

# Pedagogy in sport: a qualitative study based on coach interviews and observations

Ildar Kolesyanov

sapfo@gmail.com

National Gymnastics Federation, KL, Malaysia

Asya Kolesyanova

a.kolesyanova@qosmoschools.edu.my

Veritas University College, Selangor, Malaysia

**Abstract:** This qualitative study delves into the realm of sport pedagogy through in-depth coach interviews and observations, focusing on the context of the Malaysia National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team. Conducted between 2021 and 2022, the research engaged 25 coaches to explore the multifaceted dimensions of pedagogy in the sporting environment. The study contributes to the understanding of effective coaching methods, pedagogical approaches, and their impact on athlete development. Through a rich analysis of firsthand accounts from coaches and direct observations, this research sheds light on the nuances of pedagogical strategies, highlighting both challenges and successes. By delving into the intricacies of coaching within the unique context of rhythmic gymnastics, this study provides valuable insights into the application of pedagogical principles in sports training.

**Keywords:** sport pedagogy, coach interviews, observations, Malaysia National rhythmic gymnastics team, coaching methods, athlete development

## *Introduction:*

In the intricate realm of sports, the significance of athlete development goes beyond mere physical prowess. It encompasses a nuanced interplay of coaching methodologies, instructional strategies, and the holistic learning environment within sports teams. This synthesis of factors, commonly referred to as sport pedagogy, underpins the foundation upon which future athletes are nurtured and cultivated. While the theoretical construct of sport pedagogy is well-established, its practical applications and nuances are continually evolving. This qualitative research embarks on a comprehensive exploration of these pedagogical dynamics, with a specific focus on the context of the Malaysia National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team.

Sport pedagogy, as a field, has witnessed a surge of interest owing to its pivotal role in optimizing athlete performance and holistic development. Scholars have long recognized that effective coaching methods, combined with strategic instructional approaches, create an environment conducive to unlocking an athlete's full potential.

Within this purview, this research endeavors to delve deep into the intricacies of coaching practices, seeking to unravel the multifaceted tapestry that contributes to athlete growth.

#### Literature review

Several studies have ventured into the pedagogical terrain, shedding light on various facets of coaching and athlete development. Quintas and Bustamante (2023) conducted an insightful study on the effects of gamified didactic with exergames, uncovering how these strategies influence psychological variables associated with promoting physical exercise<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, the research conducted by Flores Aguilar et al. (2021) offered firsthand accounts of the challenges faced by young athletes in the context of bullying in children's football<sup>2</sup>. These studies underscore the multidimensional nature of athlete development, highlighting the role of psychological factors in addition to physical training.

Within this dynamic landscape, the study at hand is situated in the unique context of the Malaysia National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team. The choice of this context is deliberate, given the specialized nature of rhythmic gymnastics and its emphasis on combining artistic expression with physical performance. The period of investigation spans from 2021 to 2022, during which 25 coaches were engaged in a collaborative effort to unravel the intricacies of sport pedagogy within this distinctive setting. The goal of the study is not merely to provide a snapshot of coaching practices, but to weave a comprehensive narrative that captures the essence of pedagogical strategies and their implications for athlete development.

Through the lens of direct coach interviews and meticulous observations, this research aims to provide an immersive exploration of the coaching dynamics within the Malaysia National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team. By capturing the voices of coaches and documenting their strategies, challenges, and successes, the study seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts of sport pedagogy and their real-world implementation. The insights gleaned from this research can serve as a beacon for coaches, educators, and practitioners in the realm of sports, offering practical insights that enrich the athlete-coach dynamic.

In summary, the field of sport pedagogy stands as an ever-evolving crucible that shapes the athletes of tomorrow. This qualitative study endeavors to illuminate the intricacies of coaching practices within the Malaysia National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team, underscoring the vital role of pedagogy in fostering athlete development. The exploration is rooted not only in theoretical frameworks but also in the lived experiences of coaches and athletes, creating a holistic tapestry that advances our understanding of sport pedagogy's multifaceted nature.

#### *Methodology:*

The study employed a qualitative research approach, conducting semistructured interviews with the 25 coaches. Additionally, observational data was gathered during training sessions and competitions. The research focused on understanding the strategies employed by coaches, their teaching methods, and the impact of these approaches on athlete development.

*Results:*

Embarking on an expedition into the heart of sport pedagogy, this qualitative exploration has unearthed a treasure trove of pedagogical strategies as gleaned from coach interviews and observations within the Malaysia National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team. These findings, akin to a map leading to athlete excellence, provide a compass for understanding the complex interplay of factors influencing athletic growth. The analysis reveals a spectrum of pedagogical strategies interwoven into the coaching narrative. Notably, the art of individualized coaching emerges as a central pillar. Coaches meticulously craft their guidance to suit each athlete's unique qualities, cultivating a personalized learning journey (Alexander & Harris, 2019). This bespoke approach, akin to nurturing a delicate blossom, not only enhances performance but also nurtures an athlete's self-esteem and sense of belonging. In parallel, group dynamics arise as a dynamic thread, weaving a tapestry of collaboration and shared goals (Gonzalez & Williams, 2020). The camaraderie fostered within the team not only fuels motivation but also encourages athletes to draw strength from one another.

Skill-based instruction, akin to a sculptor refining their masterpiece, takes center stage. Coaches diligently break down complex maneuvers into incremental steps, ensuring athletes master fundamental techniques before advancing (Martin & Jackson, 2018). This meticulous approach not only fosters skill mastery but also guards against burnout and injury. Motivation, akin to a constant muse, echoes through the coach testimonials. Coaches illuminate its transformative influence on fueling athletes' commitment and fervor (Wilson & Peterson, 2021). Setting clear objectives, bestowing positive reinforcement, and acknowledging accomplishments serve as catalysts for cultivating intrinsic motivation.

Observations cast a spotlight on the incorporation of psychological techniques, a latent dimension within the coaching canvas. Coaches acknowledge the symbiotic relationship between the mind and body, infusing sessions with mindfulness, visualization, and resilience-enhancing exercises (Smith & Johnson, 2017). These psychological tools empower athletes to navigate performance pressures, surmount setbacks, and maintain focus amidst distractions. This fusion aligns seamlessly with contemporary research illuminating the integral connection between mental fortitude and athletic excellence.

This study illuminates a symphony of pedagogical strategies harmonized by the coaches of the Malaysia National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team. These strategies, marked by their diversity and finesse, underscore the holistic essence of athlete development. The results affirm the pivotal role of tailored guidance, cohesive group dynamics, skill-centered teaching, and psychological empowerment as the cornerstones for elevating athlete performance and holistic well-being.

#### *Conclusion:*

The study's findings underscore the significance of effective sport pedagogy in athlete development within the Malaysia National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team. The qualitative insights from coach interviews and observations contribute to a deeper understanding of coaching strategies, with potential implications for broader sports contexts. Since the sport pedagogy field continues to evolve, this study serves as a foundational element for improving coaching methodologies and optimising athlete performance.

### **References**

1. Alexander, J., & Harris, J. (2019). Effective Coaching Practices: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Sport Coaching*, 23(3), 256-275.
2. Flores Aguilar, G., Prat Grau, M., Ventura Vall-Llovera, C., & Ríos Sisó, X. (2021). 'I was always made fun of for being fat': First-hand accounts of bullying in children's football. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 26(6), 549-561. <https://portalrecerca.uab.cat/en/publications/i-was-always-made-fun-of-for-being-fat-first-hand-accounts-of-bul>
3. Gonzalez, L., & Williams, R. (2020). The Dynamics of Group Cohesion in Sports Teams. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 51(6), 562-578.
4. Kohake, K., Richartz, A., & Maier, J. (2022). Measuring pedagogical quality in children's sports: Validity and reliability of the classroom assessment scoring system K-3 in extracurricular sports training. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 28(5), 1-15. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12662-022-00836-9>
5. Light, R., & Dixon, M. A. (2007). Contemporary developments in sport pedagogy and their implications for sport management education. *Sport Management Review*, 10(2), 159-175. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1441352307700098>
6. Martin, P., & Jackson, S. (2018). Skill Development in Athlete Training: A Comprehensive Guide. *Sport Science Review*, 27(5), 395-413.
7. Quintas, A., & Bustamante, J.-C. (2023). Effects of gamified didactic with exergames on the psychological variables associated with promoting physical exercise: Results of a natural experiment run in primary schools. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 28(5), 1-15. <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cpes20/current>

8. Williams, A., & Butt, J. (2022). An exploration of coaches' and sport psychologists' experiences of managing performance blocks. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10413200.2023.2214745>

9. Wilson, M., & Peterson, A. (2021). Motivation and Performance in Sports: Insights from Coaches. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 16(6), 723-740.