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ACTIVE GAMES FOR CHANGE A PEDAGOGY OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ACTIVE GAMES FOR CHANGE

A PEDAGOGY OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Physical education, sport and physical activity have a long history of being beneficial for the personal development of young people (Morgan, Parker, Meek & Cryer, 2020; Côté, Turnnidge, Vierimaa, 2016; Bailey, 2006). Active Games for Change (AG4C) is an Erasmus Key Action 3 project that aims to support young people in conflict with the law in the acquisition and usage of key competences to facilitate inclusion, education and employability, by developing an innovative framework of active games that seek to develop a range of social and emotional competencies in our target population. This overarching aim is achieved through the creation and implementation of active games delivered through a hybrid pedagogical model to maximise personal growth. The project, led by the University of Gloucestershire, has ten European partners and includes England, Romania, Hungary,

Turkey, Spain, Portugal and Italy. Partners include two universities, a ministry of justice and non-government organisations (NGOs), all of which are involved in researching or working as practitioners with young people who have come into contact with youth justice systems in their respective countries. The overarching aim of the project is to influence EU policy to adopt physical education and sport as key areas of rehabilitation and personal development of young offenders (or those at risk of offending). The key areas of development are outlined in Table 1.

Active Games 4 Change introduction

The AG4C programme contains 18 active games pitched at three different levels (six at each level). Level one games require less-complex social and emotional competencies whilst level three requires either more competencies or competencies used at

“
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Table 1: Key competencies in the AG4C programme

| COMPETENCIES DEFINED | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Self-awareness | Self-awareness is the thinking skill that focuses on an individual's ability to accurately judge their own performance and behaviour and to respond appropriately to different social situations. Self-awareness helps an individual to tune into their feelings, as well as to the behaviours and feelings of others. |
| Self-management | Self-management refers to the ability of a person to regulate their own activity with little or no intervention from others. This includes staying on task even when distractions are present and making good choices in terms of actions and behaviour. |
| Responsible decision-making | Responsible decision-making involves being able to demonstrate making a reasoned decision that considers the views of various stakeholders (other people) with a clear rationale behind the decision-making process. This may involve seeking the views of others or experts. |
| Relationship skills | Relationship skills refers to the skills, tools, knowledge and understanding to create, communicate, evolve, grow, trust and maintain a relationship. This involves being able to work effectively with a broad range of individuals from different backgrounds. |
| Social awareness | Social awareness is the ability to know and feel the people around you and the ability to interact with them in the most efficient and proper manner. This includes being able to empathise with various viewpoints and consider how your own actions may be interpreted by others. |

a higher level of difficulty, with level 2 sitting somewhere in the middle. Within the programme there is a suggested progression plan to work through the games within each setting, although we do encourage educators to be flexible in their approach depending on the particular group and their characteristics.

Each game comes with a full set of instructions; this includes the aim of the game, any rules, and an overview of the equipment and facility requirements. Educators will also find a useful section on how the games can be made easier or more challenging depending on the nature of the group they are working with. Alongside this, each game has a set of guided reflection questions to be used either during the game or after completion. This is a vital step in the game/programme delivery that will be discussed further in the following section. Each game has a QR link to a short video showing the game in

progress; this will help educators to better understand the set-up and implementation of the game should they need it.

On the reverse of each game card, we provide an overview of the competencies. This serves as a reminder for the teacher, but we would recommend that the young people become familiar with these competencies and what they look like in practice so they can begin to self-evaluate their own progress. This is something that could be shared at the start of the programme and reminders added at the beginning of each session. The assessment grid at the bottom of the card will enable the tutor or young person to assess their performance in the game at either an **established** (clearly demonstrates the competency on a consistent basis), **developing** (demonstrates the competency at times but is inconsistent), or **emerging** (rarely or never demonstrates the competency) level.



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Retrieval Challenge Level 3

Game Overview

Set Up
Create a circle approximately 5m in diameter out of the cones. In the centre of the circle place a water bottle on an upturned box.

Challenge
Using the equipment provided retrieve the bottle without touching inside the circle. The bottle must not touch the ground until it is outside the circle. If the rules are broken the game must re-start.

Set-Up




Competences

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Self-awareness | ★ |
| Self-management | ★ ★ |
| Responsible decision making | ★ ★ ★ ★ |
| Relationship skills | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ |
| Social awareness | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ |

Detailed information on competencies, indicators and levels on the back

Equipment

- 8 cones
- 6-8 lengths of rope (approximately 2m in length each). Skipping ropes can work well.
- 1 small box
- 1 water bottle
- Blindfolds (for progression)
- Coat hanger (for regression)

Adaptations

To simplify
Tape a coat hanger to the bottle to create an easier shape to hook. Alternatively, provide the group with a longer length of rope or make the circle smaller.

To Progress
Blindfold half of the participants, only blindfolded participants can touch the rope. Alternatively, increase the size of the circle or only allow participants to use one hand through the challenge

Reflection

- What role did you play within the task? How did this contribute to the success of the group?
- Pick another group member and explain how they had a positive impact on the task
- What could the group do in the future to improve their performance in similar tasks?
- What skills were used in this task and how could they transfer to other areas of your life?

Figure 1:
Example game

To accompany the resource, we are building the AG4C app to support delivery. The app will allow full access to all the details of the games, as well as guidance on delivery and management of the entire programme, including assessment tracking and progress reports. It is anticipated that the final version of the app will be widely available towards the end of 2021 on both Android and iOS.

The learners' social and emotional competencies will be assessed using The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), both prior to the use of the AG4C tools and after the programme of games and activities has been completed. This is a standardised scale which contains 14 self-report Likert-style questions and is quick and easy to administer, either on paper or via the app. In addition to the WEMWBS, the learners will be asked to respond to two questions after completion of the games to provide additional detail around social and emotional competency development:

- How did working with others help you to achieve the end goal of the games?
- How did you overcome any difficulties that you felt in achieving the end goal of the games?

It is anticipated that the data gathered will provide the development team with valuable information on the efficacy of the programme, as well as highlighting any potential barriers to the effectiveness of the project.

Active Games for Change pedagogical approaches

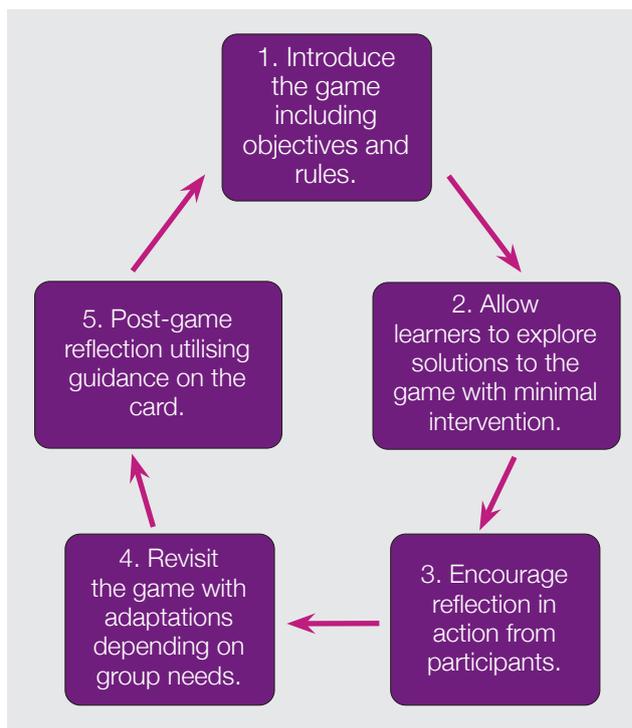
The role of the educator is paramount to the success of the AG4C programme and we are keen to provide teachers with guidance on the delivery approach to be used during the programme. Figure 2 sets out the delivery method for each game.

The teaching approaches within AG4C are based on several well-researched pedagogical approaches: Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (Hellison, 2010), Positive Youth Development (Lerner, 2004) and Adventure Based Learning (Sutherland, Stuhr & Ayvazo, 2016). These approaches have been shown to have a positive impact on personal growth of young people in a range of settings. Some key principles linked to this are highlighted below.

Positive relationships

Educators should do their utmost to build positive relationships with the participants. Simple actions, such as asking how

Figure 2: AG4C Pedagogy



someone is or taking time to find out a bit more about them, will go towards developing trust between staff and young people. Positive relationships should also be encouraged between participants and promote inclusion and involvement of all and respect amongst the group.

Awareness talks

The young people should develop awareness of the competencies they are aiming to develop through the programme. Awareness talks can take place before, during and after the games and should seek to allow the participants to understand how they are developing within in each of the competencies.

Gradual empowerment

Within the early stages of delivery, it is anticipated that the educator may need to take on a leading role at times and be more direct in their approach. Nevertheless, many of the games rely on young people using problem-solving skills

Table 2: Facilitation techniques for educators

| FACILITATION TECHNIQUES | |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Speaking for the experience | Focus on key events to direct their thinking. The educator provides feedback linked to the game focus to groups or individuals. |
| Debriefing or channelling | Participants themselves recall and evaluate key events. Ask open questions to guide conversation and gain views from a number of people. |
| Frontloading | Alert participants to a particular focus before the game. This could relate to something they struggled with in previous tasks or a key game competency. |
| Framing | Educators can help participants to make links between significant events in the game and their everyday lives. This is key for transfer to occur. |
| Letting the experience speak for itself | Participants reflect themselves with little or no input from the educator. This is particularly useful in the latter stages of the programme. |

Testing the games with undergraduate physical education students at the University of Gloucestershire.



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to be successful, so educators should be mindful of adopting a telling approach and try to become more of a guide, in line with many other pedagogical models (Goodyear & Dudley, 2015). As the programme progresses, the educator should be able to take a more facilitative role and only intervene if there are safety concerns or if the game is going too far off-course. This links with phase 2 and 3 of Figure 2.

Transfer

It is important that the young people are able to see where the competencies developed in the games might be used in the wider life within and beyond secure settings. This is where the reflective elements of the programme are vitally important; educators must encourage young people to make these connections and commit to actions outside the game delivery. This links with phase five in Figure 2. In order to maximise transfer possibilities, often a problem in personal development programmes, educators should provide examples of how and when competencies can be applied both within and outside the education setting, encourage target-setting amongst the group, and consider both opportunities for near and far transfer (see Jacobs *et al*, 2017).

To help with the teacher role, a range of facilitation techniques will be useful. Table 2

highlights these, with some examples or advice (adapted from Berry & Hodgson, 2011).

As the educator and participants become more competent in this approach, the need for conflict resolution and teacher intervention is reduced, young people gain a greater sense of autonomy for their learning, and the development of the competencies is increased.

The AG4C programme is currently being piloted by partners within the project team. Training for master tutors for each country will be completed before further roll out across a range of settings. It is anticipated that the full project will be completed towards the end of 2021, leaving a legacy of using physical education for personal development in our youth justice systems.

For more information about the project or to register for updates please visit www.activegames4change.org. ■

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