

Evaluation of a Life Skill Coach Development Programme in Primary School Physical Education

Darren Nolan, PhD
University of Hertfordshire

INTRODUCTION

Project conducted in conjunction with Palace for Life Foundation (PFL).

PE is an ideal context in which life skills can be developed. Life skills are skills that are developed in one context, such as PE, and applied in another, such as the home or in the community.

Primary PE coaches are often expected to plan and deliver lessons that both prioritise and facilitate life skill development as part of a holistic approach, despite a limited understanding of life skill development and associated coaching behaviours.

Kirkpatrick's (1959, 1976, 1996) training evaluation model was used to assess the effectiveness of a Life Skills Coach Development Programme. The programme aimed to enhance primary PE coaches' ability to embed life skills in lessons.

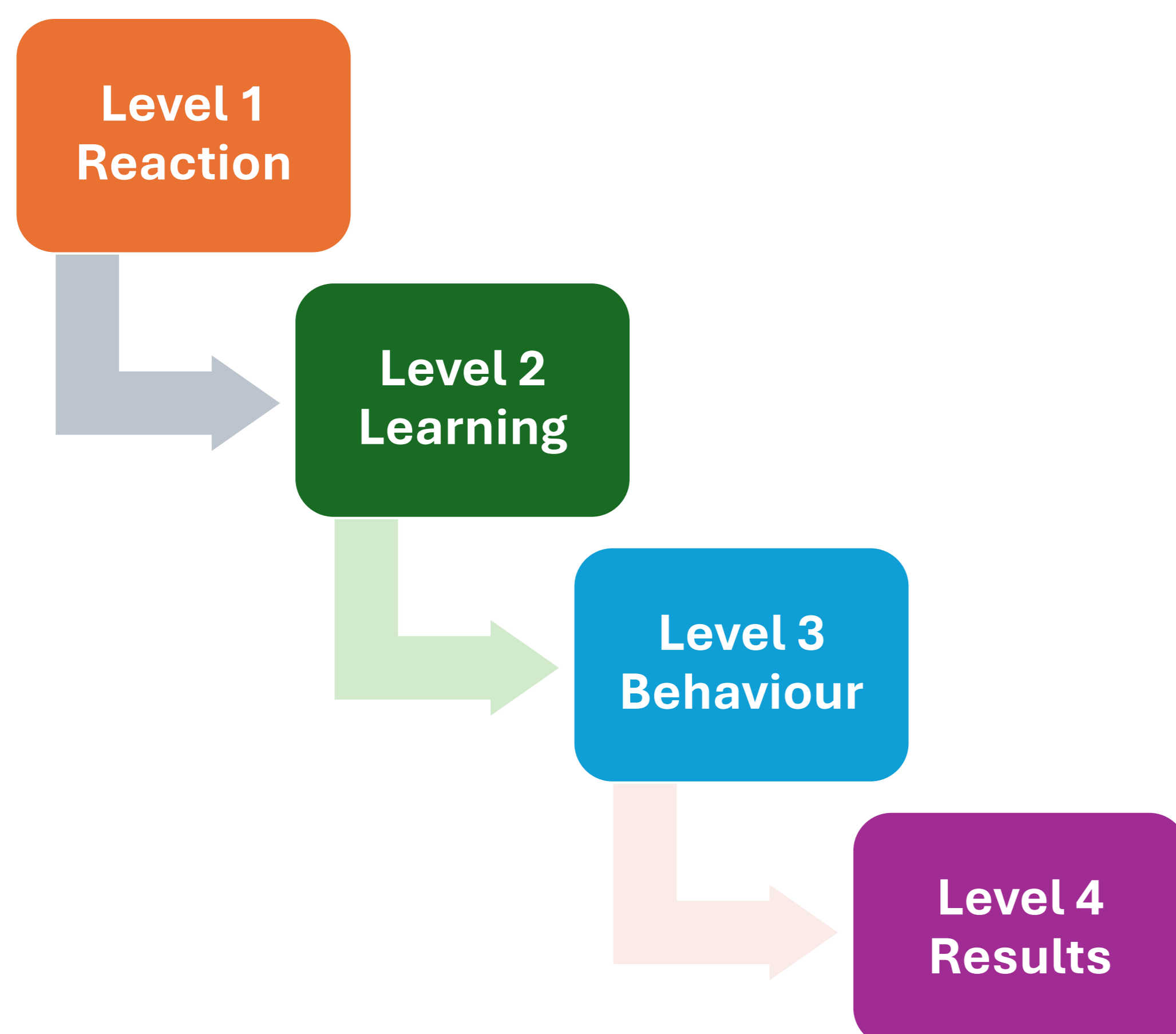


Figure 1
Contemporary conceptualisation of Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016)

METHODS

Participants

- All participants were recruited from PFL.
- Ten adult male and one adult female primary school PE coaches (Mean \pm SD for age and for duration of employment with PFL = 32 ± 11 y and 3 ± 5 y, respectively).

Data Collection & Analysis

- Fifty-nine unstructured observations (average duration = 39 mins) & eight semi structured interviews.
- Data analysed using Inductive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

FINDINGS

THEME	SUB-THEME
Reaction	Experience of the Coach Development Programme
	Proposed alterations to Coach Development Programme
Learning	Understanding of the research project and its purpose
	Understanding of life skill development
Behaviour	Application of new knowledge
	Non-application of new knowledge
	Utilising the life skill lesson resources
Results	Change in coaching behaviours
	PE prioritisation and project legacy

Reaction

"Yeah, I enjoyed it. I thought it was quite refreshing in a sense... I quite enjoyed being given the task of 'Can you try this through your teaching?' I quite enjoyed that aspect. And am, yeah, trial and error I suppose, through the sessions. I enjoyed when you came to observe me and I liked when you gave me feedback, because myself and a lot of coaches, I believe, build off a lot of feedback from you. And I do like feedback... to make myself better... I think the overall experience is that I enjoyed it" [Jody, Interview].

Learning

"So it's not just focusing on the technical aspects, not just making sure that the children are able to kick a ball or strike a ball. But it's the skills that they can acquire from learning that, so your psychological and your social, and interacting with other people. Thinking about themselves and thinking about others. Am, so using sports and the technical side of sports as a vessel... to achieve bigger and better things as an individual, or as a group" [Lee, Interview].

Behaviour

"I used to rush and get through [lessons] as quick as I could... just so I could get there. Just so I could say I'd done it – 'Boom. Next one.' But now I know I need to take a step back... I need to let the children learn, and actually learn the activity. Because that's when I'm going to see the life skills instead of just whizzing through them" [Robyn, Interview].

Results

"Charlie has just told me that PE today is going to be delayed by 15 minutes because of singing practice. Kids will also have to leave PE early to do an interactive online lesson about 'Dr. Who?' Charlie said that this often happens, that PE gets moved down the priority list in place of other activities, which in this case is the Christmas show" [Charlie, Observation].

DISCUSSION

Programme involvement was novel and engaging for coaches.

The autonomy-supportive climate and school-based situated learning environment facilitated improvements in coaching practice and enhanced coaches' understanding of life skills.

To improve the programme, coaches recommended greater communication between PFL and schools about the project, and advocated for more peer learning opportunities.

Further observations showed increased coaching behaviours that promoted life skill development post-programme, although application of new knowledge in lessons could be inconsistent.

Lasting changes to coaching practice may be threatened by the low prioritisation of PE in schools.

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