

# **An Examination into the Delivery of the 4 Star Leaders Training course and Cross Discipline Expertise within 4 Star Leader Providers.**

**Calum McNicol**

Independent Study submitted as part of Postgraduate Diploma, Performance Coaching, University of Stirling, 2016.

## **Abstract**

### **Background and Purpose**

It is typical for the adventure sport coach in the UK to be expert in more than one discipline. This Cross Discipline Expertise can be defined as someone who has gained a professional qualification that allows them to deliver training and assessment for aspirant leaders in a number of different sports. However, the 4 Star Providers own philosophies, beliefs and values will influence the way in which they interact with their students. How does this effect their work with aspirant leaders?

The purpose of this study was to address two questions:

1. What influence does cross discipline expertise have on the content and delivery of a Four Star Leader training course?
2. Are cross discipline coaches approaching decision-making and situational awareness the same way as single discipline coaches?

### **What was done?**

The study was divided into 3 phases:

1. Interviews with 4 Star Providers
2. Interviews with 4 Star Trainees
3. Questionnaire to 4 Star Providers

Participants: In phase 1: Four providers participated in semi-structured interviews. All Providers lived and worked in Scotland and had delivered 4 Star Leader courses for on average 9.50 years. In phase 2: Two trainees participated in semi-structured interviews. In phase 3: 17 providers responded to the questionnaire.

Process: Phase 1 & 2: Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information on the providers and trainees perceptions of the key areas of the syllabus for 4 Star Leader courses. The interviews last on average 32.5 mins (Providers) and 35 mins (Trainees). They were recorded, transcribed, and analysed to develop themes to address the study questions. Phase 3: A questionnaire was developed based on the themes from phase 1 and distributed via an online survey tool to Providers in Scotland.

## Key findings

Six main themes were developed from Phase 1 (Providers) describing the key areas of the syllabus. These were explored from the trainees and other providers (questionnaire) perspectives in phases 2 and 3. The six themes were:

1. *Scenario based sessions* (included technical capabilities, safe place to go and try, appropriate to the student, additional complications)
2. *Leadership skills* (included group awareness, personal qualities, personal paddling competencies, psychological position of students)

46% of Providers in Scotland agreed that good leadership is mostly about “good positioning” and “good communication.”

3. *Situational awareness* (included cognitive capacities, pattern Recognition, reading the environment, attention to group)

Despite the fact that 89% of Providers in Scotland “agree” or “strongly agree” that situational awareness is a learned skill, one trainee wasn’t made aware of the term or introduced to it as a concept during his training courses. The other trainee indicated that reading and assessing the situation was a recurring theme during his training course.

4. *Reflection* (included time on activity, open questioning, capacity to reflect, story building, reflection on, retrospective Reflection on)

87% of Providers in Scotland claim to actively teach reflection on their training courses and all 4 Providers interviewed, felt that at some point on their courses. The trainees interviewed experienced differing levels of encouragement to reflect on their performance during training.

5. *Decision making* (included time sensitivities, naturalistic decision, intuitive deliberation, deliberative decisions, personal judgment)

All four Providers indicated that decision-making forms the basis for good leadership but that during the training course there is limited opportunities to teach effective decision making. Both trainees reported that they were allowed time to make decisions during their course, both at the planning stage and on the water.

6. *Feedback* (included anticipatory reflection, student lead, self-gained, formative application)

88% of Providers in Scotland agree with Jimmy, that it is important to make sure that their students “understand” the feedback they are giving them and more than 50% agree that it is the quality of feedback that’s important not the quantity. Both trainees were given an action plan and written feedback at the end of their training course.

## Points of interest for coaches:

Feedback, reflection, situational awareness and decision making were central components of in the 4 Star training courses. Along with the use of scenario-based sessions and introduction to the CLAP principle (Communication, Line of Sight, Avoidance and Positioning) of leadership.

Providers with cross discipline expertise approach to situational awareness suggested that recall, pattern recognition and story building (from other disciplines) helped them tell their story to their students. Their students appreciated the time given to them to assess the environment.

### **Conclusion**

It was evident from the study, through interviews and questionnaires, that 4 Star Leader Providers in Scotland are well trained and comfortable with and use sophisticated language and concepts to articulate what they do. All 4 interviewed Providers showed an awareness and understanding of the importance of 4 key components in training new 4 Star Leaders (feedback, reflection, situational awareness and decision making). However, it became apparent that those with cross discipline expertise placed greater emphasis on decision-making and situational awareness as critical and indispensable components of good leadership and made time to include them within their own training courses.

If you would like further information on the research or to receive a copy of the full project please contact: [calum@calummcnicol.com](mailto:calum@calummcnicol.com)