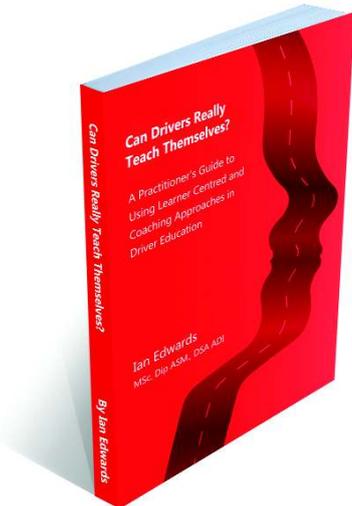


Can Drivers Really Teach Themselves?

– A Practitioner's Guide to Using Learner Centred and Coaching Approaches in Driver Education
By Ian Edwards, Reviewed by Mac McDade, £9.50



A big title for a small book on a big subject – coaching. Actually, it is more than that. It may not be the first book I've read about coaching, but it is the first coaching book I've read that's aimed at driver education. Whilst the DSA have been promoting 'client centred learning' for some time, I was keen to find out how and if the question posed in the title would be answered. Since the influence of the Hermes Project (the author, Ian Edwards, was the only UK ADI involved) started to filter through, I think it is fair to say that there has been some resistance to coaching within the industry. Then again, I think there seems to be some degree of resistance to change of any kind within this industry. The main misconception in this case is that coaching requires a complete change in the way you deliver lessons, which is not true. What it does require is an openness to take on, try and develop new skills –

something we expect of our pupils on a daily basis.

The Route

The book focuses on how to use learner centred and coaching techniques in driver education, and is written in such a way that it takes you on a bit of a journey. And like all journeys, we start with a bit of preparation - gaining an understanding of the need for change, and the difference between driver training and driver education. The book states that 'Driver training tends to focus on the ability of the driver to handle the vehicle and to integrate with traffic', whilst driver education is defined as 'Coaching and learner centred approaches aim, as much as possible, to make the learner both the learner and the teacher.' I found myself returning to this statement as I read through the book, in order to confirm its truth, and gain a better understanding of it. In basic terms, the learner centred approach requires the learner to continually self-evaluate their performance and then, after reflection, suggest ways they can improve and progress. The aim of the coach is to increase the learner's level of self-awareness and responsibility, whilst continually developing their self-evaluation skills. For this to work, it requires the learner and coach to establish an equal relationship, and for the coach to be non-judgemental. The book shows you how, providing examples, scenarios and questions that can help develop a balanced relationship.

The Destination

It was interesting to look in-depth at learning from a learner's point of view, not just what you are learning or how it is presented, but how they had learnt from previous experience; observing their parents, being a passenger or pedestrian, being influenced by peer groups and the media. It's not just about what is observed, but how this is absorbed, its influence on behaviour and formation of relevant strengths and weaknesses. This is something that certainly rears its ugly head in the world of 'instruction', but is rarely dealt with appropriately, but how this is dealt with by 'coaching', along with the common anxieties of learning any new task, are the key strengths of the coaching process.

You may have come across the coaching 'Toolbox' and the GROW model (Goals, Reality, Options and Way forward) before. However, from the 'Toolbox' I found the use of mind mapping particularly interesting, having used them for some years as a project management tool. I know how valuable it can be, but now I realise I've been missing a trick. Using mind maps to identify the learner's problems and concerns, and then to provide solutions is brilliant! Plus, as the book says, you also have the advantage of having a ready made, personal training aid for the learner to take away. There are so many good tips and techniques peppered throughout this book, including 'Micro-coaching' and 'Scaling', which are easy to implement within normal

lesson structures. The book will help you start the transformation to full-time coach, even if it is mixed with instruction. As the author states: 'Many approaches to coaching and instruction overlap. But, as a general rule, coaching comes first!'

The De-brief

After reading this book I felt challenged; challenged to change the way I teach people to drive. The book made so much sense I thought 'I have to try this', and I'd recommend it to anyone, especially those still sitting on the instruction/coaching fence, or who have their feet firmly planted in instruction. It helps even the most intransigent to think about the advantages of using the techniques described, rather than the inconvenience of change. It will certainly give you food for thought and perhaps even encourage you to look at a coaching course. So, 'Can drivers really teach themselves?' I may have said no before reading this book, but now...I think so. With my daughter just applying for her provisional driving licence, I've got the perfect guinea pig, so I'll let you know. To read an abstract from the book and to order, go to eDriving Solutions at: <http://www.edrivingolutions.com/book.aspx>. **edi**

Competition

Competition: What does the GROW model stand for? First three correct answers out of the hat on the 24th August win. Send answers to the usual addresses on page 3.

Mac McDade is a former ADI with over 20 years' experience in the training industry. He is an advocate for road safety, has passed the Cardington Special Driving Test and is a Director of Ideas4ADIs Ltd.