

Modelling the Way to Needs-led Coach Education:

The Approach Taken by the Rugby Football Union



Introduction

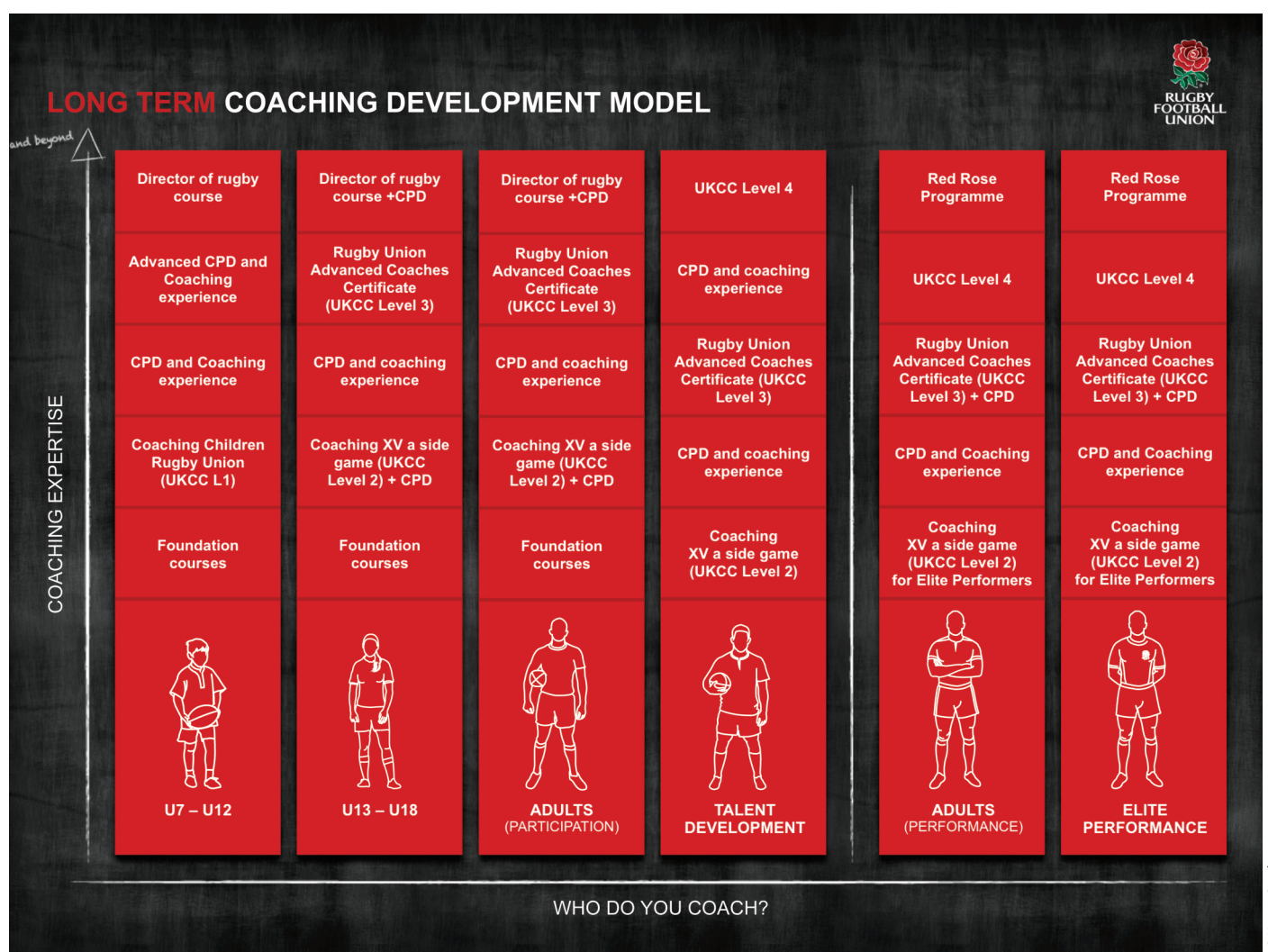
Faced with the desire to continually improve coach and player development, the Rugby Football Union (RFU) started work with sports coach UK in 2007 to better understand the needs of their players and coaches. The process of modelling appealed as a method that could identify the appropriate roles, capabilities and pathways of players and coaches. As such, the RFU, along with the Scottish Rugby Union (SRU) and the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU), set about creating their own visionary models: a participant development model (PDM) and coach development model (CDM).

As a result, the RFU increased its player and coach insight, and clarified the strategic direction needed for its coaching pathways. In turn, it recognised that changes to its coaching qualifications and continuous professional development (CPD) were required to make these models a reality. Now, five years into this journey, with the brave decision to instigate the changes already taken, great steps forward have been made, and the coaching landscape has seen a dramatic shift.

So, What is Modelling?

The RFU PDM and CDM offer a visual representation of the populations involved in rugby union and the different types of coaches needed to work with them. The models show the potential routes into and through the sport for both players and coaches.

The RFU CDM below identifies six coaching environments to support players:



Developing this model helped the RFU chart the different roles and desired capabilities of each coach. The CDM also helped it begin to identify the appropriate coach education and development for each coach, throughout their stages of development.



Servicing the Needs of Players

As the implications of the PDM and CDM became apparent, the coaching staff recognised the need for change:

“We have always tried to apply a player-centred approach - in order to live it, then, the CDM had to service the needs of players. The aim, and ultimately challenge, across staff and departments was to arrive at a common understanding of how coaching should serve participants across the environments.”

Nick Scott, Coach Development Manager, RFU

The RFU is now using the CDM to guide its workforce planning and development, with a strong focus on updating its current UK Coaching Certificate (UKCC) endorsed qualifications to align to the six coaching roles identified. By creating task and finish groups composed of staff with a range of experiences and skill sets, individual projects to update and launch qualifications have been, and continue to be, delivered.

With the support from sports coach UK as a ‘critical friend’, the RFU has become one of the first governing bodies of sport to create a Coaching Children Level 1 qualification and is currently piloting a Coaching the XV-a-side Game Level 2 qualification.

The Power of PDM: Unlocking Personal and Social Development

Within both the revised Level 1 and 2 qualifications, the RFU has incorporated the ‘C’ system identified in the Coaching Children Curriculum¹ and Participation Curriculum² (developed by sports coach UK). The ‘C’ system looks at a player’s personal and social development, and includes:

- competence
- confidence
- connection
- character and caring
- creativity.

So, why did the ‘C’ system appeal to the RFU so much?

“Social and personal skills are identified by the PDM as core to performance and quality of experience. The ‘C’ system succinctly summarises these key skills in a way that coaches find accessible.”

The emphasis on personal and social development for players will help coaches discover practical coaching methods that develop players as a whole, combined with the traditional focus on improving physical, technical, tactical and mental capabilities.

¹ www.sportcoachuk.org/sites/default/files/Coaching%20Children%20Curriculum.pdf

² www.sportcoachuk.org/sites/default/files/Participation%20in%20Coaching%20Curriculum.pdf

The 'C' System in a Nutshell

Never seen the 'C' system before? Here's a quick crash course:

Competence



This is about developing a positive view of one's actions with matching appropriate capability (being able to do things).

Confidence



This hinges on having an internal sense of overall self-worth ('I am OK') and self-efficacy ('I can do things').

Connection



This is related to the ability to build positive bonds with people and institutions (ie clubs and schools), resulting in effective and mutually beneficial relationships between the individual, others and the environment.

Character and Caring



This is based on exercising respect for societal and cultural rules, possessing standards for correct behaviours, a sense of right and wrong and a sense of sympathy and empathy for others.

Creativity



This is about being able to find your own solutions to problems.

The development of the 'C' system and its underpinning capabilities is linked to the physical, technical, tactical and mental areas in a mutually inclusive way. For example, a coach can increase someone's physical capabilities and, at the same time, develop their connection with the setting and the people in it by encouraging participants to work together.



sports coach UK is delighted to endorse the way the RFU has embedded the "C" system into its PDM. The "C" system was initially intended as a model for the coaching of children, but sports coach UK and Partners like the RFU have found that the personal and social development characteristics promoted by the "C" system have huge positive benefits across the participant spectrum. »

David Turner, Development Lead Officer - Children and Schools, sports coach UK

3 Unions: One UKCC-endorsed Level 4 Qualification

A key qualification required to meet the needs of elite performance coaches identified in the CDM is the Level 4 qualification. Although the RFU has been awarding a qualification at this level for eight years, it took the opportunity to review the course and the requirement to provide cutting-edge education for elite performance coaches.

The result is an updated Level 4 qualification, part of a 3 Unions Level 4 qualification, in collaboration with the SRU and WRU. This qualification has been UKCC endorsed and is delivered at a postgraduate level in partnership with Hartpury College. Although an academic qualification in structure, the Level 4 programme is focused on practical coaching in the elite environment and ensuring that those coaches who take the course are reaching the level of coaching expertise required to succeed in this environment.

Level 4 is the flagship qualification for those working in performance and elite environments (as identified in the model) in rugby union. The CDM has identified accurately the requirements and needs of a coach operating in these environments, and facilitated the development of a course that meets the development needs of an applied coach working at the highest levels of the game. The course is highly regarded, and demand is strong among Premiership, Championship and Academy coaches who recognise the value it adds to their skill set.

Nick Scott, Coach Development Manager, RFU



When I was appointed England Head Coach, it was both a tremendous honour for me and a huge endorsement of the RFU coach development programme. There is no doubt that the opportunity that has now presented itself would not have been achievable without completing my coaching qualifications along the way, and I hope this inspires every community rugby coach with the ambition and talent to reach the top.

With the Level 4 qualification recently endorsed by sports coach UK, this means our entire suite of courses is now externally verified as being of excellent quality. Last season saw the highest ever attendance on RFU courses, with 25,000 coaches benefiting. A revised coach education structure and more bespoke service were launched in the new year, together with an online Coaching Academy for licensed coaches, with numbers licensed more than doubling and now standing at more than 5000. All of this helps to ensure that our coaches continue to develop and that our players have an enjoyable experience as a result.

Stuart Lancaster, England Rugby Head Coach

The Results

This approach to coach education has created a fundamental shift in the approach to coaching rugby union. The coaching ethos is now focused on **coaching the person first and the sport second**. For example, the Level 1 qualification focuses on developing a child through rugby.

The revised UKCC qualifications will benefit coaches and players all over the country. Around 4000 coaches a year will take the new UKCC Level 1 course, forming a core part of the RFU coaching workforce that supports 235,000 mini/youth players. Likewise, around 900 coaches a year will take the new UKCC Level 2 course, forming a core part of the RFU coaching workforce that supports over 140,000 adult players.

The RFU is hoping that this new approach to qualifications and CPD will help retain and develop players through high quality coaching. Indeed, the early signs are very encouraging. sports coach UK research³ has highlighted that rugby union coaches play a key role in maintaining participants' commitment to the sport – more than twice as effective compared to coaches of all sports. Rugby union coaches are also much more likely to improve sporting performance and enhance the social life of players than coaches of all sports.

With the World Cup coming to England in 2015, the RFU is committed to ensuring that players attracted to the game through the higher profile of the sport during the tournament will be enthused, engaged and retained by a skilled coaching workforce. The developments in the qualifications and CPD courses will ensure that the needs of the player will be the key driver for the coach, thus putting the quality of experience for the player at the heart of coach development. A mantra at the heart of all this work has been: 'Coaches coach activity – good coaches coach people.'

And if you want some extra tips, then consider these:

- **Get the communication right** with coach educators and clubs to ensure they are on board with the new approach. One great way to do this is to involve them in the piloting process.
- **Work in partnership** – From concept to development, the new qualifications took a lot of partnership working across national staff, regional staff, educators, clubs and coaches. These relationships and collaborative working practices should not be underestimated or considered as an afterthought to planning the qualification content. They need to be nurtured and managed from the start.
- **Allow enough time** to turn theory into practice and get all the content required into the course! The steps taken by the RFU have required patience and diligence, particularly to produce the PDM and CDM. However, now these tools are in place, they provide the framework to develop qualifications and CPD with the knowledge that the time invested will ultimately benefit players.
- **Pilot your qualifications** to give the content, learning programme and course processes a test run prior to a full scale launch. Don't get too hung up on creating the perfect course to start with. The feedback from educators, coaches and administrators will highlight the areas where you need to make changes so you can prioritise your resources to best effect.
- **Coordinate your Level 4 UKCC endorsement submissions** by having a lead person to direct the overall submission. This person may be involved in preparing the detail of some or all of the submission and qualification content, but needs to have the time to look at the big picture. Their role is to ensure the separate elements come together in the right way, at the right time – for the benefit of the qualification and the presentation of the endorsement submission.

Lessons Learnt

As with any process of change, there have been a number of lessons learnt by the RFU coach development team. So, what's their top piece of advice?

🗨️ **Challenge every assumption and every proposal with the question "Will this improve and enhance the quality of experience of the participant?"**
Coaches are there to support participants - coaches' needs are, therefore, secondary. 🗨️

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³ sports coach UK (2011) 'Sports Coaching in the UK III', www.sportscoachuk.org/sites/default/files/Sports%20Coaching%20in%20the%20UK%20III%20final.pdf