

Developing questioning in your practice

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The ‘Debate of Ideas’ (Gréhaigne & Griffin, 2005) is a framework that can be used to challenge and extend learning within your practice. Originally developed as a means of advancing tactical decision-making within invasion based sports (such as basketball), the concept is akin to social constructivism and promotes reasoning, reflecting and decision-making. Gréhaigne and Griffin (2005) referred to the concept as a ‘tactical timeout’, which essentially is the provision of time and space to consider the tactical decisions employed within the game. The framework has four broad strategies that can be employed by the coach:

1. **Promoting Exploration:** Concepts such as allowing moments of deliberate play, time and space to explore problems of difficulties within the Moment of the Game. After some exposure to the problem, players may fail to perceive any problems, at which point the coach should provide further opportunity to explore, collaborate and work towards a solution. The coach may wish to add further modifications to the activity as a means of guided-discovery.
2. **Asking Open-Ended questions:** When a problem or challenge is identified by the athlete(s) the coach may decide to bring them together to debate among themselves or with them through the use of open-ended questioning.
3. **Asking Specific Questions:** After posing a divergent question the coach may observe and allow the athletes time and space to problem-solve before offering further facilitation.
4. **Applying strategies:** Once a solution is reached, athletes should be encouraged to explore / test the strategy.

The benefits to such an approach include:

- Solicit critical thinking
- Based on constructivist thinking that develops confidence and autonomy in the athlete
- Encourages participation and co-construction of meaning and understanding
- Promotes tactical learning and advancement
- Knowledge is developed and interpreted through group interaction, which is fundamental to invasion-based sports.

The concept of creating ‘space’ for dialogue is important as this leads to the generation of actions and solutions (Cazden, 2001). For example, the following details a basketball specific set within the Offensive Moment of the Game.

In your small group (4 or 5) discuss the following in relation to developing a strategy to overcome the defensive play of your opponent.

1. Identify the particular strengths of the opponent, consider their pattern of play, individual talent and the strategies they employed in their last three defensive possessions
2. What did you do well within the MOG to combat these strengths?
3. What things does your team need to further counteract the strengths of the opposition?
4. How will you do the things you have just mentioned in question 3?

This ‘time and space’ can be introduced at any point within a set / drill / activity and will both empower your athletes as well as develop their confidence and competence across a range of POGs. As oppose to the provision of instruction, attempt to pose a series of questions that will ultimately engage your players in the process of active learning.

References:

- Cazden, C. B. (2001). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Gréhaigne, J. –F., & Griffin, L. L. (2005) *Teaching and learning team sports and games*. New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.
- Messam, S. A. (2019, February). Talent thinking: Theory behind the practice. *Basketball England Aspire Conference*, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK.