

# 21ST CENTURY COACHING: IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS



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## Introduction

In today's tech-savvy, fast paced and ever-changing world, it's not surprising to learn that "we won't experience 100 years of progress in the 21st century - it will be more like 20,000 years of progress at today's rate" – Ray Kurzweil. The Figure below puts this into some sort of perspective and shows how knowledge has grown significantly over the past 100 odd years and is currently doubling at astonishing and unprecedented rates.

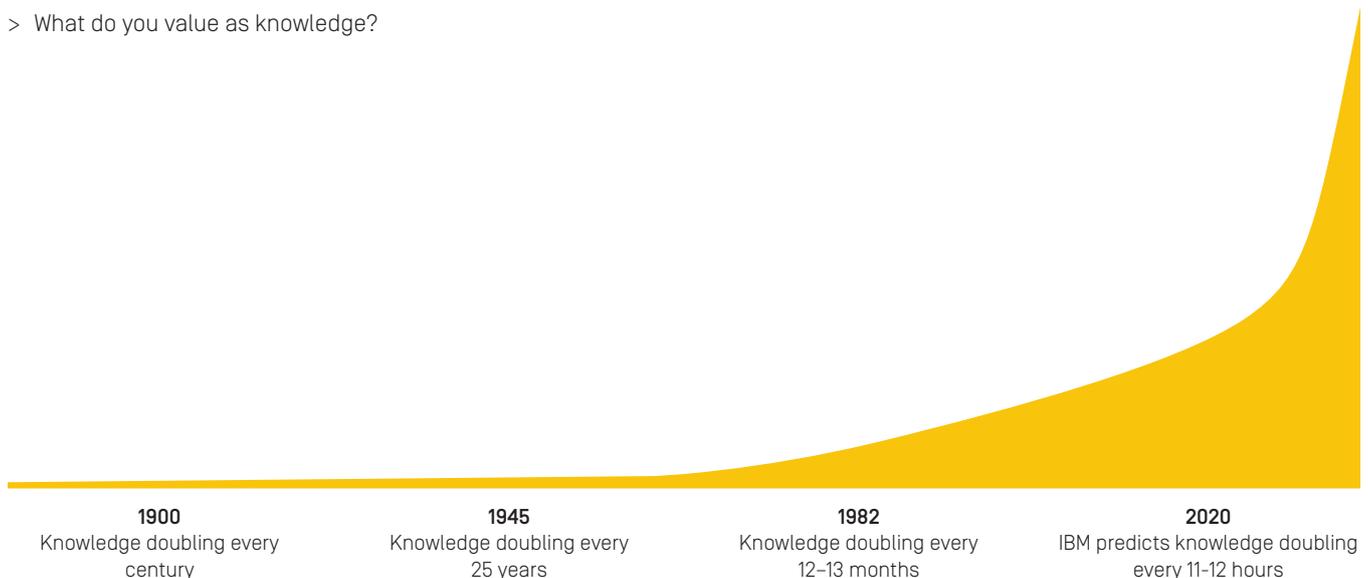
Whilst it's difficult to comprehend the amount of information that is being generated, the key questions to consider here are:

- > How quickly does what we know change?
- > To what extent is knowledge outpacing our ability to understand it?
- > How do you currently process and make sense of new information?
- > What do you value as knowledge?

## What does this mean for coaches?

The exponential growth of knowledge makes it clear that 21st century HP coaches need to constantly acquire and apply new skills throughout their careers to keep pace with this tsunami of information.

This could, for example, involve new ways of **thinking and being** and/or embracing alternative approaches for the gathering, processing and evaluation of data. The following suggestions (based on the premises below) aim to help with these tasks by providing a basis for future discussions.



Buckminster Fuller's Knowledge Doubling Curve with IBM's post 1982 prediction included



**Paul Perkins** is an associate Professor at the University of Canberra and a member of the Australian Institute of Sport High Performance Coach Development Team. He is a dedicated, passionate and experienced coach, educator and researcher with an extensive background in the Australian sport sector and a passion for helping others and seeing people succeed. Paul is skilled at, and highly experienced in developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating multi-layered sport-based development initiatives and has a thorough understanding of deductive, inductive and abductive reasoning and how these different processes can be used to draw conclusions, make predictions, and/or construct explanations. Whilst Paul's research has been multi-disciplinary and positioned within the broader societal context, he is currently exploring the benefits of more social and collaborative approaches to coach learning and is interested in contributing to long-term positive outcomes through the use of Australian First Nations methodologies.

**Underlying beliefs, premises and assumptions**

- > HP coaching is a highly a complex, challenging and multi-faceted task that requires a variety of skills and involves many responsibilities.
- > Learning is a social and collaborative process whereby knowledge is acquired and contextually tied to the settings and situations in which it is learnt.
- > HP sporting outcomes require interprofessional thinking and solutions.
- > Positive and transformative change requires tipping points.
- > Innovation requires more than the reproduction of existing knowledge.
- > Highly effective coach development tends to occur through opportunistic and serendipitous methods as opposed to participation in structured programs.
- > Doxa - the unwritten, never questioned and taken for granted rules of an organisation that promote, encourage and continuously reproduce certain ways of thinking and behaviour need to change.
- > *"None of us is as smart as all of us"* - Kenneth Blanchard.

**Suggestion 1**

The first suggestion is centred around the idea that the key to effective 21st century coaching is not only the acquisition of key sport-specific knowledge but the development skills, traits and beliefs that empower coaches to dream big and achieve big by transforming critical pieces of information into tangential assets (e.g., new thoughts, behaviour and solutions). These skills are summarised below and based on a learning framework designed by The National Education Association.

| 21st century coaching skills  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Role-specific skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Technical expertise</li> <li>&gt; Planning skills</li> <li>&gt; Delivery skills</li> <li>&gt; Management skills</li> <li>&gt; Pedagogical skills</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Literacy skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Information literacy</li> <li>&gt; Technology literacy</li> <li>&gt; Media literacy</li> <li>&gt; Digital literacy</li> <li>&gt; Relationship literacy</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Life skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Personal attributes</li> <li>&gt; Habits</li> <li>&gt; Experiences</li> <li>&gt; Dispositions</li> <li>&gt; Social skills</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Custodianship skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Flexibility</li> <li>&gt; Empathy</li> <li>&gt; Kindness</li> <li>&gt; Adaptability</li> <li>&gt; Authenticity</li> </ul> |
| Underpinning thinking skills – the 'four Cs' of 21st century learning   |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Critical thinking</b></p>   | <p><b>Communication</b></p>  | <p><b>Collaboration</b></p>  | <p><b>Creativity</b></p>   |
| <p>"Critical thinking is the art of making clear, reasoned judgements based on interpreting, understanding, applying and synthesising evidence gathered from observation, reading and experiment"</p> <p><u>–Essential study skills</u></p>   | <p><u>Communication</u> has many forms (verbal, non-verbal, written, visual, and listening) and can take place in person, on the internet (emails, social media and forums), over the phone (apps, calls and video), or by mail. While its effectiveness can be difficult to measure, its <u>impact</u> is hard to deny.</p> | <p>In the present context, collaboration refers to a person's ability to work with other people to solve problems, complete tasks and <u>learn</u> new concepts.</p>   | <p><u>Creativity</u> transcends traditional ways of thinking and includes concepts such as expression, imagination, gratification, experimentation, and enrichment.</p>                                  |
| Supportive frameworks and approaches  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Participatory action research</b></p>   | <p><b>Asset-based community development</b></p>  | <p><b>First Nations methodology</b></p>  |  |
| <p>Working collaborative with coaches and other key personnel to design and implement impactful learning and development projects in ways that enable holistic identification and resolution of real-world problems through repeated cycles of observation, reflection, planning, action and evaluation conducted in collaboration with the people for whom the solutions are being sought.</p> | <p>Acknowledging and leveraging existing skills, knowledge, experiences and expertise to enhance capabilities and capacities.</p>  | <p>Utilising techniques and methods drawn from the traditions of Australian Indigenous People to generate new actionable knowledge and know-how.</p> <p>Creating and sharing physical and cognitive artifacts, storytelling, yarning, kinship, introspective self-analysis, and information-sharing circles.</p> |  |

## Suggestion 2

The next suggestion is based on the simple idea that meaningful partnerships across interconnected disciplines (coaches, support staff, administrators and scientists) combined with regular periods of critical self-reflection could facilitate very effective learning at the boundaries of different professions ([interprofessional learning](#)) and create opportunities for the development of coaching knowledgeability. The model below provides a framework to guide the work and highlights how real world experiences would be turned into active experiments and form the basis of new learning cycles aimed at exploring, modifying and clarifying ideas based on what is being learnt (i.e., learning by doing, experiencing, belonging and becoming).



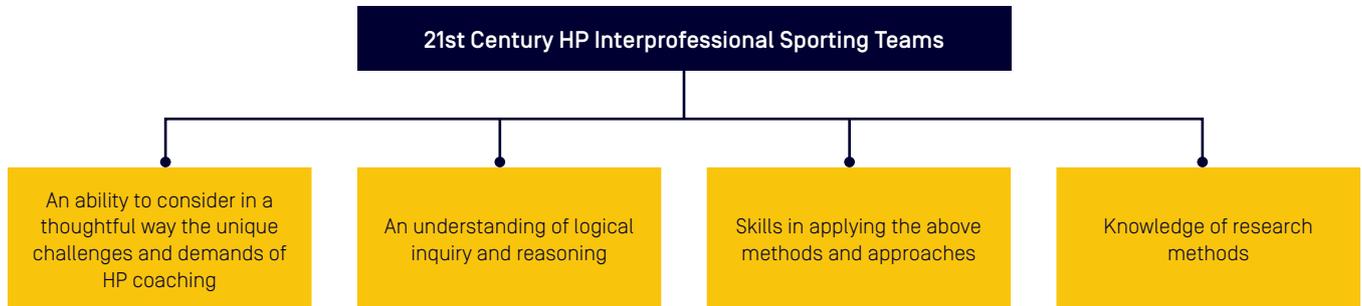
## Suggestions 3

The third suggestion is based on a set of educational strategies known as [the habits of mind](#) and summarises the different dispositions and personal traits 21st century coaches and interprofessional learning teams may need to use when faced with new problems and/or situations. When considering these points, it might be helpful to think of them as underlying principles of highly collaborative endeavours that aim to achieve HP sporting outcomes by critically examining, reformulating and continually testing new ideas through repeated cycles of planning, doing, reflecting, and refining. It should be noted, however, that the strategies are not measures of intelligence. Instead, they are suggested behavioural responses intended to help with the solving of real-world challenges to which answers are not immediately known.

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Persisting</b><br>Sticking to a task, especially when things get rough.                  | <b>Managing impulsivity</b><br>Reviewing relevant data, consulting widely and taking time before making decisions.   | <b>Thinking interdependently</b><br>Working collaboratively and using the collective wisdom of team members to develop new solutions. | <b>Remaining open to continuous learning</b><br>Understanding that new approaches must be constantly developed and applied for performance to continuously improve. |
| <b>Using metacognition</b><br>Constantly thinking about your thinking.                      | <b>Striving for excellence</b><br>Being thorough and always prepared to go that little bit further.                  | <b>Creating and innovating</b><br>Exploring new ways of thinking and doing.   | <b>Responding with wonderment</b><br>Having fun while figuring things out and being in awe of everything.   |
| <b>Communicating with clarity</b><br>Being clear with others and providing regular updates. | <b>Utilising multiple forms of data</b><br>Providing methodological rigor to co-created, context-specific knowledge. | <b>Questioning</b><br>Always asking: "How, why, what if".   | <b>Applying past lessons to new situations</b><br>Using what you already know but remaining open minded to new possibilities.                                       |
| <b>Taking responsible risks</b><br>Being daring and taking calculated risks.                | <b>Finding humour</b><br>Keeping a sense of humour, especially when things don't go as planned.                      | <b>Listening with empathy</b><br>Trying to understand others by listening with the heart.   | <b>Thinking flexibly</b><br>Thinking about things in multiple ways.   |

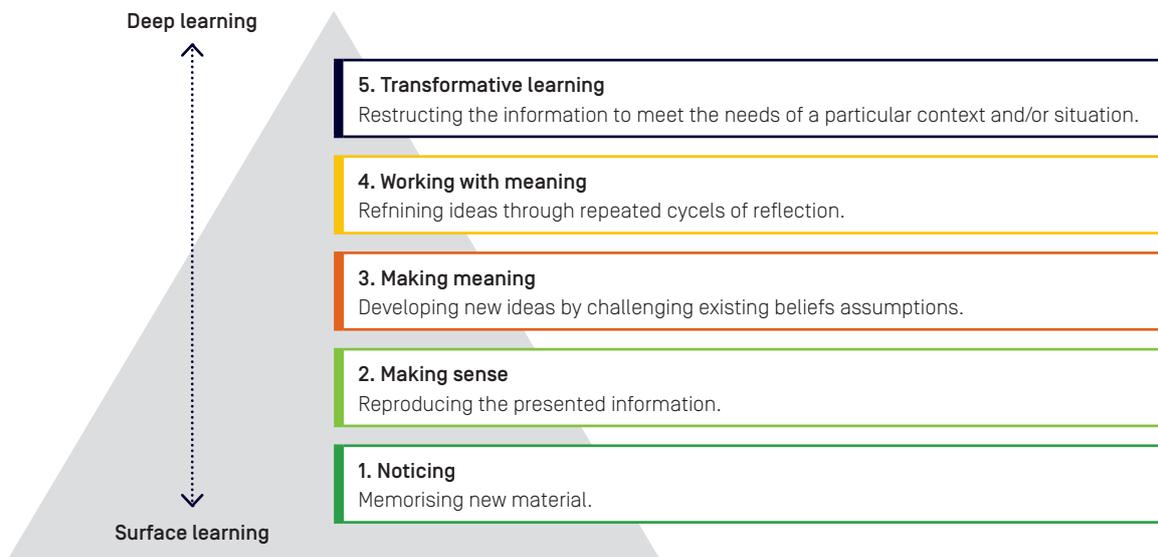
### Suggestion 4

Suggestion 4 aims to demonstrate how problems can be solved and solutions found when newly acquired information is examined in highly systematic and collaborative ways. It makes use of educational theorist, [Edward Glaser's](#) work and highlights how an ability to interpret data, recognise relationships between concepts, draw conclusions, and make decisions based on a thorough examination of presented information could be an essential skill for 21st century coaches and the teams they work with.



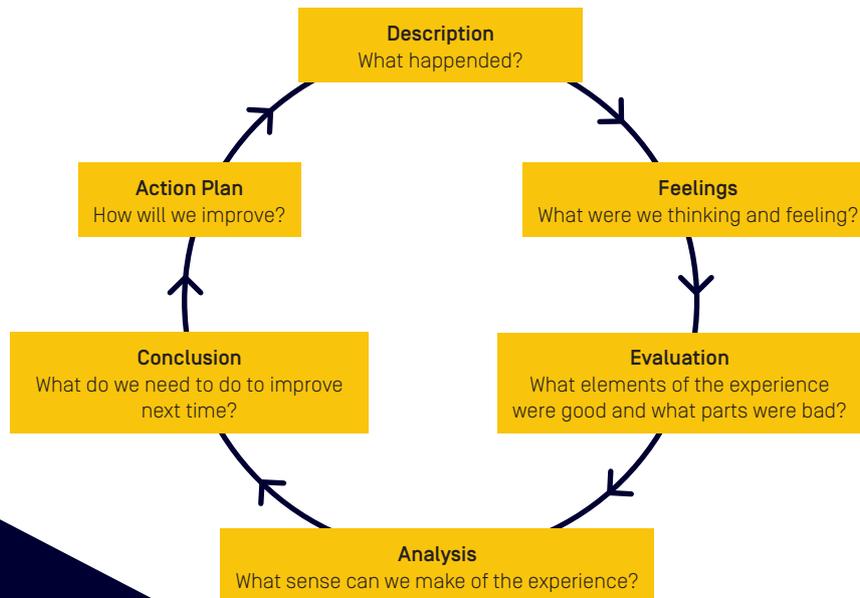
### Suggestion 5

This suggestion is based on the work of [Jennifer Moon](#) and is intended to show how regular engagement in meaningful reflective practice could assist with the development of new skills, habits, thinking and behaviours by encouraging coaches and other interprofessional learning team members to reflect on what they do so that they can better understand and improve their practice. Nevertheless, it should be noted that whilst exposure to progressively higher levels of reflection can progress learners through the different stages, the upgrading process requires a deliberate and conscious effort on the part of the learner and a willingness to be critically reflective.



## Suggestion 6

The final suggestion builds upon the previous ones and provides a **framework** for the examination and interpretation of real-world experiences, such as those that would occur from participating in interprofessional learning teams. This is important in the present context, since regular engagement in reflective practice has been shown to improve performance across a range of professions by providing a structured approach to learning that enables new ideas to be transformed into practical solutions. Similar to the other ideas, this suggestion should be viewed as part of a broader informal interprofessional learning process that aims to support the development skilful custodians and achieve HP sport-specific outcomes by providing opportunities for members to assess situations, reflect openly and honestly when things go wrong, make joint decisions and check each other's behaviour.



## Concluding thoughts

The challenges and demands facing 21st century HP coaches are not the same as the ones faced by previous practitioners. The world is a different place and the information presented in this paper demonstrates a necessity for change in the following areas:

- > Development of 21st century thinking, acting and doing skills.
- > Implementation of coordinated interprofessional learning teams.
- > Investment in knowledge exchange and transfer behaviours and habits.
- > Utilisation and management of collective wisdom.
- > Generation of mutual trust and respect across multiple professions.

The implementation and sustainability of these ideas, however, will require considerable effort and is dependent on the willingness of key personnel from multiple organisations to work together – something that could be achieved organically if given the right conditions.

## Reflections

- > What do you think are the biggest challenges facing coaching today?
- > What is your vision for coaching?
- > What do you think coaching will look like 20 years from now?
- > What three actions can you implement today to make this happen?
- > Could well coordinated interprofessional learning teams assist this task?
- > How effective are your critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity skills?
- > How do you currently deal with real-world challenges and transform information into new thoughts, behaviour and practical solutions?