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Unified Rugby Course

➤ The Role of the Enabler

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The word *enable* in a broad sense refers to the idea of "making something easier", which presupposes that there is some difficulty. It also requires that there is "something" or "someone", somehow "external" to the issue or occupying a "vacant" place, that facilitates progress or improves the current state of the situation. That someone is the enabler, i.e. the subject of the action of enabling.

The origins of the enabler's role.

Nowadays, **mediated learning** methods are being imposed, and the teacher's functions are being restructured, generating new models of didactic methodology in which the **teacher** acts as an enabler of **learning**, a **mediator of social culture** and an **architect of knowledge**. The concept of mediator and mediated learning has its origin in [Vygotsky \(1934\)](#) and more specifically in the concept of the Zone of Potential Development, which indicates the learning possibilities of a student with the help of teachers. According to Vygotsky, learning engenders an area of potential development, stimulates and activates internal processes within the framework of interrelationships which become internal acquisitions. The teacher ceases to be a mere explainer and becomes "a builder of the learner's learning together with the learner": what the learner can learn on his or her own does not have to be explained. He/she only acts when necessary and as a support. The teacher as a **mediator of learning** chooses and selects the most appropriate content (ways of knowing) and methods (ways of doing) to try to develop the expected skills, and must know how to manage his or her silences and keep quiet "in time and out of time". This type of mental processes involves intense activity on the part of the learner, but the tasks must be very well selected and defined.

The term *enabler* has become increasingly popular in academic settings over the last 10 years. It is sometimes confused with a *coach* or *trainer*, but it is more complex than that. It is a person who has the necessary tools to energise a team of people when solving a problem and/or developing



Importance of Communication: When communicating and conveying something to someone, tones of voice, body posture, etc., all these factors - verbal and non-verbal - are very important, as important as, or more important than, learning or cognitive factors.

Stimulus variation: The five senses have a threshold of exhaustion, after a while of listening to the same thing, the system becomes less receptive to change, so by varying the stimulus we are able to maintain attention. Nowadays most people have a very short attention span, partly due to the use of new technologies, so we need some way of varying the stimulus (e.g. tone of voice; group or individual interactions; gestures or pauses). Variation of the stimulus is basically targeting different senses.

Comfort: People learn best when they feel comfortable. We must take care of the physical and emotional comfort of the group. As enablers we make sure they can see and hear us clearly; anticipate what we will do; give ourselves a few minutes to calm down before we start.

Contact: It is important to help people feel connected. It is essential to establish and maintain direct contact with each participant and to provide opportunities for people in the group to link directly with each other.

Pace: "Slow down, I'm in a hurry"; "Less is more". Working through a few experiences in depth, slowly and carefully, is of greater didactic value than covering too much at once but superficially. Spending as much time as necessary, without rushing, is better than trying to rush things in order to beat time for the sole purpose of achieving a goal.

Expectations: It is important that each person can say what their wishes and hopes are, depending on the size of the group and the time we have. However, there are differences between what the group members expect to happen, the plans and ideas we (enablers) have and what will actually happen.





The role of the enabler and its characteristics

Enablers are able-bodied players who already know the sport or want to learn with them and can help other athletes improve. They become an extension of the coach with multiple functions. They are in charge of making sure that all players are participating and feel comfortable with the exercises. They are a positive role model to imitate, both in sporting and social aspects, enabling communication and integration with the rest of the teammates. They have the task of playing and ensuring that others play, always prioritising the safety and enjoyment of people with disabilities. The coach poses challenges and questions that players and enablers solve together, learning in a cooperative way. Players are involved in decisions and have space and time to explain and demonstrate their choices.

The values transmitted by the enablers are the fundamental part of the project; they are people who voluntarily attend the training sessions with the dual function of doing sport and helping other people to enjoy the benefits of sport. Affective bonds are created that end in sincere friendships that could not have happened without the common axis of sport.

Some of the most important characteristics of the enabler's role are that he/she can draw on the knowledge and ideas of the different members of a group, helping them to learn from each other and to think and act together. He or she should also help the group to find new ways of thinking and analysing the situation that has arisen. An enabler should also be able to recognise the strengths and abilities of the group members and help them feel comfortable in sharing their concerns and ideas. In addition, the enabler should value diversity and be sensitive to the different needs and interests of the group members.

The concept of enabling implies that the experiences and knowledge of each participant are valuable and indispensable for collective learning. Therefore, the role of the enabler is to create or facilitate the conditions for the inclusion and full participation of the group throughout the session.

We can summarise the role of the enabler as follows:

- Set a model and example of consistent behaviour by being clear, precise and direct.
- Listen carefully (active listening) without judgement.
- Be aware of the comfort level of the group and the pace required for the activity.
- Cultivate inner motivation and an attitude of patience, humility, generosity and share messages of growth whenever possible.
- Progress slowly, calmly, promoting deep learning, giving space for the expression of the participants.
- Use any intervention as an opportunity to increase participants' confidence, with a sense of tact and humour, accepting and acknowledging one's own mistake, when there is one.



- Keep what has been useful and leave aside what has been useless, but learn from both.

Qualities of an enabler

The following are some methodological skills that the enabler should develop:

- Trust in other people and their capacity.
- Have a democratic and participatory attitude.
- Have patience and the ability to listen.
- Be open to develop new skills.
- Respect the opinions of others, not imposing their own ideas.
- Create an atmosphere of trust among participants.
- Know the processes of group dynamics.
- Have a sense of humour.
- Know how to work in a team.
- Be tolerant of criticism and have the capacity for self-evaluation.

Sources

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