

Foundation and Fundamental Journeys

The following is an overview of my contribution to an online discussion in a recent enjoyable learning experience for me online with some old and new colleagues internationally.

Whether on a journey to individual technical efficiency, consistency and resilience in a foundation movement, (*Squat, Lunge, Pull, Push, Brace, Rotate, Hinge*) whose combinations underpin efficiency, consistency and resilience in fundamental complex movements (often listed as **Locomotion** – *Walking, Running, Skipping, Leaping, Galloping, Hopping, Jumping, Crawling*; **Non-Locomotion** – *Bending, Pushing, Rotating, Pulling, Reaching, Twisting, Pivoting, Lifting, Landing, Bracing*; **Manipulative** – *Catching, Kicking, Bouncing, Dribbling, Passing, Throwing, Juggling, Striking*) or appropriately manipulating the journey so as to expose the subject to both the foundation and fundamental jigsaws, there are some vital landmarks to consider.

The foundation jigsaw sees the building of a basic, multi-directional, multi-plane, multi-amplitude, multi-speed movement vocabulary, thus creating total structural strength, stability, and coordination. This will give the subject the physical means to apply to the learning of the more complex movements. This vocabulary can be described as the functional status of the individual. Structural status is another matter. Every subject has unique skeletal, neuromuscular, and cardiorespiratory systems, unlike any other. These unique genetic hand-me-downs create the physiological and biomechanical infrastructure of that individual (alongside several other systems of note) and will be the source of the solutions called upon when any movement puzzle is encountered. Never expect to see an identical response to a puzzle when observing a group encountering the challenge presented in the learning continuum that you have created. Their unique structural and functional status will influence greatly their answers to the puzzles presented.

Also accept that their physiological and biomechanical toolbox will be an ever-changing one as maturation and ageing are brought to bear throughout their lifetime. Understanding this 'change' is a vital component to have built into the learning journey especially during the pre and post puberty periods. It is also vital to accept that as the subject adapts to the stimulus of learning in each of the four pillars of technical, tactical, physical, and mental/behavioural, so more 'change' will influence the response structurally, functionally, and cognitively. The greatest feat of a coach is to make decisions based upon the actual responses of the subjects directly in front of them and to heed the context of the 'change' of each individual they are teaching. It is under these circumstances that the roles of observation and patience can be more easily understood in the development layers of such journeys.

Due to the nature and content of certification courses, nearly every coach will have been introduced to their trade with sports competition-specific technique and its development as the focus. Many coaching certification courses also mention the need for individualization in the learning situation. Unfortunately, the latter is simply a 'mention'. I am hoping that the aforementioned illustrations of foundation and fundamental movements and functional status and structural status in the light of the illustrations of 'change' might encourage a review of the focus/content in the coach and coaching development strategies currently in place.

It is likely that, if there was a greater practical understanding of the journey's components and the individuality and timing of the inevitable changes, the focus would shift from the narrow view of the sports competition-specific technical model to one of the creation of a powerful, long-term movement superstructure upon which the sports competition-specific technical model could be built.

As a coach you will obviously need an appropriate theoretical and visual understanding of the sought-after movement pattern. Knowledge of this movement pattern's eventual destination should act as the context of the journey embarked upon. Every prescription chosen during the journey should be associated appropriately with this destination. In some cases, particularly in the very early stages of the journey, there may only be a general association with the destination model. As the journey unfolds and the subject garners more and more structural and functional abilities, the relationship will appear to be more related to the destination. Finally, there will come a time when the prescription is very specific to the destination model. This general to related to specific pathway is not linear and

each of these components will appear at different times and in different combinations with each other – all relevant and related to the unique interpretation and adaptation rhythm of the individual.

There are many sources to use when ascertaining this technical model – books, video, etc, but nothing better than seeing the model being executed live. Because the coaching of the progression along the learning continuum should always be set in a 'long term' strategy one can expect that this understanding of the model will go through its own development and refinement as the coach's experiences mount into their thousands.

The key element to this 'appropriate' understanding of the destination, and the intermediate steps taken to earn the right to achieve it, is that the coach will need to be able to discern whether what they see is correct, an error or an interpretation. Never forget that every movement pattern will be attempted by the learner using only the tools available from their unique and ever-developing structural and functional toolbox. It will always be a complex journey of degrees of progression, regression, and consolidation.

It would be foolish to think and act, with an understanding that the individual's structure, function, experience, and maturity is optimal. It would also be wrong to think or act with an understanding that an individual's structure, function, experience, and maturity is the same as the person next to them. Put mildly, you are going to see a vast range of answers to the movement puzzle you have set the learner. As the foundation movements are experienced, the answers will range from completely ineffective and clumsy through to satisfactory. Seldom will consistency appear early. As efficiency and consistency in a number of movement patterns is achieved, be prepared for a regression in effectiveness when these foundation movements are exposed to the more complex fundamental movements.

If any of these overall concepts of the creation and progression of a wide and deep movement vocabulary that leads to specific complex movement efficiency, consistency and resilience is of value it is safe to say that all coach and coaching development pathways should contain them. Once this overall theory is understood and accepted as a legitimate route to follow whether to a well-being destination for all or a high-performance destination for the few, the practical elements must prevail. Deep practice of how to teach the foundation movements and then how to journey them through their many complexities to the fundamental locomotion, non-locomotion and manipulative patterns should become a cornerstone to all teacher and coach development.

As each month unfolds and I look at all the jobs available in Colleges and Universities (the major site of our next generation of Physical Education teachers, Sports coaches and Allied Health professionals) and the National Governing Body courses available for all our volunteer Club-based sports practitioners, I am surprised by the lack of mention of such a curriculum.

Today I saw an advert for a Lecturer in Strength and Conditioning and Sports Coaching at a University in the UK that described itself as "vibrant, research-active environment that values innovation, inclusivity, and excellence in teaching and learning". It made me wonder if this, or any other organisation, would be the one to create the aforementioned curriculum and truly innovate in the direction of well-being and performance. I toyed with the idea of applying for the post in an attempt to create a first step towards what I believe is a critical and ignored element.

Safe to say that at 78 years of age I would have been wasting my time. Here's hoping that someone, somewhere will grasp the nettle and create such a curriculum and then teach it. The one I have been promoting and teaching seems to have had some success but imagine what it could look like if a team of open-minded practitioners with official support and resources had a crack at it. While such an act might be viewed as being progressive it should be mentioned that the UK's 1958 PE Curriculum had many facets associated with these ideas.

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