

# The role of a combat sport coach in the education of youth – a reference to the traditional standards and perception of understanding the role of sport in life of an individual and society

## Authors' Contribution:

- ☑ **A** Study Design
- ☑ **B** Data Collection
- ☑ **C** Statistical Analysis
- ☑ **D** Manuscript Preparation
- ☑ **E** Funds Collection

**Kazimierz Witkowski<sup>ABCDE</sup>, Patrycja Proskura<sup>ABCD</sup>, Paweł Piepiora<sup>ABCD</sup>**

Department of Martial Arts, University School of Physical Education in Wrocław, Poland

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## Abstract

### Background & Study Aim:

In traditional standards of youth education an exceptional role is assigned to the sports activity. However, the contemporary professional sports career is tempting due to the possibility of bringing fame, wealth and even power. This raises justified concerns whether such prospect prevails among coaches and youth athletes. The aim of the research is to obtain data about the role of the combat sport coach in the education process of youths, in the opinion of both entities: coach and combat sport athlete.

### Material & Methods:

The study included 60 top athletes and 30 coaches from Poland, from which every 20 athletes and 10 coaches were the representatives of three combat sports: judo, Greco-Roman wrestling, and kickboxing. The study involved diagnostic survey and the questionnaire.

### Results:

Most of coaches are aware of their educational mission, essential pedagogical competences, which should be similar to teachers. Most of Polish combat sport athletes declare that their coaches play an important role in their educational process.

### Conclusions:

Similar views of combat sports coaches and athletes allows us to draw a conclusion that most coaches prefer educational values to the opportunity to concentrate their activities on sports achievement. Cultivating these values suggest that competent coaches of combat sports can play an increasingly important role in the expansion of all health dimensions (somatic, mental, and social) of youth and their survival abilities.

### Key words:

achievement sport • budo • fair play • health-related training • sport pedagogy • sportsmanship

### Author's address:

Paweł Piepiora, Faculty of Sport Science, University School of Physical Education, Paderewskiego 35, 51-612 Wrocław, Poland; email: pawel.piepiora@awf.wroc.pl

**Combat sport** – *noun* a sport in which one person fights another, e.g. wrestling, boxing and the martial arts [39].

**Combat sports** – competition based martial arts. The combat sports investigated in this article are karate, judo and taekwondo [40].

**Martial arts** – *plural noun* any of various systems of combat and self-defence, e.g. judo or karate, developed especially in Japan and Korea and now usually practised as a sport [39].

**Sportsmanship** *noun* 1. conduct considered fitting for a sportsperson, including observance of the rules of fair play, respect for others and graciousness in losing 2. participation in sport [39].

**Kalos kagathos** – (Ancient Greek: *καλὸς κἀγαθός*), of which *kalokagathia* is the derived noun, is a phrase used by classical Greek writers to describe an ideal of gentlemanly personal conduct, especially in a military context.

## INTRODUCTION

It is an obvious truism to say that educational process takes almost a lifetime. It starts at family home, primarily under the care of parents, then at nursery school, first friendships with peers, disciplining impact and advices given by preschool teachers and afterwards by teachers at school. Some youths who continue their education at the tertiary level are still subject to educational impact of academic teachers. During an adult, responsible life, following standards and principles at work, in given profession, family and society is the canon of proper interpersonal relationships.

Precisely because of the possibility of shaping proper interpersonal relations, the role of sport is important in the education process [1-6]. Hence, the role of a coach (sports educator) is so extraordinary in fulfilling this mission [7-12]. In affluent societies filled by the media with the ideology of success, numerous parents are preoccupied with work, their career and search for a rewarding entertainment. Such parents transfer some obligations related to education of their children to sports teachers (who do not often have pedagogic qualifications). Therefore, a certain group of sports is very popular because of that [12]. Schools of tennis, soccer, ice hockey, and basketball remain very popular among wealthy people. The perspective of high salaries earned by sportsmen and celebrities is tempting. Mental and pragmatic grounds of popularity of martial arts and combat sports are rather different [13-21]. Randomised studies conducted by Kruszewski [22] on Polish population show that there are the following factors which lead people to choose martial arts and combat sports: developing physical fitness (40% answers of exercising persons); learning how to fight (38%); fascination with philosophy and culture of the East (14%). On the other hand, there are the following factors, which limit their interest: lack of access to sports centres (33% of answers provided by people who do not exercise); financial considerations (26%); lack of interest in martial arts and combat sports (17%); medical reasons (5%).

This unique drive for success, wealth, fame, and power gained through professional sport makes it lose its educational potential. This is particularly true for sport for all. Invariably, some proponents of the ideal of *kalos kagathos* perceive nearly the entire positive impact on education through sport. Proponents (idealists) underline the sporting traditions, ideals of Olympism, healthy lifestyle, the laws of social development of mankind, etc. [3, 8, 10, 12, 23]. From such perspective, sport is used as a pedagogic concept.

Unfortunately, there is much empirical evidence, backed up by the results of the daily observation of numerous pathologies in contemporary sports. Violence and aggression in sport and aggressiveness stimulated through sport, i.e. practice and watching of aggressive sport spectacles, are of particular importance due to mass character of interactions [24-26].

Still there is no empirical evidence on the more popular concept of perception of the role of sport in the education of youth – whether it is the creative one or more destructive one; whether this phenomenon is similarly perceived by athletes and coaches; whether both athletes and coaches are aware that they are being educated (although playing different roles) regardless of the possibility of combining long-term training with sport success by given entity (athlete or coach) or by both entities.

The aim of the research is to obtain data about the role of the combat sport coach in the education process of youths, in the opinion of both entities: coach and combat sport athlete.

Two research hypotheses have been verified: (1) coaches are significantly (in statistical terms) aware of their important role in educating the athletes and know that they should have pedagogic competences just as teachers; (2) athletes (sportsmen) are aware that their coach plays an important role in their education.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Participants

The study included 60 top athletes and 30 coaches from Poland, from which every 20 athletes and 10 coaches were the representatives of three combat sports: judo, Greco-Roman wrestling, and kickboxing. As far as judo athletes are concerned, 14 men and 6 women participated in the study (mean age of 20 years). The group of wrestlers consisted only of men (mean age of 27 years). The group of kickboxing athletes comprised 13 men and 7 women (mean age of 26 years).

As far as coaches are concerned: the group of judo coaches consisted of 9 men and 1 woman (mean age of 46 years); group of wrestling coaches: only men (mean age of 52 years); group of kickboxing instructors: 9 men and 1 woman (mean age of 43 years).

The study was conducted in 2015 during training camps of the national team of these three combat

sports as well as during training sessions in sports clubs.

The study involved diagnostic survey method and a questionnaire developed by the author. The questionnaire consisted of two open questions and 19 closed questions, including 18 diagnostic ones (monitored in different thematic tables). While answering 18 diagnostic closed questions, respondents could choose one of three answers: “no”, “neither agree nor disagree” and “yes”. In three closed questions, respondents were asked whether they agree with the views of the eminent Polish specialist in sport science [27] and experienced coach.

### Statistical analyses

The proportion (expressed in percentage) of answers provided to each question was used. The authors arbitrarily assumed that 95% of declarations demonstrates statistically significant index value for given sample from population (combat sports athletes or coaches). This means that this significance level allowed the authors to draw conclusions about the veracity of this aspect of the hypotheses, to which given question pertained. We defined the significance of the difference in two independent proportions of appropriate indicators of empirical variables (answers to particular questions).

## RESULTS

### Educational aspect of sport and training

Almost all (97%) combat sports athletes and all combat sports coaches agree that sport shapes character. Also almost all combat sports athletes and coaches (97%) agree that an athlete’s personality may be enriched through training, sports achievements, along with psychosomatic and educational impact. Only the answers to these two questions confirm a statistically significant agreement as to the opinions of combat sports athletes and coaches. Only coaches are strongly convinced that sport is a source of numerous situations referred to as “teaching moments”. Only 8% difference in proportions against combat sports athletes is not statistically significant (Table 1).

### Pedagogical and educational mission of sports coach

Most combat sports athletes (62-88%) and coaches (80-90%) agree with statements made by eminent specialist in sport science regarding the leading role of a coach in terms of sports expectations and preparation of an athlete for a social life. However, no answer provided by the respondents met the criterion of statistical significance. On the other hand, there is a statistically significant difference in proportion of ( $p < 0.05$ ) answers between combat sports athletes and coaches regarding the perception of the coach as a teacher, who prepares

**Table 1.** Answers of combat sports athletes and coaches to the questions pertaining to educational function of sport (bold proportions indicate that the required criterion of statistical significance was met).

Distribution of answers	Athletes (n = 60)		Coaches (n = 30)		Differences	
	N	%	N	%	%	t(p)
Do you believe that sport shapes character?						
No	0	0	0	0	0	
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.67	0	0	1.67	
Yes	59	<b>98.33</b>	30	<b>100</b>	1.67	
Do you think that athlete’s personality can be enriched through training, sports achievements, along with psychosomatic and educational impact?						
No	1	1.67	0	0	1.67	
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.67	1	3.33	1.66	
Yes	58	<b>96.67</b>	29	<b>96.67</b>	0	
Do you agree that sport is a source of numerous situations referred to as the “teaching moments”?						
No	1	1.67	0	0	1.67	
Neither agree nor disagree	6	10	1	3.33	6.67	
Yes	53	88.33	29	<b>96.67</b>	8.34	

**Table 2.** Answers of combat sports athletes and coaches to the questions whether they agree with the views of the eminent Polish specialist in sport science and experienced coach (Naglak 1999 [27]).

Distribution of answers	Athletes (n = 60)		Coaches (n = 30)		Differences	
	N	%	N	%	%	t(p)
Do you believe that “managements of an athlete’s training is an activity which consists both in inducing favourable changes in his/her personal qualities and opposing the formation of undesirable changes?”						
No	0	0	0	0		
Neither agree nor disagree	7	11.67	3	10	1.67	
Yes	53	88.33	27	90	1.67	
Do you believe that a “coach is a specialist who apart from knowledge also has faith in the value of their pedagogical activity?”						
No	0	0	1	3.33	3.33	
Neither agree nor disagree	10	16.67	3	10	6.67	
Yes	50	83.33	26	86.67	3.34	
Do you believe that: “a coach is a teacher, who prepares an athlete to live in the society by acting on the basis of humanistic content of education, training and ethics of this profession”?						
No	7	11.67	0	0	11.67	
Neither agree nor disagree	16	26.67	6	20	6.67	
Yes	37	61.67	24	80	18.33	2.347*

\*p&lt;0.05

an athlete to live in the society by acting on the basis of humanistic content of education, training and ethics of this profession. Such answer was provided only by 62% of athletes (Table 2).

The vast majority (97%) of combat sports coaches are convinced that they can have a significant impact on the choice of sports discipline by potential athletes. This view is shared by 88% of combat sports athletes. Statistically significant similarity of answers provided by combat sports athletes (95%) and coaches (97%) pertains only to the problem that a coach is a moral teacher and could be a role model? Significant differences with lower rates of the proportions of athletes pertain to: perception of a coach as a teacher (difference in 27% of answers,  $p<0.01$ ); perception of a coach as an “educator of character” (difference in 23% of answers,  $p<0.01$ ); considering attitudes, values and behaviours of a person who conducts sports classes as major personality shapers with the use of sport (difference in 15% of answers,  $p<0.01$ ). Coaches are mostly (90-97%) convinced about their creative role in a training process (Table 3).

There is a high discrepancy (a difference of 28%,  $p<0.01$ ) between the opinions expressed by combat sports athletes (62%) and coaches (90%) that being

a coach requires pedagogical knowledge and socio-pedagogical skills to the same extent as being a teacher. This constitutes an empirical evidence that the first hypothesis proved to be false in this sense. Statistically significant difference in the proportion of answers (13%,  $p<0.05$ ) is also related to the need of passing remarks by a coach, including also critical ones, in as optimal manner as possible (83% of combat sports athletes, 97% of coaches). 97% answers of coaches is the only factor which indicates that the required criterion of statistical significance was met which allows to draw conclusions about veracity of the first hypothesis (in the sense to which the question pertains). Similarity of views expressed by combat sports athletes (82%) and coaches (83%) refers to communication skills of a coach as one of the most important qualifications. This proportion of answers however does not satisfy the required criterion for the veracity of the first hypothesis (Table 4).

Very high number of combat sports athletes (97-98%) and coaches (97-100%) agree that relations between them should be based on mutual trust and that a coach should also be able to listen to people under his/her care (Table 5).

Distribution of answers to individual questions in both groups of combat sports athletes and coaches

**Table 3.** Answers of combat sports athletes and coaches to the questions about the impact of coaching on the choice of the sport by an athlete and shaping their personality (bold proportions indicate that the required criterion of statistical significance was met).

Distribution of answers	Athletes (n = 60)		Coaches (n = 30)		Differences	
	N	%	N	%	%	t(p)
Do you think that a coach and his/her authority may have impact on the choice of sports discipline by future athletes?						
No	2	3.33	1	3.33	0	
Neither agree nor disagree	5	8.33	0	0	8.33	
Yes	53	88.33	29	<b>96.67</b>	8.34	
Do you believe that a coach is a moral teacher and could be a role model?						
No	2	3.33	0	0	3.33	
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.67	1	3.33	1.66	
Yes	57	<b>95</b>	29	<b>96.67</b>	1.67	
Do you agree that a coach has a considerable impact on shaping personality of the athletes?						
No	2	3.33	0	0	3.33	
Neither agree nor disagree	4	6.67	3	10	3.33	
Yes	54	90	27	90	0	
Do you believe that a coach is perceived as the "educator of character"?						
No	6	10	0	0	10	
Neither agree nor disagree	10	16.67	1	3.33	13.34	
Yes	44	73.33	29	<b>96.67</b>	23.34	3.569**
Do you believe that a coach is a social educator?						
No	6	10	1	3.33	6.67	
Neither agree nor disagree	14	23.33	1	3.33	20	
Yes	40	66.67	28	93.33	26.66	3.707**
Do you believe that attitudes, values and behaviours of a person who conducts sports classes are major personality shapers with the use of sport?						
No	7	11.67	0	0	11.67	
Neither agree nor disagree	8	13.33	3	10	3.33	
Yes	45	75	27	90	15	2.241*

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01

were similar. For example only one coach believes that he or she and his/her authority has no influence on the choice of sport by potential athlete.

## DISCUSSION

Empirical data prove that the hypotheses are only partially true (with a strict criterion that 95% of answers to each diagnostic question must be positive). The first hypothesis is verified with the use of answers provided by coaches (one direct and other indirect

answers), but also indirectly by answers offered by combat sports athletes. Assuming that the selection of research groups was relevant to the objective pursued (there are no premises to assume otherwise), the result is an accurate diagnosis of the phenomenon examined in relation to the Polish population. If combat sports athletes who participated in the study have long-term training experience and high sports competencies, they must have undergone experiences arising from pedagogical and educational impacts of various coaches. This results from participations in

**Table 4.** Answers of combat sports athletes and coaches to the questions pertaining to social expectations about pedagogic qualifications of a coach (bold proportions indicate that the required criterion of statistical significance was met).

Distribution of answers	Athletes (n = 60)		Coaches (n = 30)		Differences	
	N	%	N	%	%	t(p)
Do you believe that coaches need pedagogical knowledge along with socio-pedagogical skills in the same extent as teachers?						
No	9	15	2	6.67	8.33	
Neither agree nor disagree	14	23.33	1	3.33	20	
Yes	37	61.67	27	90	28.33	3.737**
Do you think that a coach should know educational methods and principles of teaching and learning?						
No	1	1.67	1	3.33	1.66	
Neither agree nor disagree	7	11.67	0	0	11.67	
Yes	52	86.67	29	<b>96.67</b>	10	
Do you agree that communication skills are one of the most important skills which each coach should have?						
No	4	6.67	0	0	6.67	
Neither agree nor disagree	7	11.67	5	16.67	5	
Yes	49	81.67	25	83.33	1.66	
Do you believe that a coach should pass his/her remarks, including the critical ones, in as optimal manner as possible?						
No	4	6.67	0	0	6.67	
Neither agree nor disagree	6	10	1	3.33	6.67	
Yes	50	83.33	29	<b>96.67</b>	13.34	2.425*

\*p<0.05

sport camps, especially of the national team.

The first hypothesis about the fact that coaches are significantly (in statistical terms) aware of their important role in the educational process of athletes, is indirectly verified by three questions in Table 1 pertaining do educational function of sport and by three questions in Table 2 whether the respondents agree with the view of the eminent specialist in sport science – six questions in total. Half of answers met the criteria assumed, which means that this aspect of the hypothesis presented was only verified as true.

Another aspect of the first hypothesis about the fact that coaches are significantly (in statistical terms) aware of the need to have pedagogical skills similar to teachers, is verified directly by the first question in Table 4 and indirectly by questions 2-4 in Table 4, six questions in Table 3, two questions in Table 5 – twelve questions in total. The required significance of positive answers is showed by seven questions (58%). However, the most important indicator,

i.e. answer to the following direct question: “do you believe that coaches need pedagogical knowledge along with socio-pedagogical skills in the same extent as teachers?”, failed to exceed the 95% threshold of significance (90%).

Only 10 diagnostic questions out of 18 indicate that the first hypothesis is true. This means that its veracity is estimated at less than 56%. Indirect verification of this hypothesis with the use of answers provided by combat sports athletes allows us to draw a conclusion that this hypothesis is false – only 28% of answers satisfy adopted methodological criteria for positive verification.

In the view of methodological criteria adopted, the second hypothesis that combat sports athletes are aware that their coach plays an important role in their education (Tables 3, 4 and 5), proved to be false. Only three diagnostic questions out of 12 exceeded the 95% threshold of statistical significance (95%, 98%, and 97%, respectively). The question: “Do you believe

**Table 5.** Answers of combat sports athletes and coaches to the questions pertaining to significant relations between both entities (bold proportions indicate that the required criterion of statistical significance was met).

Distribution of answers	Athletes (n = 60)		Coaches (n = 30)		Differences	
	N	%	N	%	%	t(p)
Do you believe that relations between an athlete and a coach should be based on mutual trust and respect?						
No	0	0	0	0	0	
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.67	1	3.33	1.66	
Yes	59	<b>98.33</b>	29	<b>96.67</b>	1.66	
Do you think that a coach should also be able to listen to people under his/her care?						
No	1	1.67	0	0	1.67	
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.67	0	0	1.67	
Yes	58	<b>96.67</b>	30	<b>100</b>	3.33	

that coaches need pedagogical knowledge along with socio-pedagogical skills in the same extent as teachers?” was positively answered by 62% of athletes.

Empirical evidence clearly refutes declared educational and pedagogical expectations combined with training of not only combat sports [13-21, 27, 28] but of sport in general [29, 30]. This rather allows to conclude that the vision of commercialised sport starts to replace the fact of perceiving training of martial arts and combat sports (by the public as well as teachers and educators) as a form of psychophysical activity having high utilitarian and health-related value provided that they are used in a competent manner [15, 16, 18, 19, 28].

If the strict criteria for required statistical significance are reduced, the study results can be assessed as positive. Nominally, the vast majority of combat sports coaches prefer educational values to the opportunity to concentrate their activities on the achievements related to sport.

Studies performed by Harasymowicz are among the ones which show the need of continuous strengthening of these preferences in a broad utilitarian aspect (self-defence and prevention of aggression) as well as aspects related to personality (philosophical) and education of teachers of combat sports and martial arts. He claimed that training carried out in combat sports and martial arts in general does not fulfil the requirements of comprehensive preparation of a person in the field of fair self-defence and is done without sufficient theoretical, philosophical and methodical knowledge

of the foundations of arts of counteraction and prevention of aggression. It is possible to assume, that the education of teachers of combat sports and martial arts almost does not involve preparation to widely comprehended self-defence, as well as issues related to philosophical, ethical and methodical foundations of training. He empirically found that the highest criteria are met only by 8% of the judo educators [31].

Conclusions drawn by Harasymowicz are related to three important issues. The first one is associated with unused potential of combat sports and martial arts in diagnosing and reducing aggressiveness [28, 32, 33]. The second one pertains to the use of educational and health-related potential of combat sports and martial arts in effective prevention of pathological education towards aggression by promoting neo-gladiatorship, in particular in electronic media. Here a clear reference is made to Częstochowa Declarations 2015: “HMA against MMA” [34]. The third one is related to a disturbing tendency showed by universities educating specialists in sport and physical education to tolerate dissertations based on methodology non-specific to these specialties [35]. This tendency is counteracted by promotion of a new sub-discipline recognised in global science – science of martial arts, and its specialty – bibliotherapy [36-38]. These new tools can significantly improve the dialogue “coach – athlete”, which is an immanent part of sports training [41].

## CONCLUSIONS

Similar views of combat sports coaches as well as

athletes allows us to draw a conclusion that most coaches prefer educational values to the opportunity to concentrate their activities on sports achievement. Cultivating these values suggest that competent coaches of combat sports can play an increasingly important role in the expansion of all health dimensions (somatic, mental, and social) of youth and their survival abilities.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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