Psychology website – BelievePerform):
https://believeperform.com/infographic/10-reasons-why-children-play-sport/

Why Play Sports? A video on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7g03W6k7q8

ACTIVITY 1.3 - PERSONAL COACHING TASK/COACHING WITH OTHERS – Listening to the children you coach (Mini-Focus Group and/or Questionnaire)

Introduction

Conduct Mini-Focus Groups or use a questionnaire. The following describes a Focus Group and the next page outlines a questionnaire (the questions on this can be used in the focus group).

Mini-Focus Group

You are asked to record with a mobile phone an informal mini-focus group workshop with some of the children you coach asking them why they do sport and what they dislike. Permission from parents has to be sought. Then review the video a number of times and identify the key threads that come up in the discussion.

Or

Conduct a mini-focus group with the children and keep notes of the discussion points each group.

Then, consider how you will provide more of what they like; and how you will address the dislikes. Please conduct Mini-Focus Groups or use a questionnaire. The following describes a Focus Group and the next page outlines a questionnaire (the questions on this can be used in the focus group).

Focus Group: Outcome

Bring the key threads back to the children and ask if they are accurate. Also present what you propose to do to encourage their continued involvement; and how you will address the dislikes.

A mini-focus group could also be held with parents

Post-Focus Group: Action

Include the outcomes of the focus group in the coaching sessions you do with the children. Also adapt your coaching to accommodate any changes identified for you as the coach.

Post-Action: Reflection

Consider the Impact of what you have Included so that you grow as a coach.

ACTIVITY 1.4 - iCoachKids REQUEST – #TheVoiceof ChildrenInSport

You are asked to record with their mobile phones an informal mini-focus group workshop with some of the children they coach asking them why they do sport and what they dislike. Permission from parents has to be sought and videos could be posted on Twitter account with #TheVoiceOfChildrenInSport and @iCoachKidsEU tagged.

Coaching with Others - Questionnaire/Questions:

The following is an example of a questionnaire or questions that could be put to children and parents as part of Activities 1.3 and 1.4. It is from Sport Ireland Coaching Children Factsheet 1. https://www.sportireland.ie/Coaching-Ireland/Coaching-Children/Coaching-Children-Factsheet-1.pdf

LET'S GET REAL TASK 1 – WHY DO THEY COME?

"Questions wake us up. They prompt new ideas. They show us new place and new ways of doing things." – Michael Marquardt

This task is designed to help you gather the views of the children you coach and their families with regards to their motives for coming to your sessions. It will give you information about what they like most about your coaching and your club and where they think improvements could be made.

Hand this questionnaire out to a few parents and get them to fill it in with their child.

Parent's Questions:

1. Why do you bring your child to our sessions/club?
2. What do you think your children get from taking part?
3. What do you like most about our sessions and our club?
4. Is there anything you would like to see more or less of?

Children's Questions:

1. Do you like doing sport? If so why/why not?

2. What do you like most about your coach?
3. What would you like your coach to do more/less of?

Chapter 1, Section 2

Children Sport - Reality Check

VIEW AND/OR READ

You can view this section on the online MOOC or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

What is the main purpose of a children's coach?

For many, it is about creating and delivering positive and inspirational experiences that will make children fall in love with sport for life. For many others, however, coaching is about trying to develop the next Ronaldo or Simone Biles or about progressing through the ranks to become a professional coach. None of these goals are better than the others. However, in how we go about achieving them, it is important that we are aware of some key facts:

- For example, in England, there are 12,500 players in the professional football academy system, but only 0.5% of those in the system from 9 years of age have a chance to play for the first team. The odds are very low!! And even lower for kids outside the academy system.
- Another example, in the USA, in basketball, only about 3% of high school players gain a scholarship to play college basketball (NCAA) and of those only about 1% end up playing professional basketball. Again, the odds are very low!

What are we trying to say? Well, as coaches working with 5 to 12 year olds, we have to be aware that we will be very lucky to see one of our athletes go to the Olympics or play professional sport. For the vast majority of the kids we coach, we hope that sport will become a significant part of their lifestyle and leisure time. The reality is though, that between the ages of 5 and 12, whether a child looks like they could become a great athlete or not should not really change the way we go about coaching them.

WE MUST COACH THE CHILD,
NOT THE SPORT OR THE CHAMPION.

There is no point in imposing ‘adult-like’ training programmes and expectations on children.

REMEMBER: CHILDREN ARE NOT MINI-ADULTS.

Treating children, talented or not, like Olympians or wannabe professionals may likely lead to negative experiences and dropout. And yet, some kids will want to train more and will be very clear about becoming top athletes. Yet we have to treat them with caution and help them make the right choices, so they do not burnout or miss out on important developmental steps. For every Tiger Woods or Williams Sisters, there are many broken and forgotten ‘child prodigies’ that never made it.

The sport participation map proposed by the European Sport Coaching Framework helps us put all this into context. As coaches of young participants, we are in charge of providing a fantastic introduction to sport to all children. Some of them may progress towards the performance pathway as emerging athletes, but the vast majority will hopefully progress to becoming adolescent sport participants who enjoy playing sport with their friends and become active and healthy adults. If you are working with emerging athletes, your final goals may be slightly different, yet you have to consider that they are still children and not mini-adults. Very few of them will become high performance athletes.

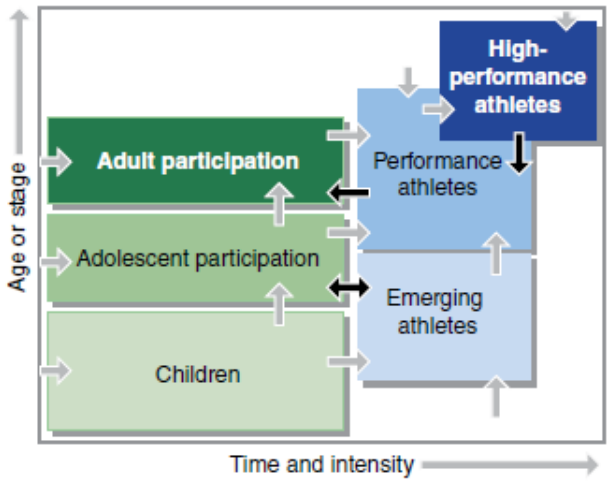


Figure 1.1 - The sport participation map. Reproduced from the International Sport Coaching Framework (ICCE, ASOIF & LBU, 2013)

The Coach Decision Making Model

Another model that helps us understand the implications of working with children is the Coach Decision Making model proposed by Andy Abraham and his colleagues at Leeds Beckett University. We will come back to this model regularly during the three MOOCs.

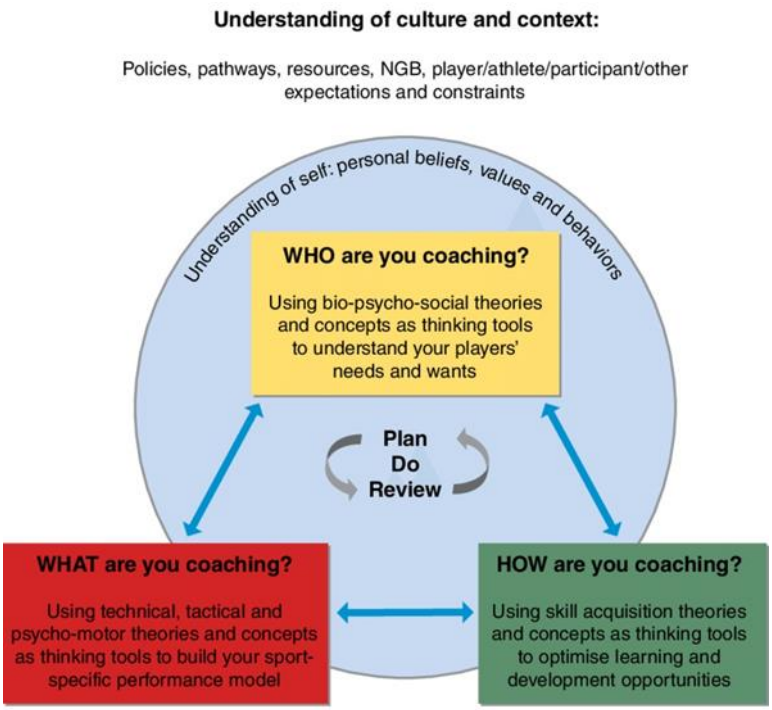


Figure 1.2 - The Coach Decision-Making Model. Adapted from Abraham et al. (2015) and reproduced from European Sport Coaching Framework (Lara-Bercial et al., 2017)

Context

The model highlights that the first thing coaches should be aware of is the key characteristics of the context in which they work because these will have an impact on their practice. These may include:

- The vision, mission and philosophy of the club/school/community group
- The club/school/community group's resources
- The expectations of children and parents
- Any policies or directives from the sport's national governing body

All of these will impact on coaching because they set the parameters of our work as coaches. For instance, if the club/school/community group has an inclusive ethos, as a coach I have to respect that and be inclusive rather than selective. Another example, if the national governing body prohibits certain types of defence up to a certain age, I have to stick to these rules. We don't coach in a vacuum or cocoon, but within a particular social context and we must become familiar with its characteristics.

Self-Awareness

Next, the Coach Decision Making model, proposes that coaches need to be self-aware about their values, beliefs and behaviours. This cannot be underestimated, and we will devote a full chapter in this MOOC (Chapter 2) to this very important area. For now, it is important that you know that more and more research shows that self-aware coaches

enjoy coaching more, have better relationships with the people they coach, learn faster and tend to have better results in the long term.

Being self-aware pays off! One of the key benefits of self-awareness is that it allows us to ensure there is positive alignment between the philosophy and values of the club/school/community group we coach in, all the people in it and our own values and beliefs. If these are misaligned, the potential for things to go wrong is much higher. Self-awareness also helps coaches keep a check on their own practices and behaviours and to see if these match their own and the club/school/community group's values and beliefs and to take corrective action if needed.

Who, What, How?

Abraham's model then asks three questions that every coach should consider in order to facilitate decision-making, planning and to make sure practice is effective:

1. WHO are you coaching?
2. WHAT are you coaching?
3. HOW are you coaching?

WHO are you coaching?

In answering the WHO question, coaches need to consider theories and knowledge related to the biology, psychology and sociology of the human being as thinking tools to understand the participants' needs and wants. In other words, the biology, psychology and sociology of children are completely different to adults. Remember CHILDREN ARE NOT MINI-ADULTS and therefore what they want and what they need from sport is totally different.

REMOVE THE ADULT GLASSES AND SEE THE WORLD THROUGH THE KIDS' EYES.

MOOC 2 will consider the WHO question in great detail. Now let's move on to the WHAT.

WHAT are you coaching?

To answer the WHAT question, coaches need to take into account technical, tactical and motor development theories and knowledge and use them as thinking tools to build a general or sport specific programme. Put simply, answering the WHAT question is about deciding what curriculum or syllabus we want children to learn during our sessions and seasons. This is hugely important as it provides the final destination and should help coaches stay focused and on track and not get distracted by things like winning at an early age at the expense of long-term development.

MOOC 2 will also answer the WHAT question in full depth. Let's move on to the HOW.

HOW are you coaching?

In finding an answer to the HOW question, coaches have to consider ideas and knowledge in relation to how children learn. This is also known as 'skill acquisition' and includes theories that allow us to maximise learning and development. In a nutshell, this is about understanding that there are different 'coaching techniques, coaching methods or pedagogies' that have different effects on children and that can be useful depending of the type of skill being learned and the child's stage of development.

MOOC 3 will cover these theories and strategies and provide you with clear guidance as to when to use the different methods available.

Coaching Programme - The Plan, Do, Review Cycle

The final piece of the Coach Decision-Making model relates to the idea that once we have understood the context in which we coach, our own personal beliefs and answered the WHO, WHAT and HOW question, we are in possession of all the information we need to actually sit down and plan our coaching programme. From there, a continuous cycle of planning, doing and reviewing becomes part of our day to day.

MOO3 will also help you get more comfortable with this very important area of coaching.

With all these ideas fresh in your head, please move on to the next activity where you will be asked to case study your own coaching context. Enjoy!

ACTIVITY 2.1 - PERSONAL COACHING TASK – Case Study your own club/school/community group

Key elements that need to be in the case study:

Context:

- Describe the main goals of your club/school/community group, Its raison d'être
- Describe the level of resources available to your club/school/community group

- Describe the institutional context (at local or national level)

Self-Awareness:

- Outline what you think Is your role as a coach and what values and beliefs you bring to your coaching

Who, What, How:

- WHO – List the age, number and characteristics of the children you coach
- WHAT – In key words, what are you trying to achieve/coach; where are these kids going after they finish with you this year/in the future
- HOW – what kind of activities and teaching strategies have you been using to achieve your goals

Coaching Programme:

- Around the "what" and the "how", identify the duration of the season; the frequency of coaching sessions; and the number of events/games. Knowing what you know now, reflect on how well is your context providing for children; and what are the key areas for improvement?

ACTIVITY 2.2 - COACHING WITH OTHERS –

1. The other coaches that work with the children you coach and consider their inputs and any implications for you, the coaching group and the club/school/community group.

AND / OR

2. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation so that you can clearly outline the main sections and points of the case study

Chapter 1, Section 3

The iCoachKids PLEDGE - 10 Golden Rules for Coaching Children

VIEW AND/OR READ

You can view this section on the online MOOC or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

We now have a very good idea of the role of the children's coach and the key elements we need to consider when developing sport programmes for children.

Over the course of the three MOOCs we will go into a lot more detail in all these areas. But right now, we want to share with you a little summary that we are sure will help you stay on track.

We have called it **THE ICOACHKIDS PLEDGE** and we would like coaches and sport clubs all over the world to commit to it.

The Pledge contains 10 Golden Rules that will help to guarantee that sport is a positive experience for all involved, especially for each and every child.

Rule Number 1: Be CHILD-CENTRED

Always have the best interest of children at heart and listen to them. It is about what children want and what they need, not about the parents or the coaches!

Make sure to take the adult 'glasses' off and try to see the sport through the eyes of the child. It looks a lot different from where they sit. So, why not ask the kids some questions? For example: Why do they come to your sessions? What do they like/dislike? What other experiences of sport have they had?

Rule Number 2: Be HOLISTIC

Try to see and develop children in your sessions as *people first and foremost, not only as participants*. For example, try to develop their psychosocial capabilities (for example, how they feel about themselves, confidence, mixing with others) and not just their physical ones. To do this, use activities that engage children at more than just the physical level, make the most of teachable moments and challenge them to think as well as to move.

Rule Number 3: Be INCLUSIVE

Be prepared to cater for all levels of abilities and motivations. Coaching is not a one-size-fits-all. *Pay attention to every child, not only "the good ones".* Get to know the kids you coach and dare to coach them differently. Make sure you remove all barriers to participation, so every child feels welcome and included regardless of their background, motivation, ability and previous experience.

Rule Number 4: Make it FUN and SAFE

Children want to learn and to have fun doing it. And they also want to feel safe. As a coach, you must create enjoyable and caring climates – an atmosphere that allow children to thrive and that keeps them coming back. *Go out of your way to build great relationships.* Spend time on it. Nothing else matters until you achieve this.

So, what about FUN? Well, it sounds counterintuitive, *but don't let learning get in the way of fun.* Include activities that are fun to do and which also include learning. Bear in mind that when you, the coach have fun, so will the children. Go on coach, let your hair down!

Rule Number 5: Prioritise the LOVE for sport above LEARNING sport

As we already know, only a small proportion of kids want to be elite athletes, and of those who do, even a smaller number will actually do so. Yet, all of them have the potential to become healthy active adults. Creating that fantastic legacy is part of your job.

Make sure children *want to come back next week* for more. Make it fun, make it enjoyable, make it varied and novel, make sure they are learning, make it a social experience. Get them hooked!

Rule Number 6: Focus on FOUNDATIONAL skills

During childhood, coaches should not worry too much about the specific skills of their sport. At a young age, kids need to *gain essential fundamental movement and motor skills*. They also need to learn the basics of how to play games using *generic tactical principles*. This focus on foundational skill leads to lifelong participation as well as higher levels of performance.

And yes, if you are coaching a specific sport, your sessions will have a distinct sport-specific flavour. But *the main ingredients should be foundational*. As children grow and develop, you can then introduce more complex movement and sport skills and tactics.

Rule Number 7: Engage PARENTS positively

Parents/guardians are not the enemy, but the biggest resource at the coach's disposal. They want the best for their kids and so do you. *Partnership is the key word.* But you will never know what parents/guardians can offer if you don't talk to them. We have to open and maintain regular lines of communication with the parents/guardians.

And yes, parents/guardians can sometimes be overzealous, and do or say things they should not. However, as a coach, it is also your responsibility to help them understand the best ways they can help their kids make the most out of sport. The role of the coach as an educator cannot be overestimated.

Rule Number 8 - Plan PROGRESSIVE programmes

Remember coach, you are taking kids on a learning journey. Coaching children should not be about 'peaking-by-Saturday' to win a game, but more about reaching *long-term holistic goals*. This can only be achieved when we have a good plan in place. But this plan must be developmentally appropriate. What does that mean? It means the plan needs to take into account the *children's age and stage of development* and the best ways to help them progress. Remember *Children are not Mini-Adults! You have to make the game fit the kids, not the other way around.*

Rule Number 9 - Use different methods to ENHANCE LEARNING

It is vital that coaches understand that *learning is a complex process and it doesn't happen overnight.* Here is the thing - there is not one

single best way to coach. Different coaching strategies are better suited for different stages of learning and have different effects on the learner.

Repetition, skill circuits, grid drills, games-based learning (which will be covered in MOOC 3), all have a time and a place. It is not an 'either or' situation. The art of coaching is to know when a child or a group needs to be exposed to one type of practice or another. The goal is to maximise their chances of learning and retaining a skill or concept.

Rule Number 10 - Use COMPETITION in a developmental way

Let's be clear, we don't think competition is the devil! *Competition is neither good nor bad by itself. It all depends on how it is organised, presented and managed.* When done properly, competition is an amazing motivator and a lot of fun. Competition can also teach children a lot of good skills and attitudes like fairness, sportsmanship, respect, teamwork. We just have to make sure that the format and the atmosphere around competition is appropriate for the kids. Competitions that replicate the adult version of the game are bound to be an epic fail!

Summary

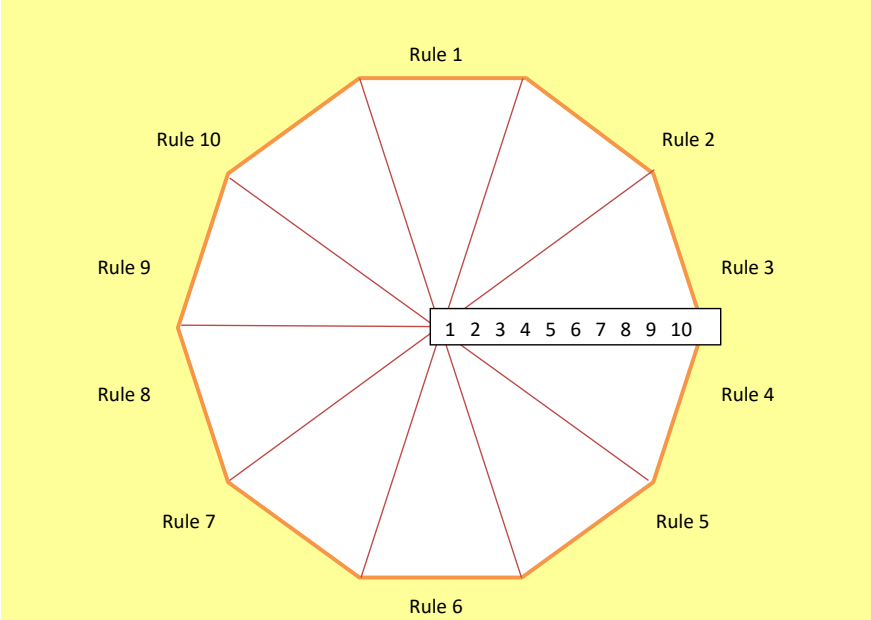
So, how does this sound as a recipe for positive sport experiences?

The main ingredient for the coach is understanding that our job is to take children on a journey over time to become whatever they want to be.

As coaches working with children, we must be very clear that we are their guide on a journey of learning, discovery and enjoyment. But, the destination is ultimately up to them. Let's not forget that!

ACTIVITY 3.1 - PERSONAL COACHING TASK – Self-Assessment - My Coaching Wheel

- Using the template provided rate yourself on the 10 items of the pledge – 1 lowest, 10 highest – from the hub of the wheel out.
- Pick one area at a time, starting where you feel you have most potential to improve and that will make the biggest difference to the children you coach and explain why you rated yourself the way you did and what you plan to do to do better going forward
- Repeat for each of the other 9 areas



Rule No.	Rating	Why Do You Think This Area Can Be Improved?	I will do… to do better going forward
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

9			
10			

ACTIVITY 3.2 - COACHING IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Bring the iCoachKids Pledge to the coaching committee and/or the executive committee of your club/school/community group. Get them to discuss and rate the club against the Coaching Wheel

Use the worksheet for the club to consider what actions in could take to become more child-centred.

FURTHER VIEWING/READING

- Coaching Children - What does great children's coaching look like? A video on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPkXJOdIIt0

Chapter 1, Section 4

On Being a Coach - What Coaches Really Do

VIEW AND/OR READ

You can view this section on the online MOOC or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

In section 2, we have looked at the role of the children's coach from the perspective of what children need and want. We have also seen in section3, how we have to go about coaching to make sure that we are truly child-centred.

In this section we are going to dig deeper into the day to day activities of the children's coach. And to do this, we are going to use the 6 primary functions of the coach from the **European Sport Coaching Framework** developed by the International Council of Coaching Excellence (ICCE).

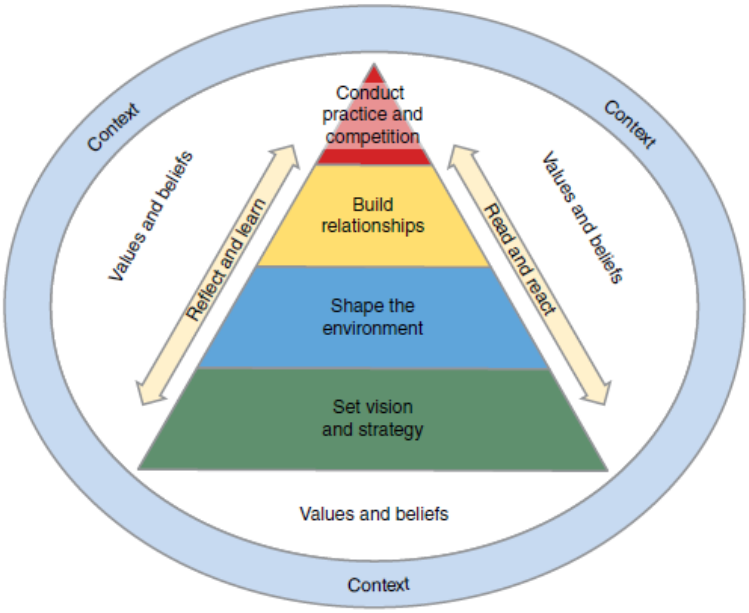


Figure 1.3 - The 6 Primary Functions of The Coach – Reproduced from European Sport Coaching Framework (Lara-Bercial et al., 2017)

Coaches do much more than putting out cones and running drills. This is literally the tip of the iceberg. Coaching involves a lot more than that.

The 6 Primary Functions essentially tell us what the daily work of the coach is.

1. Vision and Strategy

First, coaches must set the Vision and Strategy for the children they coach and their clubs. Before we think about standing in front of a bunch of children, a children's coach has to create a vision and a strategy based on their needs and stage of development and the context of the programme. For this, it is useful to consult with the parents and the children themselves to make sure that everyone is on the same page and has similar expectations.

As a children's coach, this may be as simple or as complex as you want to make it, but you have to start here so that you are clear about what it is that you are trying to achieve with the kids you coach. Even the shortest journey needs a destination!

Once the vision and strategy are in place, the coach can develop a specific plan outlining the steps required to bring the strategy to life and therefore realise the vision.

We cover this in MOOC 1 and in even greater detail in MOOC 3.

2. Shaping the Environment

Second, coaches spend time shaping the Environment. When working with children, the coach has to ensure the environment in which the programme occurs is the best it can be, including Personnel, facilities, resources and even policies. This may sound like overkill, but we cannot expect to achieve our goals in an environment that is not good enough.

3. Build Relationships

Third, coaches must make an effort to Build Relationships. A fundamental part of the job of the children's coach is to build positive and effective relationships with them and their parents/guardians. But not only that, the coach has to influence the context surrounding the children creating respectful and effective working relationships with everyone else at the club.

4. Conducting Practices and Preparing and Managing Competitions

Now and only now, coaches can think about the fourth function, Conducting Practices and Preparing and Managing Competitions. A major part of what coaches do is to organise suitable and challenging practices to promote learning and improvement. And in some cases, the coach will also have to prepare for competitions and of course oversee and manage the children in these competitions.

5. Reading and Reacting to the Field

The next function, Reading and Reacting to the Field, reflects the dynamic nature of coaching where things change all the time. All along the way, coaches have a duty to observe and respond to these changes as they happen, both on- and off the field. Effective decision making is essential and is a capability that all coaches should develop.

6. Reflect and Learn

And finally, the sixth function, Reflect and Learn, covers the fact that coaches must constantly evaluate the programme, each session and competition as well as their own practice to always try to get better. This journey of personal evaluation and reflection is at the heart of each coach's continuous professional development. Research shows that coaches who reflect regularly get better much quicker and get better results! No brainer really!

Summary

So, there you have it, running practice and coaching in competitions is only a small part of the job of the coach. We need to see all these other aspects of the job as central to success and deliberately treat them with as much care as we use for training and competition.

Of course, the time, effort and intensity we commit to each of these functions may be different depending on our available time, the amount of days per week you see the children and their families, whether you are a volunteer or a full-time coach or whether you work in a recreational environment or in the performance pathway. Regardless of these factors, good, quality coaching will always entail all these six functions to some degree.

The three iCK Courses have been developed explicitly to support you fulfil all these different aspects of the job, not just practice and competition.

ACTIVITY 4.1 - PERSONAL COACHING TASK

A. Time to Reflect: Review and rate your current performance in the following functions:

POOR									EXCELLENT
1. Vision and Strategy									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. Shaping the Environment
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Build Relationships
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Conducting Practices and Preparing and Managing Competitions
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Reading and Reacting to the Field
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Reflect and Learn
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

B. Now for each function, examine ways to improve it, identifying practical things that you can do:

1. Vision and Strategy
2. Shaping the Environment
3. Build Relationships
4. Conducting Practices and Preparing and Managing Competitions
5. Read and React to the Field
6. Reflect and learn

Chapter 1, Summary & Conclusions

VIEW AND/OR READ

You can view this section on the online MOOC or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

Chapter 1 has offered an overall view of what coaching children should be about and the functions coaches fulfil to create positive experiences.

First, we looked at the reasons why children join and stay in sport clubs and why they drop out. The picture was pretty clear: children want to have fun, learn skills, make friends, feel competent and be like their parents/guardians. On the other hand, children don't really like it when it gets too serious, when parents/guardians and coaches are pushy, when it is all about winning, when they don't feel good enough and when coaches have favourites.

We then had a reality check and saw that a tiny fraction of the children that start in sport, progress to the performance pathway, and an even smaller percentage end up playing professional sport. The conclusion was clear, treat all children as children and make sure they have a positive experience. Those who have a possibility of becoming performance athletes will rise over time.

To help us understand what it means to coach children, we explored the Coach Decision Making model. This model gives us a number of questions we have to ask ourselves before we design our coaching plans. We saw that an understanding of context and personal values and beliefs was central to get us on the right track and that after that, careful consideration of the WHO, WHAT and HOW are we coaching, was the only way to ensure that the goals and methods we choose for the kids are appropriate.

With this fresh in our heads, we took a nose dive into the actual practice of coaching children, and we did it in two ways. First, we reviewed the 10 Golden Rules for Coaching Children in the iCoachKids Pledge.

And then we looked at the actual day-to-day of the coach in the shape of the 6 primary functions proposed in the European Sport Coaching Framework.

Now please take the Quiz to see how well you have understood all these ideas. You will have a chance to review any areas you want after

the quiz, and of course you can relook at the videos and read or review the sections of the study guide.

Thank you for being a children's coach.
You are part of a large community of very committed people!
Congratulations!!

STUDY GUIDE TASK: QUIZ

1. From the list below identify the five primary factors why children join and stay involved in sport and physical activity

1. Fun and enjoyment
2. Impress the Coach
3. To win at all cost
4. Feeling competent
5. Learning new skills
6. Become a professional athlete
7. Being with friends
8. Attitude of parents
9. Get their name in the paper

2. Identify 3 of the 5 reasons Children drop out of sport

1.
2.
3.

3. Coaching Children should be about: (True/False)

- Help children fall in love with sport for life
- Trying to develop the next Ronaldo or Simone Biles
- About progressing through the ranks to become a professional coach
- Assisting children to reach their potential
- Winning the u/12 Cup
- Helping children develop holistically

4. Identify 5 of the 10 Golden rules in the iCoachKids pledge

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Q1

1. Fun and enjoyment
2. Feeling competent
3. Learning new skills
4. Being with friends
5. Attitude of parents

Q2

1. When they don't feel confident and competent
2. When it becomes too serious
3. When the main focus is on winning
4. When coaches have favourites
5. When parents and coaches are pushy

Q3

Coaching Children should be about (True/False)

Help children fall in love with sport for life- **TRUE**
Trying to develop the next Ronaldo or Simone Biles- **FALSE**
About progressing through the ranks to become a professional coach- **FALSE**
Assisting children to reach their potential- **TRUE**
Winning the u/12 Cup-**FALSE**
Helping children develop holistically-**TRUE**

Q4

Chapter 1, Closing Tasks
The Role of the Children's Sport Coach

ACTIVITY CT 1 - PERSONAL COACHING (Written/Oral):

Write a 500-word/Record a 3' video reflective piece on the role of the coach in youth sport and specifically on what this mean for them in their current environment.

ACTIVITY CT 2 - COACHING WITH OTHERS:

Agree the role of the children's coach with the coaches you work with, based on the iCoachKids Pledge – 10 Golden Rules, in a Coaches Code of Conduct in your club/school/community group.

ACTIVITY CT 3 - COACHING IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT:

Conduct the following Child-Centred audit, based on the iCoach Kids pledge, on the club/school/community group you are involved with; and discuss it at a coaching / executive committee meeting.

COACHING IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT: My Club/School/Community Group – How child proof are we?

This task is designed to help you think about how well your club/school/community group structure and policies support children's needs and wants (Adapted from Sport Ireland Coaching Factsheet 1).

Theme/Item – iCK Pledge: 10 Golden Rules				We will continue to…	We will start to…	We will stop…
1. Be CHILD-CENTRED						
2. Be HOLISTIC						
3. Be INCLUSIVE						
4. Make it FUN and SAFE						
5. Prioritise the LOVE for sport above LEARNING sport						
6. Focus on FOUNDATIONAL skills						
7. Engage PARENTS positively						
8. Plan PROGRESSIVE programmes						
9. Use different methods to ENHANCE LEARNING						
10. Use COMPETITION in a developmental way						

FURTHER VIEWING/READING

- Sport Ireland Coaching Children Programme description and link to its Factsheets: https://www.sportireland.ie/Coaching-Ireland/Coaching-Children/
- Blogs on www.iCoachKids.eu
  - https://www.icoachkids.eu/who-what-how-key-principles-of-coaching-children.html
  - https://www.icoachkids.eu/build-a-better-connection-with-your-athletes-i-wish-my-coach-knew.html
  - https://www.icoachkids.eu/add-the-practical-summary-of-the-icoachkids-literature-review-to-your-christmas-reading-list1.html

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