

# Who is the coach?

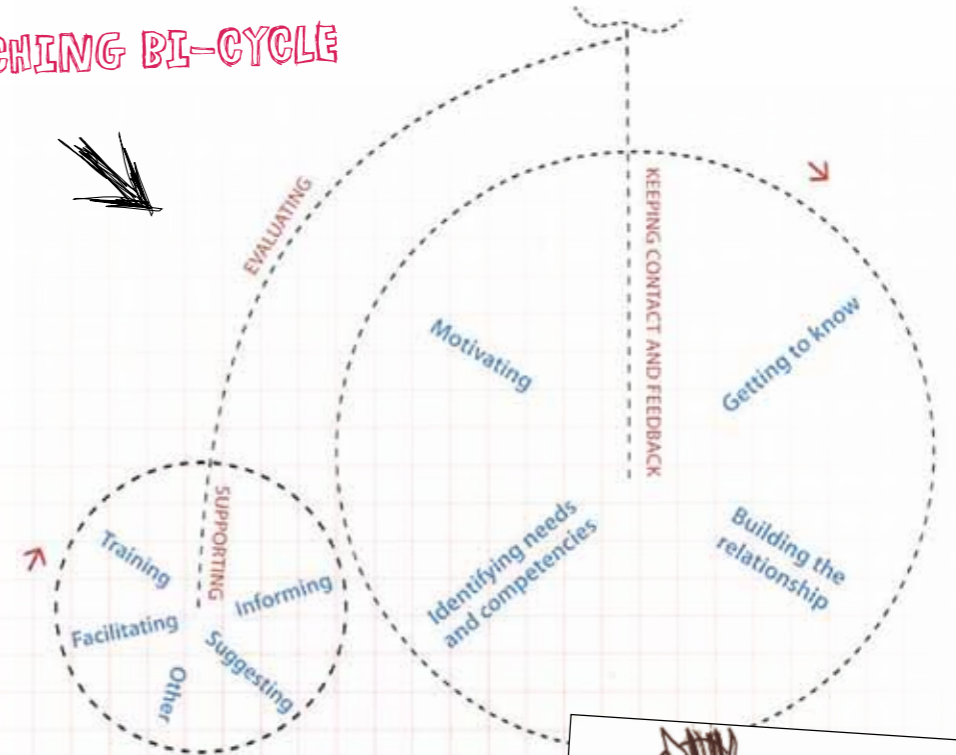
by Mark Taylor

'Marker' is a regular column in Coyote, written by Mark Taylor, looking at issues in training and hoping to encourage debate, questions and a fusion between 'tarte flambée' and a rock.

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## COACHING BI-CYCLE



Coaching, mentoring, guiding, listening, contacting, monitoring – the list goes on and on so that it's almost like one of those old adverts for Coke drinks. I've been thinking about coaching in long-term courses and came up with a dilemma or two and thought it might be nice to put them here and maybe even find out if you share some of the concerns...

Research will probably come up with some answers about when the first long-term training courses (LITCs) were implemented in our field of international youth non-formal learning/education. I remember very well the excitement around the European Youth Centre's first LITC in 1990. The idea that people come together and learn things, go away and (try to) put them into practice in projects and THEN come back together and review all their experience and even go further – a revolution!

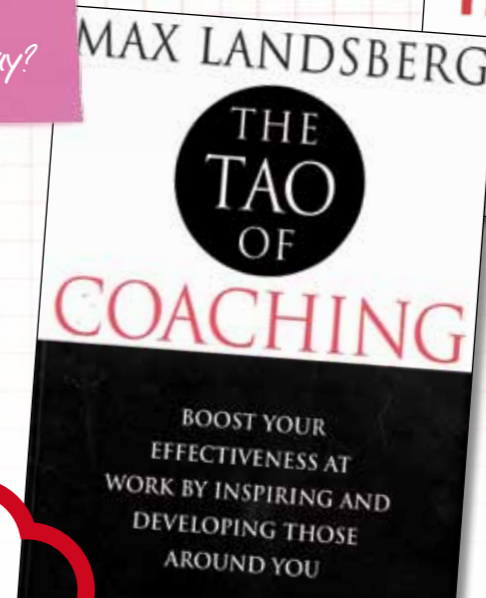
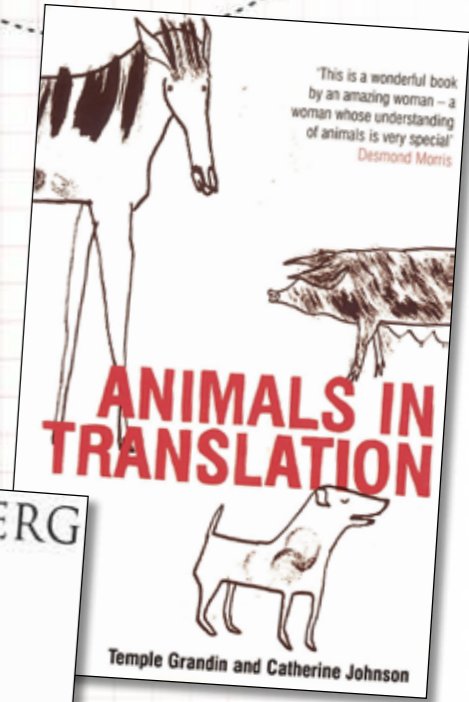
Along the way all sorts of pieces have been added to the picture, with one of the biggest steps being: there should be some form of organised contact between the trainers and the participants. What for? For a host of reasons, some of them listed here:

- To help the learning process
- To keep a sense of community (or community of practice)
- To check up if the participants are 'doing their homework'
- To find out what needs to be addressed in the next seminar/meeting/online session
- To give the trainers something to do between meetings
- To make the participants feel like Big Brother/Sister/Sibling is watching them
- To show that this course is also as serious as other ones
- To increase the loveness-ness (no, don't ask me to explain that one)
- To facilitate the re-alignment of goal-setting for trainers and participants...

The list can go on. Not everything is valid for each course. Of course.

There was a fashion a while ago to talk about 'mentors', 'mentees' and 'mentoring' which has given way mainly to 'coaches', 'coachees' and 'coaching'. And I wonder about it, not only because I am involved with others in attempting to put together a little publication ostensibly about coaching. As time goes on, I find myself returning increasingly to two key questions, which Rui Gomes of the Youth and Sport Directorate asked of practitioners, policy makers and researchers about non-formal learning/education:

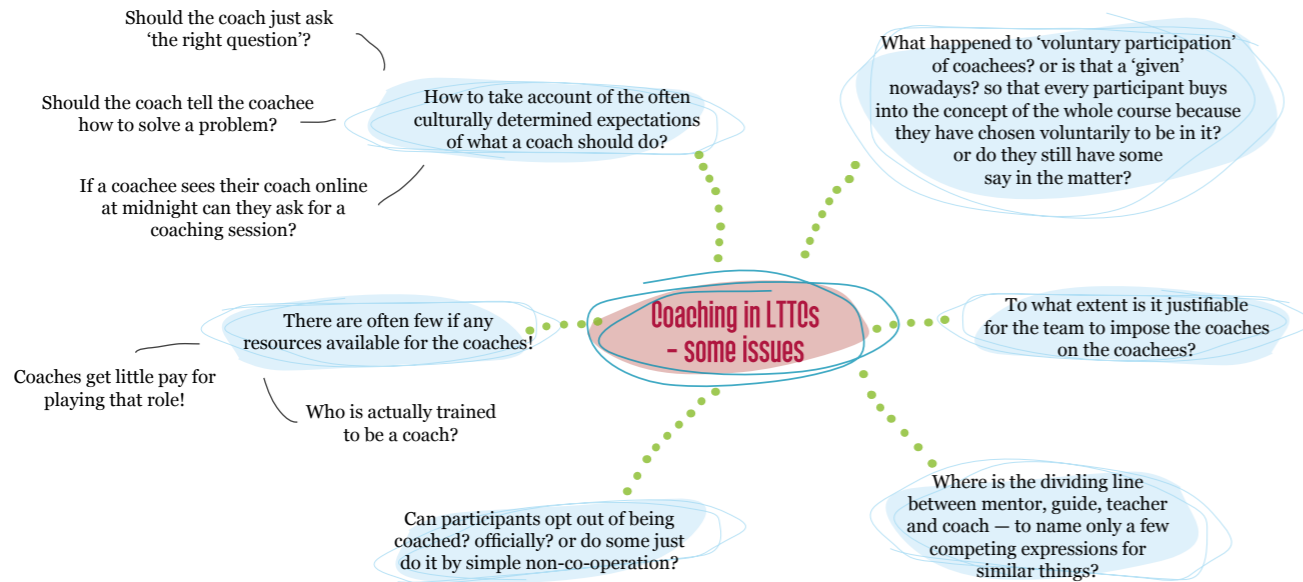
Can we say what we do?  
And...  
Can we do what we say?





# Who is the coach?

A big step was surely taken in the production of the Coaching Guide (see reference below) where principles of coaching are applied to coaching youth initiatives. Within the specific situation of LTTCs this reflection is only beginning and before deciding about including coaching as being something just totally 'natural', I think we need to look more closely at the following issues:



## And finally

Thanks again to those who write – it helps. During a recent course in which I participated we had a workshop of silence. As part of the introduction, the trainer was talking about the reasons for doing this together and not on your own: 'because being silent with others is different'. And it surely is. Next time we go into the 'pataphysics of animal whispering. (Strangely I have always missed the Jarry<sup>1</sup> apostrophe before the word 'pataphysics – sorry about that, I am striving for better control of such things).

## Sounds, words, inspirations

- Agnes Obel (2011)**, *Philharmonics*
- Eddie Vedder (2011)**, *Ukulele Songs*, Universal Records
- Gil Scott-Heron (1977)**, *Race track in France*, Arista Records
- Helmut Schmidt/Giovanni di Lorenzo (2010)**, *Auf eine Zigarette mit Helmut Schmidt*, KiWi paperback. ISBN: 978-3-462-04215-3
- Mario d'Agostino et al (2008)**, 'Coaching Guide – Coaching Youth Initiatives', SALTO-YOUTH Participation Resource Centre, Brussels
- Max Landsberg (1997)**, *The Tao of Coaching*, Harper Collins. ISBN: 0-00-638811-6
- Temple Grandin & Catherine Johnson (2005)**, *Animals in Translation*, Bloomsbury. ISBN: 0-7475-6669-0
- The Shins (2001)**, *New Slang*, **Sub Pop Records**  
watch out, some say this song can change your life!  
Or is it the other one? "The Celibate Life"?

1. End note  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pataphysics>