Building Your Coach Developer Workforce

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INTRODUCTION

This short booklet **Building Your Coach Developer Workforce** is targeted at the management and technical leaders of organisations that employ or educate coaches. Its purpose is to explain the importance of Coach Developers in helping coaches enhance their coaching skills and behaviours to benefit sports participants of all ages, motivations and abilities. It describes three steps towards establishing a highly evolved coaching development system.

Step 1:
Commit to providing quality coaching for all your participants

Step 2:
Develop your quality coach education and support programme

Step 3:
Build your quality Coach Developer workforce

Building Your Coach Developer Workforce provides a brief introduction and overview of the full International Coach Developer Framework Version 2 (2024), which is available from the ICCE www.icce.ws.

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STEP 1

Commit to Providing Quality Coaching for All your Participants

Step 1: **Commit to providing quality coaching for all your participants**	Step 2: Develop your quality coach education and support programme	Step 3: Build your quality Coach Developer workforce

Photo: Shuttle Time BWF's Schools' Badminton Programme

Step One requires commitment to providing **Quality Coaching** at every level of participation and performance. Quality coaching is so much more than teaching a sport; coaches coach the person rather than the sport and so contribute to their participants' development socially and emotionally, as well as physically and technically. Quality coaching is therefore more athlete-centred and athlete-driven, more focused on values and respect.

Coaches play an important role in promoting enjoyable sports participation, helping people achieve their potential and enhancing individual and team performance. In addition to these core roles, 'coaches contribute to the development of athletes as people, teams as cohesive units and communities with a shared interest' (ESCF, ICCE/Lara-Bercial et al, 2017, p10). Coaching contributes to social aims by promoting activity and health, building a sense of community and social networks, and contributing to society economically through employment and education.

Photo: Mental Coaching Waterski

QUALITY COACHING
- **Starts with a strong ethical foundation.**
- **Is athlete-centred, putting athletes, their welfare and their overall development first.**
- **Requires a comprehensive knowledge base and coaching skills.**
- **Demands skillful application of six core coaching functions.**

Why Quality Coaching is Important

Quality coaching leads to better, healthier and more fulfilled athletes and participants. Quality coaching inspires a lifelong love of sport and physical activity and enables everyone to achieve their sporting goals and potential. It is important therefore to provide quality coaching at every level of participation and performance from the playground to the podium. If sport is to have a positive influence on individuals and communities, coaches need to coach in an ethical and athlete-centred way and strive to achieve holistic athlete outcomes appropriate for the context in which they coach (eg the age and stage of the athlete).

Quality coaches adapt their approach to the unique needs and specific context of the athlete, whether that is the highly competitive environment of performance sport or working with children or adults in participation sport. The essence of quality coaching is the holistic development of individuals and ensuring sport is an enjoyable, healthy and positive sporting experience with 'people building as the core purpose' (Gilbert, W).

Coaching ethics

Underpinning quality coaching is a strong ethical foundation: awareness of and commitment to uphold one's core values. The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) describes five key ethical behaviours in its coaching code of conduct (Table 1).

Quality coaching is so much more than teaching a sport. Coaches develop people; they coach the person rather than the sport.

Ethical behaviour	Description
Competency	Ability to do something successfully or efficiently
Respect	Regard for feelings, wishes, rights or traditions of others
Integrity	Quality of being honest and having strong moral principles/moral uprightness
Responsibility	Having a duty to deal with something and the ability to act independently and make decisions without authorization, being accountable or to blame
Concern for other's welfare/safety	The condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk or injury

Table 1: Ethical Behaviours for Quality Coaching (USOPC, 2020)

Athlete outcomes

As quality coaching involves coaching the whole person, it is about much more than simply improving skills and performance, and certainly about more than a team's win/loss record. What are the athlete outcomes a quality coach should be helping to develop? Cote and Gilbert (2009) describe four areas quality coaches should be focussed on as the 4Cs of competence, confidence, connection and character (Table 2).

Element	Description
Competence	Sport-specific technical and tactical skills, performance skills, improved health/fitness, healthy training habits
Confidence	Internal sense of overall positive self-worth
Connection	Positive bonds and social relationships with people inside and outside of sport
Character	Respect for the sport and others (morally), integrity, empathy and responsibility

Table 2: Athlete outcomes of effective coaching (Cote and Gilbert, 2009)

Essential Coaching Knowledge and Skills

Côté and Gilbert (2009) identify three types of knowledge which need to be consistently applied by coaches in working with athletes and teams:

- **Professional knowledge:** Content such as sport sciences, sport-specific technical and pedagogical content (eg how to coach skills of observation, feedback, demonstration).

- **Interpersonal knowledge:** Examples include the ability to communicate, build rapport and interact with athletes, other coaches, parents and other professionals. This needs to be adapted so coaches can communicate appropriately and effectively with different people and athletes of varying ages, abilities and competitive levels.

- **Intrapersonal knowledge:** This refers to the deep understanding of self, to heightened sensitivity to others and their cultural contexts, as well as the ability for constant introspection, review and reflection.

Figure 1: Types of Knowledge (ISCF, 2013)

This knowledge base is underpinned by the strong ethical foundation of clear values, a holistic coaching philosophy and goals established in partnership with the athletes. It also requires a **range of coaching skills** including communcation and rapport building skills, observation and feedback skills, planning and organisational skills, problem-solving and decision-making skills, reflection and learning to learn skills.

The Core Coaching Functions

Daily in gyms, pools and fields everywhere coaches are 'conducting practices and competitions', but fulfilling the expectations of quality coaching is so much more. The International Sport Coaching Framework (ICCE, 2013) describes six core coaching functions that show the scope of the role and the demands on coaches today.

1. **Set the vision and strategy.** The coach creates a vision and a strategy based on the needs and stages of development of the athletes and the organisation and social context of the programme.

2. **Shape the environment.** The coach recruits and contracts to work with a group of athletes and takes responsibility for setting out plans for specified periods. The coach also seeks to maximise the environment in which the programme occurs through personnel, facilities, resources, working practices and the management of other coaches and support personnel.

3. **Build relationships.** The coach builds positive relationships with athletes and others associated with the programme, including personnel at the club, school, federation and other levels. The coach is responsible for engaging in, contributing to and influencing the organisational context through the creation of respectful working relationships.

4. **Conduct practices and prepare for and manage competitions.** The coach organises suitable and challenging practices using effective techniques (practice design, demonstration, observation, feedback) to promote lentinan and improvement. The coach prepares for targeted competitions and also overseas and manage the athletes in these competitions.

5. **Read and react to the field.** The coach observes and responds to events appropriately, including all on- and off-filed matters. Effective decision making is essential to fulfilling this function and should be developed in all stages of coach development.

6. **Learn and reflect.** The coach evaluates the programme as a whole as well as each practice and competition. Evaluation and reflection underpin a process of ongoing learning and professional development. The coach also supports efforts to educate and develop other coaches.

Table 3: Primary Functions of Coaches (ISCF, 2013 p16)

Building a quality coaching workforce is challenging and this leads to **Step 2: developing a quality coach education and support program.**

STEP 2

Develop your quality coach education and support programme

Step 1: Commit to providing quality coaching for all your participants	**Step 2: Develop your quality coach education and support programme**	Step 3: Build your quality Coach Developer workforce

Photo: Pelle Kvalsund, Norges Idettsforbund

To become a quality coach today requires far more than technical and tactical knowledge of the sport. It requires knowledge across many disciplines, a range of complex skills to operate effectively in a dynamic environment and an ethical framework to guide practice. Coaches will learn through a variety of ways: for example through experience, by trial and error, through conversations with other coaches, via the internet. However to develop quality coaches, there is the need for a quality coach education programme and on-going support for coaches in the field.

Quality Coach Education and Support includes:

- content to develop the technical, interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge and incorporating the 'how to coach' skills about the coach's performance and behaviours
- facilitative teaching methods that fully respect adult learning principles
- effective coach assessment processes that enhance the coach's learning
- support for coaches in their real environment to help them apply and solidify their learning
- a strong leadership group of Coach Developers to deliver the programme and help the coaches apply their knowledge in the field.

The Content of the Coach Education Programme

As described in the previous section, quality coaches need to have advanced technical, interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge. In addition, the coach education programme needs to provide both the 'what to coach' knowledge and skills related to improving the athlete's performance, and the 'how to coach' knowledge and skills that focus on how coaches' operate, their coaching skills. These are the pedagogy and learning skills such as how to demonstrate and teach skills, how to observe and analyse, provide feedback, problem-solve and make decisions, and reflect to confirm and consilidate learning (Table 4 provides an example).

Example of 'what-to-coach' and 'how-to-coach' skills

What to coach for overarm throw
What the athlete is doing

STANCE
- Sideways to target
- Take throwing arm back behind head
- Non-throwing arm pointing at target
ACTION
- Throwing arm swings forward with high elbow
- Pull non-throwing arm back as body rotates to face target and ball oin released
FOLLOW THOUGH
- Weight transfers onto front foot
- Throwing arm reaches forward and downward

How to coach the overarm throw
What the coach is doing

- Provides demonstration of overarm throw
- Gives 1-2 key coaching points
- Observes the action
- Analyses the action by comparing it with image of correct action
- Asks questions
- Provides feedback
- Encourages further practice

Table 4: Example What to Coach and How to Coach skills

Learner-Centred Facilitation

Coach education programmes have traditionally been delivered using presentations and lectures to transfer knowledge to the learner coach. However, research into how people learn has resulted in a shift to a more engaging, facilitative and learner-centred approach. This type of delivery actively engages coaches in their own learning through micro-coaching practice, activities, problem-solving tasks and case studies. It attempts to customise the learning to the unique needs of each coach and their contexts (eg who they coach, where they coach). It places a strong emphasis on self-reflection and encouraging coaches to take responsibility for their own learning and development. Coaches can now access knowledge very readily through the internet. Good practice would now advicate providing essential knowledge in advance of a face-to-face workshop (eg through e-modules). This allows more time to apply and use this knowledge in practice and to develop the skills to enable coaches to become critical thinkers, decision-makers and problem solvers.

The acronym LEARNS is a useful reminder of the core learning principles used in the delivery of quality coach education (Table 5).

L: Learning to learn (metacognitive) skills overtly taught and developed

E: Environment created is welcoming and respectful and where coaches feel comfortable to contribute without judgement

A: Active engagement by and between the coaches is encouraged

R: Reflective skills are taught, and reflection is regularly encouraged and supported

N: New: content is up-to-date and innovative delivery strategies used

S: Stretch: the degree of challenge is carefully considered, appropriate for each coach at every stage of the learning process

Table 5: L E A R N S Learning Principles

Coach Assessment

While assessment may be used as a mechanism for ensuring that a particular standard has been met (eg through competence assessment for a specific qualification), assessment also has a powerful role to play in learning. This is the concept of *'assessment as learning'* where assessment is considered as a learning experience in and of itself, as a tool for learning. It is ongoing and developmental and driven by the learner in their immediate reality. Three principles to consider in designing effective coach assessment:

1. Establish, share and showcase criteria for success: what does good look like. For example, providing a rubric or competence framework that describes the success criteria or sharing exemplars of successful work.

2. Assessment is a vehicle for developing skills for learning. The assessment process can help the learner to develop skills in goal-setting, self-directedness, reflection and self-evaluation.

3. Assessment as a collaborative activity: who can help me and how? Linked to social learning, assessment can also benefit from input from colleagues and previous learners.

Coach assessment should both contribute to coach learning and promote quality coaching through maintaining standards of ethical and effective practice.

Supporting Coaches On-the-job

For real learning to take place, to learn new skills and behaviours, to learn how to apply new concepts in a coach's actual context, requires deliberate practice, application, reflection and review, and then often more practice! Coaches need help in applying their learning from formal education and other informal experiences (eg reading about new knowledge or coaching practice, conversations with experts, observing other coaches); they need feedback on their practice and support in their reflection and review, which is best provided in the coach's own environment whenever possible.

Quality coach education programmes have therefore evolved to include on-the-job support such as observation and review of coaches' practice in training and competition, helping the coach to experiment and try new methods. Extending the coach learning beyond formal courses can take many other forms as well, for example, mentorships, observing other coaches, communities of practice.

| KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER | Traditionally instructional and confined to transferring technical, tactical and performance knowledge (what-to-coach) |

| Interactive workshop-based, including how-to-coach (pedagogy) as well as what-to-coach with an emphasis on learning | FACILITATED LEARNING |

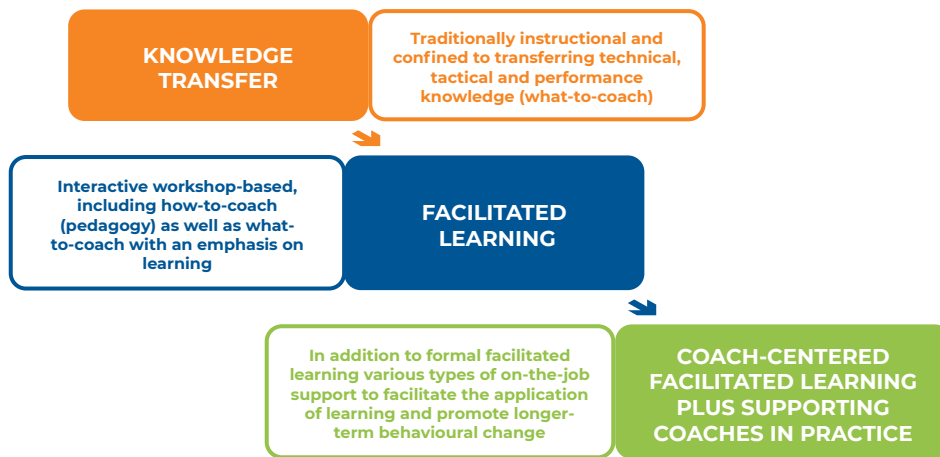| In addition to formal facilitated learning various types of on-the-job support to facilitate the application of learning and promote longer-term behavioural change | COACH-CENTERED FACILITATED LEARNING PLUS SUPPORTING COACHES IN PRACTICE |

Figure 2: The Evolution of Coach Education

The importance of providing this support to coaches on-the-job in the field is reflected in how coach education has evolved over the past 25-30 years. Coach education has shifted from knowledge transfer where 'tutors' (usually experienced coaches or sport scientists) provided workshops which focused largely on sharing the technical, tactical and performance information (eg training theory) to an emphasis on learner-centred facilitation; actively engaging coaches in their own learning, customising the learning to the unique needs of each coach with a strong emphasis on self reflection. Coach education is now evolving from a singular reliance on formal coach education workshops to a recognition of the need to provide coach support in the field (at the track, by the pool, in the gym) as well, to solidify the learning and help the coach adapt new ideas to their reality.

The Coach Developer Workforce

Putting in place a quality coach education programme requires a highly trained expert in coach learning. This demands the ability to include content directed at both improving the athlete's skills and the coach's performance, at applying adult learning principles and effective coach assessment processes and extending the learning beyond the formal course. The concept of **'Coach Developer'** is therefore an essential ingredient of a quality coach education programme. This is one that shifts the thinking from the role of teaching the content of the curriculum and certifying a coach to a focus on the individual needs of coaches, on enhancing their coaching skills and performance, helping them apply their learning to their own coaching practice and to become effective 'quality coaches' who go on developing and honing their skills year by year.

Photo: Hayley Harrison, Sport Ireland Coaching

Given this critical role of the Coach Developer in delivering a quality coach education and support programme, there is a need to address **Step 3: Building Your Coach Developer Workforce.**

STEP 3

Build a Quality Coach Developer Workforce

Step 1: Commit to providing quality coaching for all your participants	Step 2: Develop your quality coach education and support programme	**Step 3: Build your quality Coach Developer workforce**

Photo: Hayley Harrison, Sport Ireland Coaching

A Coach Developer is someone who:

- has significant experience as a coach or as an expert working with coaches in the field and in the context in which they will operate (eg sports nutrition, strength and conditioning, pedagogy, skill acquisition)

- helps coaches develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours in order to become an even more effective coach

- has received training on how best to help coaches learn

- is working formally (eg delivering coach education programmes) and/or informally with coaches (eg one-to-one in a club)

- models an attitude of lifelong learning and creates or reinforces this attitude in coaches.

As we've seen in Step 2, to meet the challenge of developing a quality coach education and support programme that helps coaches acquire and apply new knowledge and skills to become quality coaches, Coach Developers need to operate in two different settings:

- **Facilitating the learning of a group of coaches** (eg on a coach education workshop or clinic)

- **Providing support for individual coaches on-the-job** (eg to provide mentoring or to observe and assess a coach in action and assist the coach to reflect and review his/her coaching skills and behaviours).

Building the Coach Developer workforce starts with the selection and training of the right people to take on these roles.

> **Building your Coach Developer Workforce:**
> - Recruiting and training the best people to become Coach Developers.
> - Creating a leadership group of Trainers of Coach Developers.
> - Establishing Coach Developer standards and a progressive pathway to develop these 'experts in coach learning'.

Recruiting your Coach Developers

It's important to determine the optimal number of Coach Developers you require to provide the amount and type of coach training you are planning. To continue to perfect their skills, Coach Developer must be actively working with coaches on a regular basis, so training too many Coach Developers is neither efficient nor cost-effective. As with coaches, Coach Developers require supervised practice and support following their training to grow their confidence and hone their Coach Developer skills. In addition, your Coach Developers need to be deployed sufficiently frequently so they have the opportunity to develop and hone their facilitation and support skills; delivering a course once or twice a year does the not give them the opportunity to become good at learning facilitation.

Coach Developers need to become 'experts in learning', not just experts in coaching their sport

Estimating the number of Coach Developers that are needed to deliver courses and support individual coaches requires analysis of the stage of development of the sport and of coaching within the sport: How many coaches are currently active? Is the current cohort of coaches meeting the need in different contexts (eg learn-to-play, youth sport, performance sport)? How many coaching courses are being delivered or anticipated to meet the need for qualified coaches?

Who to recruit to become your Coach Developers is crucial since the best coaches do not necessairly make the best Coach Developers, in the same way the best athletes do not necessarily make the best coaches. Coach Developers need a deep desire to help coaches (rather than athletes) to get better.

Coach Developers should come to the role already having advanced expertise either in coaching itself, or with specialist knowledge in a component of coaching, for example strength and conditioning, skill acquisition, or mental training, plus a deep understanding of coaching (gained either through coaching or from significant experience working directly with coaches in their environment). They also need some of the attitudes and ideally skills shown in Table 6 (although some of these can be further developed through training).

Building on this expertise, prospective Coach Developers then need to develop advanced skills to support coach learning in a range of formal and informal contexts, for example to:

- deliver courses using a coach-centred facilitative approach
- create learning opportunities in formal and informal situations
- observe and review coaches' practice in training and competition, initiate reflection and provide feedback, and in formal programmes, assess coaches for certification
- mentor coaches, helping them to problem solve and apply their learning from formal education and other informal experiences to their coaching practice
- use questions to encourage coaches to think and reflect
- role-model best coaching practice
- portray a hunger for learning and personal development, and a growth mind-set
- develop their own critical self-reflective skills and help coaches do the same
- nurturing lifelong learning by, for example, establishing communities of practice.

The best coaches do not necessarily make the best Coach Developers; prospective Coach Developers need a deep desire to help coaches (rather than athletes) to get better.

Mindset and attitudes	✔ An openness to learning ✔ A passion for and a belief in the power of coaching ✔ A desire to help coaches become the best they can be ✔ A willingness to engage in critical self-reflection coupled with a hunger for ongoing personal growth and development
Experience	✔ Significant and successful coaching experience in one or more coaching contexts **or** ✔ Substantial experience working with athletes and coaches in a supporting discipline (e.g., strength and conditioning, mental skills)
Skills	✔ Excellent facilitation skills ✔ Good questioning, listening, reviewing and feedback skills ✔ Sound planning, monitoring and evaluation skills ✔ Well-honed self-reflective skills, self-awareness and high emotional intelligence
Knowledge	✔ Professional knowledge (learning, teaching, assessment) ✔ Up-to-date content knowledge in the area/s in which they will teach (sport's technical and tactical, coaching pedagogy, sport science discipline, sports medicine, talent development, coaching children, disability sport) ✔ Inter-personal knowledge (e.g. relationships, social context) ✔ Intra-personal knowledge (e.g. self-awareness)

Table 6: Coach Developer attributes

Photo: NCDA/Nippon Sport Science University

The work of the Coach Developer is only partially done by teaching the knowledge and skills prescribed on a course; the job is not complete until coaches can apply the new knowledge and skills consistently in their coaching practice.

Training and Supporting your Coach Developers

The focus of Coach Developer training is on helping them become effective, learner-centred teachers. It assumes they already have the expertise to teach the content of the specific coaching course for which they are preparing (hence the importance of recruitment). An orientation session to the actual content, outcomes and advocated delivery methods of the specific coaching course may then be needed to supplement the initial Coach Developer training.

Following training, Coach Developers also need support on-the-job in the same way we advocate supporting coaches on-the-job following any formal training.

The ICCE offers an example of Coach Developer training through two foundation programmes:

- **Faciliation Skills for Coach Developers:** aimed at acquiring the facilitation skills and strategies to accelerate coaches' learning, focusing on learner-centred teaching methods that create a thirst for knowledge and inspire self-aware, independent and reflective coach learners. This training is highly interactive and coach-centred and includes topics such as establishing the learning climate; learning principles and delivery strategies; listening, questioning and self-reflective skills; review and feedback skills; session/activity design and planning; and micro-teaching in classroom and practical settings.
- **Supporting Coaches in Practice:** which helps Coach Developers to aquire the skills and strategies to support coaches on-the-job and in the field in a variety of ways including coach observation and review; practical coach assessment, and mentoring.

Both courses offer a blended learning approach, a combination of pre-workshop e-modules, face-to-face teaching and post-training field support.

Coach Developer Training is not about programme orientation; it provides guidance on how coaches learn, combined with the development of a range of skills and strategies to implement the most learner-centred approach possible.

Leadership of your Coach Education and Support Programmes

Your Coach Education programme requires strong leadership to prepare a Coach Developer workforce that will inspire coaches to operate in an athlete-centred way. A select leadership group of 'Trainers of Coach Developers' fulfils this role. These are people with a wealth of experience and expertise as Coach Developers who wish to use their skills in a different context to recruit, train and support Coach Developers rather than coaches. They have exceptional practical skills in facilitating, analysing, synthesising and assessing Coach Developer learning to an expert level and play a lead role in the development and strategy of the coaching system. Their core role is to lead the delivery of the Coach Developer programme; to facilitate Coach Developer courses and provide support for Coach Developers in practice and are responsible for assessing Coach Developers.

Trainers of Coach Developers:

✔ have a wealth of knowledge, skills, experience and expertise as a Chartered Coach Developer across multiple populations, stages, environments and specialisms

✔ use their skills in a different context to recruit, train and support Coach Developers

✔ have knowledge and expertise in and of systems development, innovative practices and strategy development

✔ often operate across sport or in multi-sport settings and so must be able to transfer their skills, draw meaningful examples and create valid activities for Coach Developers from different sports

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Your Coach Education programme requires strong leadership to prepare a Coach Developer workforce that will inspire coaches to operate in an athlete-centred way

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Trainers of Coach Developers may be working as a full-time professional, either in a national or international coaching or sport organisation, or in a large sport federation. They may also operate across sport or in multi-sports settings, in which case they must be able to transfer their skills, draw meaningful examples and create valid activities for Coach Developers from different sports.

Standards and Pathways for Coach Developers

Standards for Coach Developers have been drawn up to reflect the underpinning capabilities for someone entering the field through to those who have achieved considerable expertise resulting from years of successful practice. The ICCE standards provide a guide to organisations and individuals in the way they support, train and deploy their Coach Developers.

The ICCE Coach Developer Standards are based on five elements which contribute to their professional practice:

- **Learning and Behavioural Change** which provides the foundation on which all work with coaches should be based.

- **Group Facilitation** which identifies the unique knowledge, skills and qualities required to facilitate and accelerate the learning of a group of coaches in a learner-centred way in a relatively formal and structured environment.

- **On-the-job Coach Support** which covers the very broad range of ways in which Coach Developers might support and guide the learning of individual coaches in less formal situations.

- **Coach Education Leadership** describes the way Coach Developers contribute to the coaching system at a local, regional or national level.

- **Personal and Professional Skill and Development** which includes the way Coach Developers act as role models to coaches, operate as self-reflective practitioners, engage in ongoing professional development, and adapt the way they work to the unique environment of the coach /organisation.

The standards embed a 3-tier progressive system from a beginner Coach Developer to an Accredited Coach Developer and ultimately to a Chartered Coach Developer (Figure 3). The detailed description of the Standards and a more comprehensive consideration of the Coach Developer Pathway can be found in the International Coach Developer Framework (2023) available from ICCE.
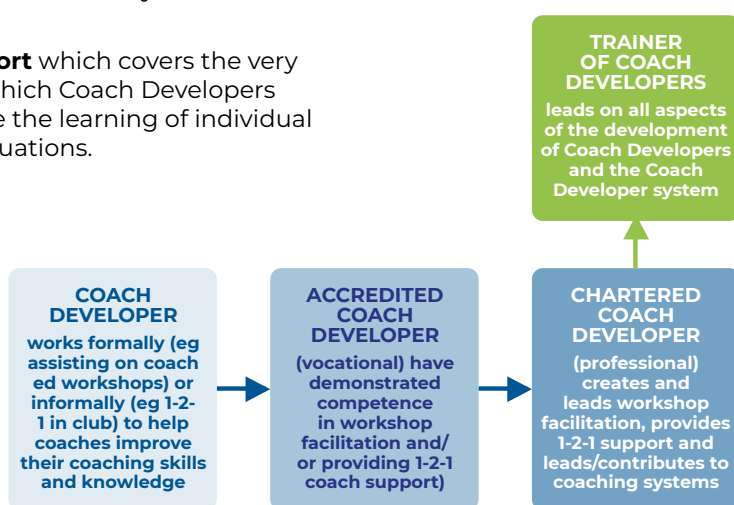
TRAINER OF COACH DEVELOPERS
leads on all aspects of the development of Coach Developers and the Coach Developer system

COACH DEVELOPER
works formally (eg assisting on coach ed workshops) or informally (eg 1-2-1 in club) to help coaches improve their coaching skills and knowledge

ACCREDITED COACH DEVELOPER
(vocational) have demonstrated competence in workshop facilitation and/or providing 1-2-1 coach support)

CHARTERED COACH DEVELOPER
(professional) creates and leads workshop facilitation, provides 1-2-1 support and leads/contributes to coaching systems

Figure 3: Coach Developer Pathway

CONCLUSION:

This document has described the three essential steps in building your Coach Developer Workforce. It emphasises the need to establish real commitment to providing quality coaching and coach education and then work to recruit, train and support your Coach Developer workforce. It emphasises the importance of those delivering coach education to become experts in coach learning, able to use a variety of learner-centred methods, and to go beyond formal courses to support coaches in practice. The essence, and the magic, of the Coach Developer job is understanding that their work is only partially done by teaching the knowledge and skills prescribed on a course; *the job is not complete until coaches can apply the new knowledge and skills consistently in their coaching practice.*

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