

## **From sport participation patterns to pedagogical training strategies: Fostering sport literacy in volleyball**

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The prevalence of highly specialised youth athletes is a concerning trend in the academic and practical domains of youth sport. This results from the premise of many coaches that only start practising at an early age and accumulating many hours of specific training athletes can reach a high level of performance in sport. However, research has shown that early specialisation is not the only path to excellence in sport. Also, negative consequences are associated with this approach to training in the long-term, such as physical and mental health problems.

Alternatively, evidence continues to emerge demonstrating the benefits of an early diversification approach. This is characterised by participation in diverse youth sport activities in coach-led, structured, and organised practice, as well as recommendations for greater involvement in child-led, unstructured, and informal activities. Participating in a rich variety of sporting experiences (both formal and informal) allows children to experience diversified learning contexts, leading to motor, physical, cognitive, affective, and psychosocial enrichment. Therefore, diversification may benefit not only skill performance, but also personal and social development. Such approach enriches therefore functional athletic development, establishing the foundation for future participation in sport and further specialisation in a target sport.

This presentation will explore the abovementioned theoretical concepts offering a link between theory and practice through the example of volleyball. The role of the coach as a learning facilitator will also be discussed as a key element in supporting and boosting the long-term athlete development.