

Creating an Engaging Coaching Learning Environment

Daniel O. Jones & Ejiro U. Osiobe

*College of Business
The University of Saint Katherine*

The quality of engagement influences young athletes' attention, interests, and passion in the specific sport of participation (Alvarez et al., 2009). Simultaneously, the dropout rate is primarily due to an increasing lack of zeal (Gill et al., 1983; Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989). It is estimated that about 38 million kids are involved in youth sports each year in the United States (Williams, 2016). The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) estimates that more than 480,000 compete as NCAA athletes, and a selected few compete at the (professional [and/or] Olympic level). Today, the likelihood of an NCAA athlete earning a college degree is significantly high (educational attainment is 86% in Division I, 71% in Division II, and 87% in Division III¹).

Sport psychologists, youth development scholars, and researchers have noticed the trend of youth participation dropping between 12 – 13, which poses a significant concern(s) in the sports industry (O'Sullivan, 2015; Wallace, 2016). According to the NCAA, the transition from high school to collegiate soccer has an estimated probability that athletes competing in college soccer games are approximately 5.6% for men and 7.2% for women. Ultimately, coaches operate as social architects in their specific environments, with the coaching process being inevitably related to both the constraints and human interaction opportunities (Potrac et al., 2002).

Coaches need to create learning environments that ensure athletes are engaged, especially the younger ones who lose focus and don't like the stop-starting practice, which ultimately impacts the coaches' delivery methods (Potrac et al., 2007). Thus, to systematically understand the holistic development of coaching, coaches must develop and operate using self-past transfer of knowledge through effective communication methods (Potrac et al., 2002).

Leadership Style:

Leadership is an act that unifies a diverse group of people to work effectively as a team toward a common goal under varied and often challenging circumstances (Northouse, 2019). Therefore it is essential to understand the complexities of the process and how athletes perceive the coaches' application. Høigaard et al. (2008) suggest within the context of coaching. The coach's behavior is influenced not only by the individuals' characteristics, such as their experiences. Athletes desire several factors from their coaches' leadership behavior as a preference, resulting from the age and level of playing experience (Høigaard et al., 2008; Potrac et al., 2007). According to Høigaard et al. (2008), in times of success and failure, it was reported that younger, less experienced athletes preferred greater levels of coach support through clear communication than older, more experienced athletes. Potrac et al. (2007) state that coaches reinforce positive behaviors consistent with the coaching role, which provides them specific goals to accomplish, such as positive feedback to ensure their students can grow both as an individual and athlete.

Furthermore, Høigaard et al. (2008) mention there is no 'one best way' to coach, and as such, coaches must adapt their styles to the given environment, facilitating with the athletes. Potrac et al. (2002) report that instruction is one of the most effective approaches to fulfill players' needs. The outcome of this approach are that the players are, in turn, increasingly socialized into expecting instructional behaviors as they develop their skills, which stop creativity. Previous experiences and education of coaches and their core values influence an athlete's aspiration, goals, and creativity.

References

- [1]. Alvarez, M. S., Balaguer, I., Castillo, I., & Duda, J. L. (2009). Coach autonomy support and quality of sport engagement in young soccer players. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 12(1), 138-148. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1138741600001554>
- [2]. Gill, D. L., Gross, J.B. & Huddleston, S. (1983). Participation motivation in youth sports. *International*

¹<https://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-college-athletics>

- Journal of Sport Psychology 14, 1-14.
- [4]. Hoigaard, R., Jones, G. W., & Peters, D. M. (2008). Preferred coach leadership behavior in elite soccer in relation to success and failure. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 3(2), 241-250. | <https://doi.org/10.1260/174795408785100581>
- [6]. O'Sullivan, J. (2015). Why Kids Quit Sports. Changing the Game Project. Retrieved from <http://changingthegameproject.com/why-kids-quit-sports/>
- [8]. Potrac, P., Jones, R. L., & Armour, K. (2002). It's all about getting respect: The coaching behaviors of an expert English soccer coach. *Sport Education and Society*, 7(2): 182-202. | <https://doi.org/10.1080/1357332022000018869>
- [10]. Potrac, Paul., Jones, Robyn., & Cushion, C. (2007). Understanding power and the coach's role in professional English soccer: A preliminary investigation of coach behavior. *Soccer and Society*, 8(1): 33-49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970600989509>
- [12]. The National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2020). Research. <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-college-athletics>
- [14]. Wallace, K. (2016). How to make your kid hate sports without really trying. CNN. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/21/health/kids-youth-sports-parents/>
- [16]. Weiss, M.R. & Petlickhoff, L.M. (1989). Children's motivation for participation in and withdrawal from sport: Identifying the missing link. *Pediatric Exercise Science* 1, 195-211 | <https://doi.org/10.1123/pes.1.3.195>
- [18]. Williams, T. (2016). Reasons Why Kids Drop Out of Sports. *Our Everyday Life*. <http://oureverydaylife.com/reasons-kids-drop-out-sports-10440.html>