



Julia Walsh

Developing Coaches: A Life Long Journey



Good coaches matter most!



Why do we have coaches?

- To changing people's capacity
- In a youth context (positive youth development)
 - Competence
 - Confidence
 - Character
 - Connections
 - Compassion/Caring

Coaching Youth

- You have to get to know something about *the person's background*, and that would apply to mainstream and professional leagues... You need *to build a relationship* between yourself and the kids... You need to *improve their ability* in sport. If they cannot do it properly they will not come back. They have to *have fun* doing what they are doing. They're *having fun but they are learning at the same time* and it's just to be able to figure out how to do that, you know...

Who are the people that volunteer to coach in an Irish Youth Sport and Physical Activity Context

Volunteer Profile

- Volunteers committed one or more days per week to volunteering.
- Length of commitment ranged between 3-10 years.
- On average volunteers worked with 1.37 sports and were responsible for 3 roles within the organisation. The main roles being coaching (81.4%), administration (53.5%), management (47.7%) and officiating (46.7%).
- In the majority of cases the volunteers worked in youth sports clubs that service 50 or less participants.

Who are the people that volunteer to coach in an Irish Youth Sport and Physical Activity Context

- Unpaid volunteers made up 97% of the workforce involved in youth sport.
- Volunteers typically ranged in age between 35 - 54 years.
- Young people (12%) and people over the age of 55 (8%) were less inclined to volunteer.
- The largest group of people working in a volunteer role were parents (48%), followed by long term members of the club and senior players.
- Females outnumbered male volunteers in individual sports, but the reverse occurred in team sports.

Recruitment and Retention

- Pathways were localised to personal connections, and motivated by previous participation in sport and/or previous volunteer experience, enjoyment working with young people, and /or family connections.
- Pathways designed to encourage youth to engage in volunteer work were limited.
- Recruitment strategies were typically local and word of mouth



- *The children would have been definitely why I'm involved, but before that it would have been because I played sport myself and I loved it, and I realised what good it had done for me when I was a teenager (volunteer)*



Recruitment and Retention

- Previous participation in sport was a predictor of future volunteering.
- Ongoing commitment to volunteering was motivated by personal health, social, and skill outcomes.



The stuff that I have achieved out of volunteering, the huge amount of life skills and learning and meeting other people, the stuff that I've taken, its trials and tribulations, like any coach, you reach the top, but you also have huge failings. An it's trying to learn from that and passing it on (Volunteer).



Volunteer Education

- The modern day volunteer is expected to be a skilled volunteer, it is more than giving time. These volunteers need and want to be competent and confident in their role.
- Volunteers will engage if it leads to a more effective and efficient use of their time.
- Access to education is problematic and influences retention.
- The greatest educational need is for teaching and management knowledge. They do not only *want to know what to teach they want to know how to teach.*

Barriers

- Knowledge location is a problem.
- People are taken for granted
- Management of human resources is a major barrier to volunteer retention.

Barriers

I had the situation where I've had not only the child that was supposed to train, but they also left the other child because they went shopping and then didn't come back for an hour after training was finished, so we sat and waited.



People Management

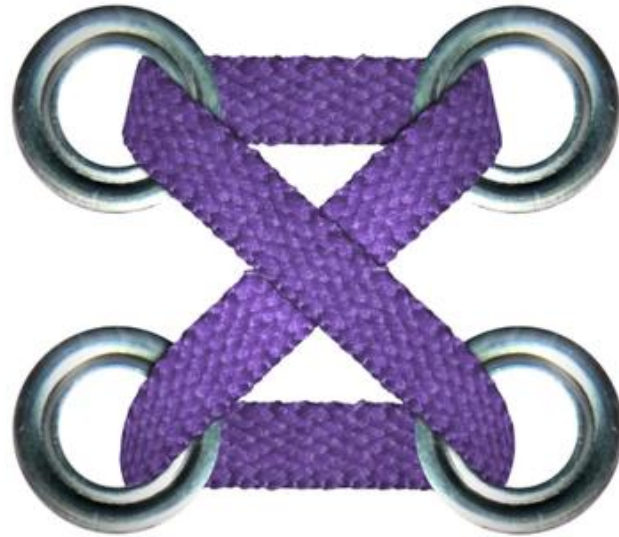


Volunteers are expected to engage in multiple roles, some of which stretch their skill set and act as a barrier to volunteer retention.

You get volunteers if you give them something that they know they can do. Let them succeed at it and then acknowledge the fact that they did it, and that's how you get and keep volunteers. If you give them appropriate tasks to do and don't expect more time than they have to give or skills they don't have, and that's how you hold onto volunteers and especially acknowledge them afterwards and say thank you (administrator).



COACHING THE COACHES



Local problem, Local solution

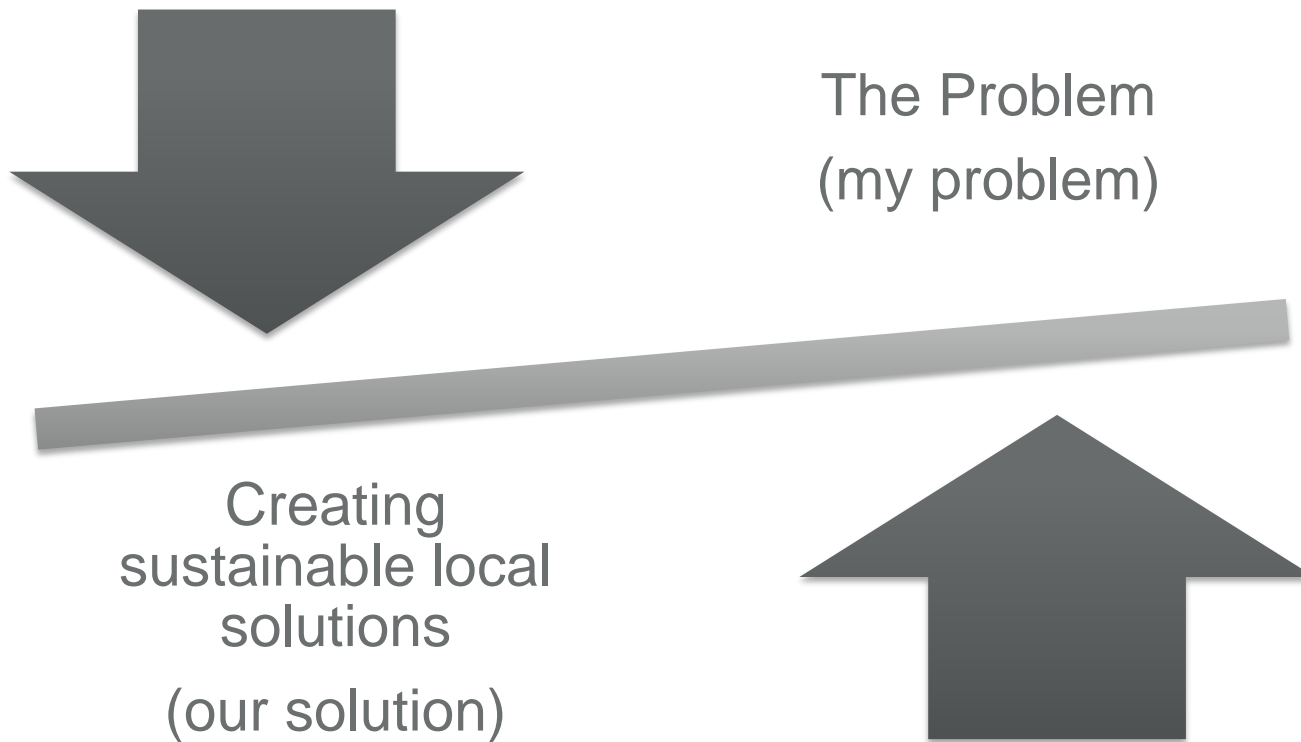
All members are learners

Context is central to planning
and engagement

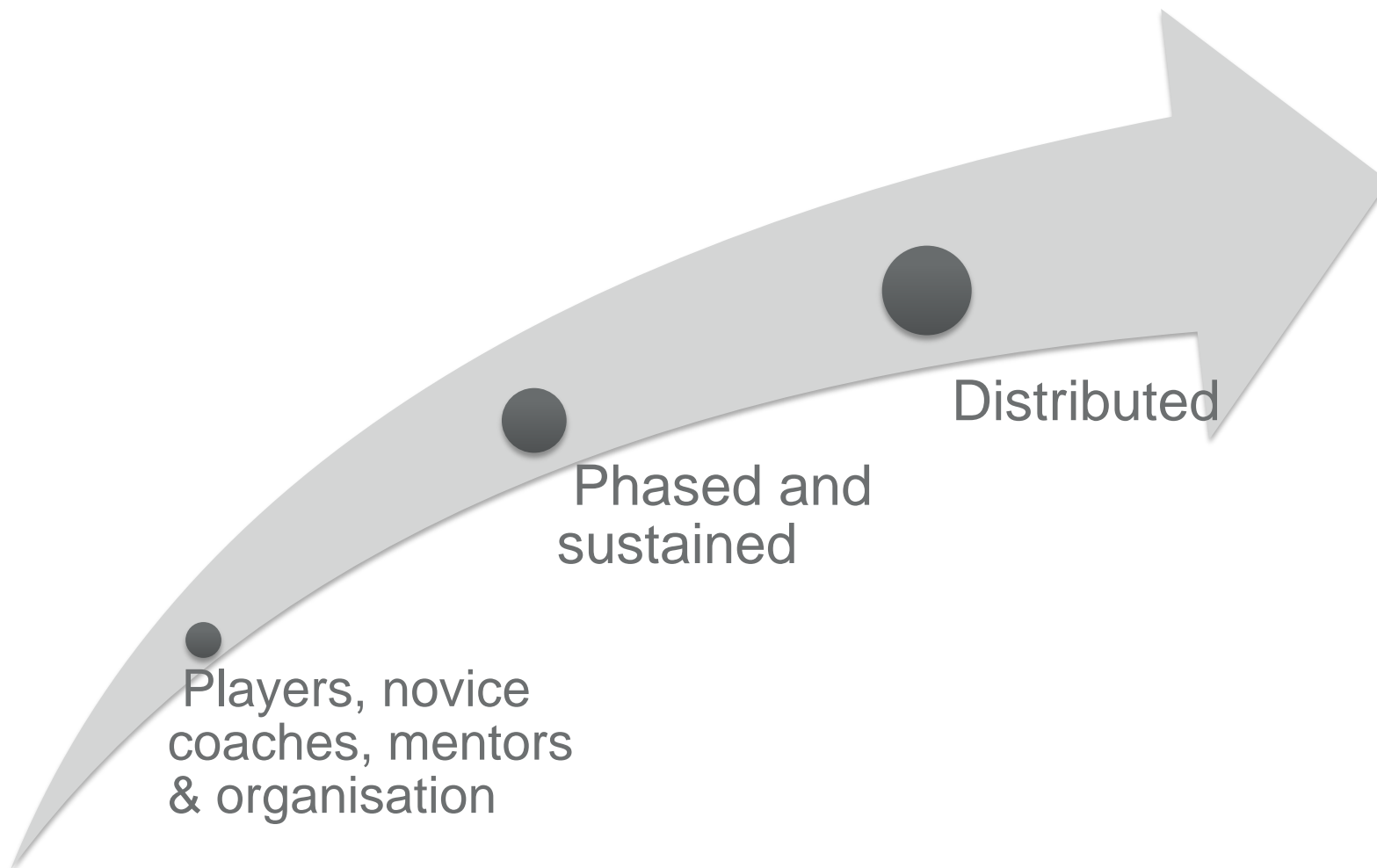
Engagement in reflective & reflexive
practice by coaches & mentors



LOCAL PROBLEM: LOCAL SOLUTION



ALL MEMBERS ARE LEARNERS



Players, novice
coaches, mentors
& organisation

Phased and
sustained

Distributed

CONTEXT IS CENTRAL TO PLANNING AND ENGAGEMENT

- Multiple contexts e.g.
- The **novice coach context** is shaped by:
 - participant age group,
 - Gender,
 - GAA games experience,
 - environmental conditions, and
 - personal competence and confidence to perform the role of coach.

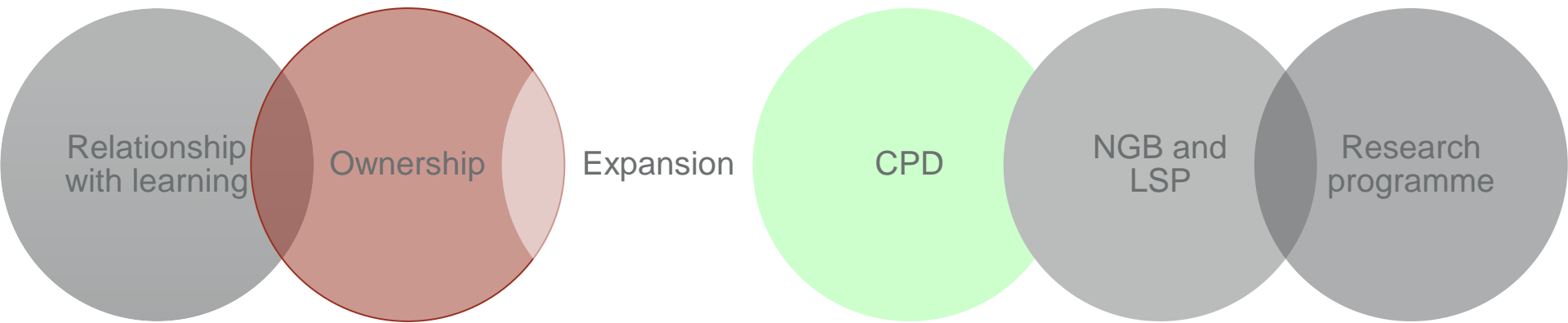
CONTEXT IS CENTRAL TO PLANNING AND ENGAGEMENT


- **The mentor's context includes:**
 - novice coach development,
 - mentor development,
 - health and safety, and
 - organisational outcomes.
- **The youth sport organisation context covers:**
 - Safe environment for children and youth to learn (physical, psychological etc)
 - Management and development of the human resources
 - Administration and management of the organisation (day-to-day and long term)

ENGAGEMENT IN REFLECTIVE AND REFLEXIVE PRACTICE BY COACHES AND MENTORS

- Reflective practice in the communication bridge for learning
 - Reflection in and on action,
 - Reflective discussion,
 - A reflective journal.
- The theory classroom = a problem solving space where everyone experiences *autonomy* and *agency* through reflection

OUTCOMES





Research
programme

The research question

- What are the learning and emotional transitions that take place during the early stages of coaching?

Methodology

The participants were 9 students enrolled in a physical education programme and two mentor coaches from a local sports club.

A mixed method combining qualitative and quantitative data was used to evaluate learning and emotional coach development. Data collection methods included:

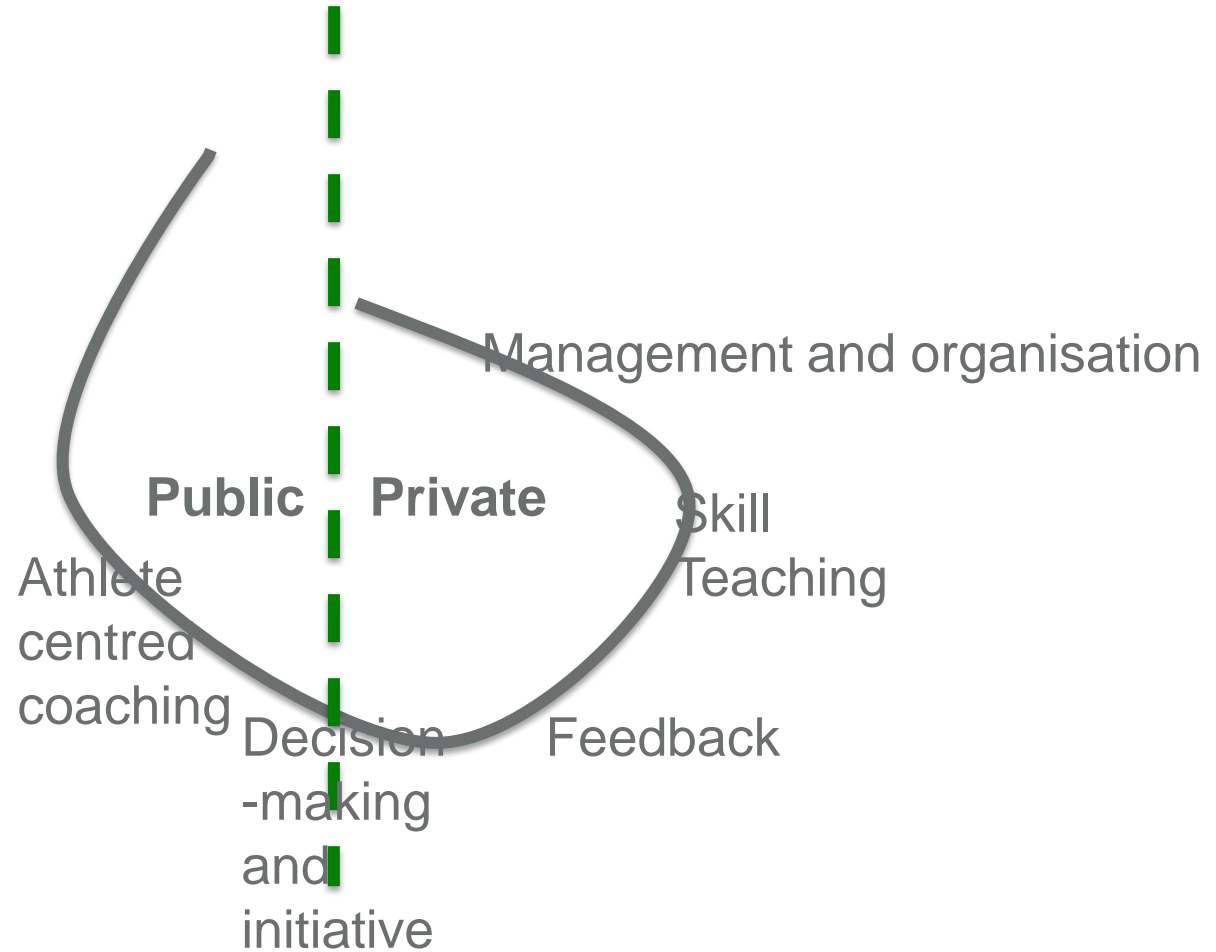
- Coach personal profiles and reflections
- Mentor evaluations

Analysis

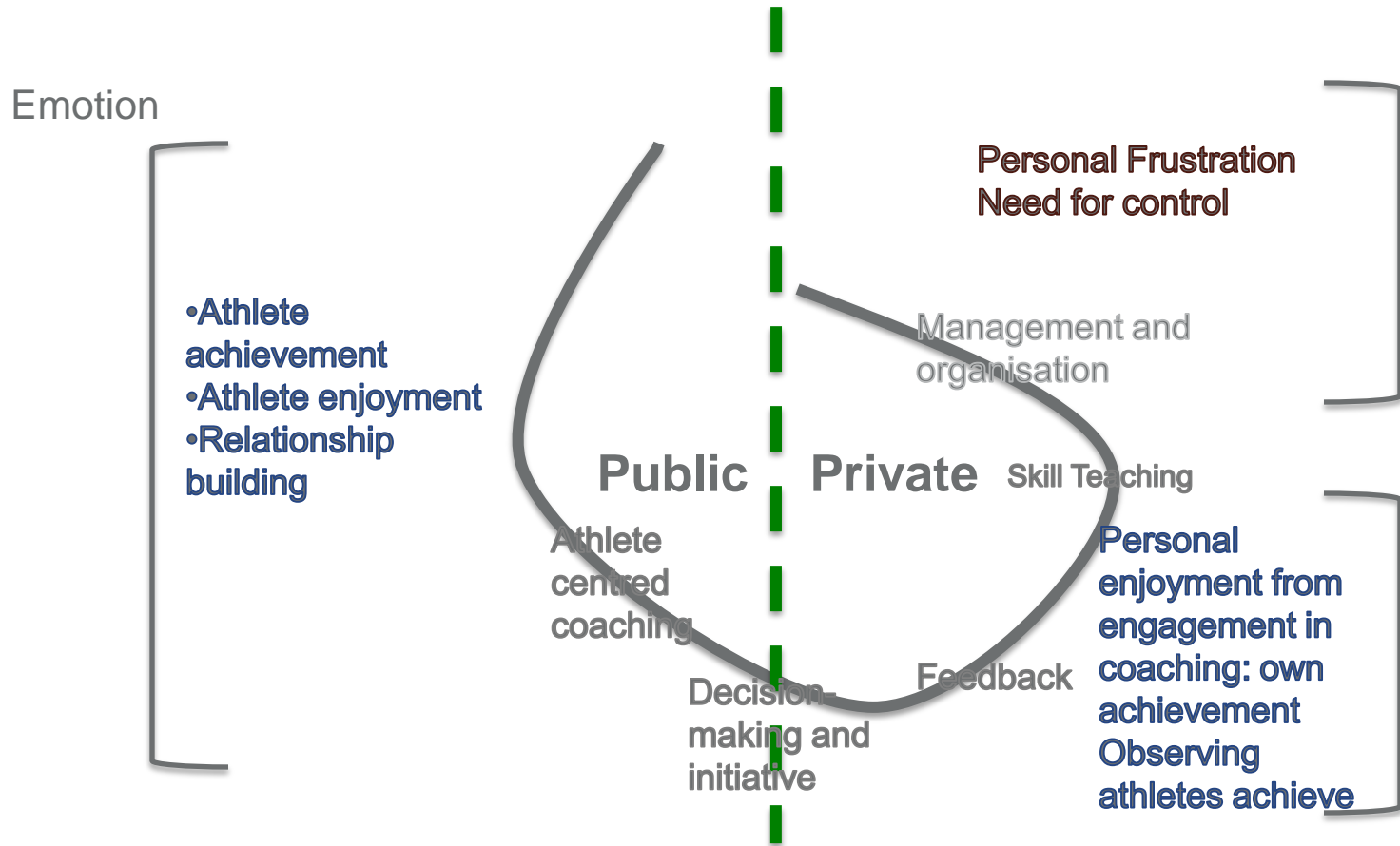
An inductive analysis was used to analyze reflective journals and personal profiles. Mentor evaluation scores were averaged over a five week period.

Coach Reflections

Coaching Skills



Coach Reflections



LACE results

- There are transitions in learning but they are dependent on the learner and their previous experience.
- With competence and confidence learning accelerates.
- The private personal learning challenges needed to be addressed before a more public coaching focus can be progressed.

Improving coach development and retention

- Formal coach education is only one piece of the puzzle in creating an environment that attracts, meets the needs, and improves the retention of coaches.
- Change at the local level hinges on the development of effective administration and management structures. Invest in sport administration and empower local clubs to become learning communities that support coaches as well as players.
- Support the development of non-formal and informal coaching professional development at the local or club level that is context specific.

Go Raibh Maith Agaibh

