

COMMENTARIES

Concept Note

"Commentaries" in the context of ISS are succinct but perceptive papers that provide professional comments, in-depth analyses, or critical appraisals of articles published in the journal. These comments play a vital role in the scholarly discourse by offering other levels of comprehension and interpretation of the original research. The main goal of these commentaries is to provide a more in-depth comprehension of the original article's content. Commentaries have the potential to increase the accessibility of the original study by clarifying complex concepts and emphasising significant discoveries to a wider audience. They also frequently highlight the research's wider ramifications, discussing how the results might affect further research, the formulation of policy, or real-world applications in the subject. Commentaries also offer fresh ideas, refuting established beliefs or putting forth different theories and approaches. This vital interaction encourages researchers to have lively, continuous conversations that advance their understanding and help them refine their concepts. Commentaries can spark new avenues of investigation and lead to breakthroughs in the subject by generating debate and discussion. These essays are usually written by academics, professionals, or specialists who have a great deal of experience and understanding of the topic of the remark. Their knowledge enables them to offer insightful comments and criticisms that improve comprehension of the original research. The authors' qualifications and reputations give their analyses additional weight, which increases the academic community's esteem and influence for their contributions. To sum up, comments published in the ISS journal are essential for enhancing scholarly discussions since they provide knowledgeable viewpoints, in-depth research, and helpful criticism. They eventually aid in the growth of knowledge in the field by bridging the gap between intricate research findings and their theoretical or practical implications.

COMMENTARY 1

An International Survey of Sports Coaches' Knowledge, Understanding, and Definitions of Physical Literacy

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Abstract

Physical literacy (PL) has always been seen as a valued goal of sports, whether it is the school physical education curriculum, sports training, or mass sports. However, definitions of specific kernels of PL can be different. As early as the 1980s, the term PL entered the field of British sports research, spreading to Europe, North America, and further afield (Bailey, 2020). In the present article, the authors offer an in-depth discussion of the phrase. At that time, the article analyses PL at the level of sports philosophy. It comprehensively assessed the complex concept through literature collection and expert opinions.

While this article used a version of an interview method, it also attempted to clarify and refine the concept of PL beyond accounts like "exercise ability," "health promotion exercise," and aspects of phenomenology. At the same time, it also uses interview subjects brought into the public's view from the perspective of professional practitioners for PL concerns. The Leximancer semantic software analyses the responses' content processing about the PL three-layer network meaning model, which can be more intuitive under practical use. The uses of the phrase PL here focus on different areas and regions between various subsets. It gives a new practical and theoretical reference value for future research on PL. In addition, the paper contributes to understanding the development of basic motor skills and highlights the need for more serious consideration of the relationship between PL and academic theory.

However, this study also has shortcomings. In the sampling approach, the coaches are selected using a convenience sampling form, and most of them are football coaches, so the obtained data have a specific direction or particularity. Future studies must address this and include coaches from other sports.

Reference:

Bailey, R. (2020). Defining physical literacy: Making sense of a promiscuous concept. *Sport in Society*, 25(1), 163-180, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2020.1777104>

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COMMENTARY 2

An International Survey of Sports Coaches' Knowledge, Understanding, and Definitions of Physical Literacy

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The article 'An International Survey of Sports Coaches' Knowledge, Understanding, and Definitions of Physical Literacy' focuses on sports coaches' perspectives on physical literacy, but this focus has been limited. While physical literacy has garnered significant attention in international policy, advocacy, and practice discourses, much of the research has traditionally focused on physical education, public health, and child development. As stakeholders in the discussion of physical literacy, coaches have often been forgotten voices, yet they are vital to continuing the notion of physical literacy for life. The concept of lifelong and life-wide physical activity and movement has been most recently proposed by Jess et al. (2023; 2024) through their idea of 'Physical Education is for Life' (PEL), and everyone experiences it in their unique way, yet Physical Education remaining the connective catalyst.

The authors may appear highly critical, contested, and controversial regarding the definitions, scope, and assessment of physical literacy research within their analysis. They highlight the pragmatics of coaches, the use of PL, and how it is lacking within grassroots clubs, where it does not appear relevant in terms of meaningful conversations. They do suggest that the concepts coaches focused on were mainly 'movement,' 'physical,' and 'activity' and appear to be at odds with previous academic theories (Almond, 2013; ILPA, 2017; Whitehead, 2019), indicating that it might be unattainable to have a unified conception of physical literacy. Yet, it could be anticipated that the language within physical literacy discussions is changing. In the recent Sport England consensus statement (2023), a collective process informed by various perspectives derives very similar focuses of physical literacy, such as 'movement' and 'physical activity' for life, as the key messages. There has been a move away from coordination, control, need, and efficiency concepts.

Perhaps from now on, in 2024, and in future work, we need to accept that there is a 'multiverse' of physical literacies and that discussions that are almost in 'different dimensions' are okay. Maybe we should talk about physical literacy in this wide range of ways without soloing ourselves and listening to the quieter voices. This would enable us to continue embracing the next generation of learners and offer a wide range of movement opportunities so that the movers can be engaged in physical activities for life, as this is ultimately our goal.

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Commentary 2: An international
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COMMENTARY 3

An International Survey of Sports Coaches' Knowledge, Understanding, and Definitions of Physical Literacy

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If this article has a subtext, it is that what Kubota (2023) describes as a disconnect between academic research and the world upon which it seeks to shed light remains – at least as far as the social sciences are concerned. The gist of its argument is that among sports coaches, there is little consensus around what is meant by the – admittedly contested – term ‘physical literacy.’ Its prominence in discourse and policy around physical education, especially as a means to bring together disparate disciplines, has seen it acquire many features of a ‘grand unified theory’ yet remains conceptually elusive. For many, it denotes little more than physical or, more specifically, sporting skill. It is thus closely aligned with deftness of movement. However, the focus is on ‘physical’ rather than ‘literacy,’ or, to put the same point, the pragmatic, not the academic.

The authors demonstrate this by conducting a structured literature review of pre-existing studies that serves mainly to underline how muddled past thinking on the matter has been. Their work, an extensive qualitative survey of practitioners with content analysis, adds further to this impression, finding no obvious agreement among participants apart from an emphasis on activity. Quotations from some of the responses indicate an awareness that physical literacy is, on some levels, about ‘understanding,’ but it is never fully developed; the majority still argue for a version of the concept that positions ‘literacy’ as a close synonym for ‘adeptness,’ usually of the acquired variety. Unsurprisingly, the authors somewhat despairingly declare that a settled definition is neither possible nor necessary!

The issue that this article could, in truth, more clearly address is the lack of precision around the word ‘literacy.’ As Alber and Kolbl (2023) point out, it is, in its basic form, the capacity to read and write and the various cognitive processes so entailed; in relation to movement and physicality, it is used metaphorically. Perhaps the correct approach to untangling what the phrase means might be to unpack the metaphor and consider its implications. Indeed, whether it refers to an un-self-consciously engaged-in activity or a more rational predisposition towards activity remains unresolved; this is not a question asked, much less answered, by the practice-orientated participants reported upon here.

Were it to be more central, definitions would be located in purely academic and conceptual realms, and that would take the conversation far from this article’s basic premises, which seem to be that physical literacy as a concept defies definition largely because those to whom finding one is most obviously relevant – sports coaches – do not deem doing so worth the effort. It is not that they do not care. They insist that physical literacy is salient in their work. Still, the organisations

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they belong to generally have scant knowledge of it, which entails no major consequences for them as individuals. The upshot is that, in line with the findings of Young et al. (2022), physical literacy is something of a gestalt phenomenon, some parts of which are of relevance to policy-makers, others to academics, and still others to those such as the participants in this study, who operate in the world in which it is most noticeably manifested.

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COMMENTARY 4

An International Survey of Sports Coaches' Knowledge, Understanding, and Definitions of Physical Literacy

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The burgeoning concept of Physical Literacy (PL) has emerged as a central focus within the realms of health and physical education over the past decade, encapsulating the holistic development of individuals. Whitehead (2013) defines it as "the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge, and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life." This comprehensive concept has transcended disciplinary boundaries, garnering attention from diverse sectors on a global scale. In this ever-evolving discourse, sports coaching plays centre stage as a pivotal component in an individual's journey towards physical literacy. Recognised by influential organisations such as the Youth Sport Trust in the UK and Canadian Sport for Life, coaching is vital in fostering physical literacy throughout one's life. Despite previous studies exploring potential connections between PL and coaching, empirical evidence remains scarce, with only one case study by Sullivan et al. (2010) highlighting the significant influence of PL knowledge on coaching practices. Against this backdrop, this commentary aims to navigate the intricate landscape of physical literacy, focusing specifically on its relationship with sports coaching. By critically examining existing definitions, we aim to unveil potential discrepancies that have shaped the current discourse. As we invite readers to embark on this journey, we aim to unravel the complexities surrounding physical literacy, address lingering questions, and collectively pave the way for a more integrated and enriched research and practice environment. Through this exploration, we aspire to contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between physical literacy and sports coaching, fostering a collaborative approach that benefits all stakeholders.

Recommended Citation:

Nair, U. S. (2024). Commentary 4: An international survey of sports coaches' knowledge, understanding, and definitions of physical literacy. *International Sports Studies*, 46(1), 111-112, <https://doi.org/10.69665/iss.v46i1.30>

This study endeavoured to illuminate the multifaceted landscape of physical literacy as perceived by sports coaches worldwide. The methodology involved a comprehensive exploration of the knowledge, understanding, and personal definitions held by a diverse cohort of 521 sports coaches from 37 countries. To ensure the robustness and impartiality of our findings, researchers employed the innovative 'Leximancer' semantic software to analyse the collected data qualitatively. This sophisticated tool facilitated a nuanced examination of the coaches' narratives, transcending linguistic barriers and cultural nuances to distil the essence of their insights. By leveraging Leximancer, they aimed to go beyond surface-level interpretations, delving into the underlying semantic structures that encapsulate the diverse array of meanings attributed to physical literacy by coaches across the globe. The analysis showcased a unanimous emphasis on fundamental concepts such as 'movement,' 'physical,' and 'activity,' where relevance scores soared to an impressive 100%. The ubiquity of these concepts reinforces the centrality of dynamic

movement and physical engagement in the coaches' conceptualisation of physical literacy. Notably, 'coordination,' 'need,' 'control,' and 'efficiently' emerged with relevance scores at 8% and 6%, suggesting a relatively lower prominence in coaches' articulation of physical literacy. The most striking revelation emanates from the observation that the dominant accounts of physical literacy within the diverse sample gravitated towards movement skills and sports. The coaches' prioritisation of movement skills and sports reflects a pragmatic and context-specific lens through which they view physical literacy, diverging from the broader theoretical frameworks encompassing a more comprehensive spectrum of factors. These results prompt contemplation on the implications for both practical applications and theoretical underpinnings within sports coaching and physical literacy. As we navigate these diverse perspectives, it becomes evident that the global community of sports coaches strongly emphasises the tangible and observable aspects of physical literacy, thereby shaping the discourse in a manner that aligns closely with the practical demands of their profession. This incongruity between academic theories and coaches' perspectives serves as a thought-provoking foundation for further exploration and dialogue within the evolving field of physical literacy.

In conclusion, this study presents a novel exploration of sports coaches' perspectives on physical literacy, employing a text analysis methodology to mitigate biases and enhance the robustness of findings. As revealed through the international survey, coaches' prioritisation of movement skills and sports diverges from influential academic theories advocating for broader, multi-factorial constructs. The results underscore a pragmatic and context-specific lens through which coaches perceive physical literacy, emphasising tangible and observable aspects over comprehensive theoretical frameworks. Importantly, these findings challenge the feasibility and necessity of standardising physical literacy definitions, suggesting that embracing the diversity of interpretations within the sports coaching community is a more pragmatic approach. This study serves as a catalyst for ongoing discussions, urging flexibility and inclusivity in defining and understanding physical literacy within the dynamic landscape of sports coaching. In summary, the key points highlight the uniqueness of this study's approach, the specific emphasis on movement skills and sports, and the call for a more nuanced and inclusive dialogue within the field.

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COMMENTARY 5

An International Survey of Sports Coaches' Knowledge, Understanding, and Definitions of Physical Literacy

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A recent enquiry into, 'What is physical literacy'? has provided contradictory theoretical and practical answers. In this study, using Leximancer semantic software to analyse qualitative data, the authors found sports coaches understand PL as a physical framework created largely by the component parts of 'movement', 'sport', 'physical', 'skills', 'activity' and 'ability'. While commentators agree that physical literacy is a product of various factors, the question of how it is defined and produced has provided differing viewpoints. This study suggests that sports coaches understand PL as the manifestation of an agent's physical capabilities. Furthermore, their understanding of PL production does not extend to recognising the impact of cognitive factors like motivation, confidence, and self-responsibility.

The quality of coaching available to the agent is viewed as an important factor in the development of their PL. The authors of this study must be congratulated for the sports coach lens adopted for this study. Nevertheless, one must cast a critical gaze upon the value of the cohort for several reasons:

Over 40% of the cohort identified themselves as volunteer coaches. With physical literacy being a relatively new and potentially challenging construct, was their inclusion in this study beneficial to its findings? Is it fair to expect volunteer coaches to identify physical literacy as distinctly different from motor skill development without specific training in physical literacy development?

In addition to the inclusion of volunteer coaches, there were no further quality-control measures regarding the experience or qualifications of the other coaches involved. Only 60% of the cohort explicitly responded to the request: "*Please define/describe Physical Literacy as if you were explaining it to a parent of a child you coach*". Does this answer rate indicate that 40% of those involved in the study have no tangible concept of physical literacy?

In building on this study, future research could insist on more participant information regarding their coaching experience and qualifications. This information could help the researchers create a taxonomy of sports coaches and physical literacy: who knows what. This, in turn, could guide physical literacy education in sports coaching. The multi-layered aspects of physical literacy, as posited by Whitehead (2019) and Young et al. (2022), have not yet been recognised by coaches, and, as such, physical literacy remains a synonym for motor skill development, but not more than that. If literacy means knowledge, it seems coaches, thus far, lack the knowledge to understand the nuances of physical literacy.

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Peek, I. (2024). Commentary 5: An international survey of sports coaches' knowledge, understanding, and definitions of physical literacy. *International Sports Studies*, 46(1), 113-114, <https://doi.org/10.69665/iss.v46i1.30>

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COMMENTARY 6

An International Survey of Sports Coaches' Knowledge, Understanding, and Definitions of Physical Literacy

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This manuscript presents a pioneering study on sports coaches' perspectives on physical literacy (PL), incorporating global insights. By employing Leximancer to analyse qualitative data, this study gathers insights from 521 sports coaches spanning 37 countries, delving into their understanding, knowledge, and personal definitions of PL. This methodological approach is particularly noteworthy for its ability to minimise bias and ensure a more objective analysis of the collected qualitative data. However, considering the validation of the results, it is better to select coaches with over five years of teaching experience. This will call for more precise definitions of 'potential participants' to aid comprehension. Besides, the study's gender representation among experts, with only 18% females, fails to reflect the industry's diversity. The participant pool's geographic distribution and the overrepresentation of football as a primary sport suggest a need for a more balanced selection in Tables 2 and 3. Besides, the significance of specific numerical data, such as the mention of the statistic '307' in the section of 3.2 content analysis findings, requires clarification, especially given the presence of other statistics in the methodology section.

The research methods of this study, particularly the reliance on self-reported data through an online survey and a convenience sampling strategy, raise concerns about the accuracy and representativeness of the findings, potentially leading to response bias, where the coaches' answers might not accurately reflect their true perceptions due to the subjective nature of self-reporting. Consequently, these limitations indicate a necessity for a more thorough qualitative analysis to fully explore the research questions and substantiate the findings presented in this study. In addition, this study provides a summary of the research identified in this area. Yet, the reliability of this summary may be subjective since the authors have not presented the selection criteria or methodologies used for including these studies. This omission raises concerns about the systematic approach to data aggregation and the potential for bias in the representation of existing knowledge on PL among sports coaches. Ensuring transparency in the selection process and methodological rigour is crucial for the credibility and usefulness of such summaries in advancing our understanding of PL within the sports coaching context. At the conclusion of this article, the authors indicated that it is essential to discover what people in the field believe about PL and how they view its importance in specific settings. However, the article does not provide an overview of how these diverse viewpoints influence coaching practices or other related activities.

Recommended Citation:

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In conclusion, while the paper introduces a new viewpoint on PL, linking it closely with fundamental movement skills development, its overall contribution still needs to be clarified. Future research could critically examine how different conceptualisations of PL influence coaching methodologies, athlete development, or the integration of PL into physical education curriculums. Specifically, investigating how the comprehensive, multi-dimensional definition of PL influences coaching success and athlete achievements could yield significant insights.

COMMENTARY 7

An International Survey of Sports Coaches' Knowledge, Understanding, and Definitions of Physical Literacy

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Physical inactivity has become a worldwide problem with a direct influence on the health and well-being of citizens. Thus, physical literacy is becoming an increasingly important part of an individual's lifelong learning process. Regrettably, a proliferation of studies of definitions for physical literacy has been observed in recent years without being able to unify the diversity of usages of the term (Durden-Myers et al., 2022; Mendoza-Muñoz et al., 2022). Some researchers, including the authors of the study, identify a vital challenge here and advocate for the operationalisation of physical literacy and the generation of distinct, testable models that will help determine what physical literacy is and how it works (Bailey et al., 2023).

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Ries, F. (2024). Commentary 7: An international survey of sports coaches' knowledge, understanding, and definitions of physical literacy. *International Sports Studies*, 46(1), 117-118, <https://doi.org/10.69665/iss.v46i1.30>

In this comprehensive 'first-of-its-kind' international survey, the authors launch an innovative and novel approach by focusing on the context of sports coaches from 37 countries and their perspectives by investigating their knowledge, understanding, and individual definitions of physical literacy. Using a text analysis approach (Leximancer semantic software) to explore the coaches' perspectives is considered an additional strength of the article and is appropriate for moderating partiality. The article adds essential knowledge to the field of physical literacy. It offers new possibilities for future research by covering "blank spots" (Carl et al., 2023), which have, to our understanding, the potential to further enhance both scholarly discussions and practical applications of physical literacy. However, many football (soccer) coaches might have prejudiced the interpretation of the results. Keeping the sample in balance concerning the sports coached by the participants could have avoided the direction of the perceptions towards physical characteristics.

Concerning the different definitions and perspectives of physical literacy, it is crucial to open a dialogue to increase the knowledge of different stakeholder groups' perceptions (i.e., sports coaches in this article) rather than seeking an agreement for a unique definition of physical literacy. Different perspectives may move forward the research and discussions on physical literacy, benefitting all parts. Thus, surveying and analysing the knowledge and understanding of physical literacy among various stakeholders will be essential to advance this field. New research efforts will still be required to clarify effective monitoring and defining procedures to better understand the physical literacy journey. In any case, stakeholders should prioritise it for community recreation organisations, education, fitness associations, national sports federations, health care and medical providers, public health agencies and foundations, parents, policy-makers, and civic leaders. The potential practical applications point to physical literacy's important role in coaching

activities. More attention should be paid to developing athletes' physical literacy, including delivering knowledge of physical literacy concepts. Moreover, as the main stakeholders of athletes during coaching, coaches should combine coaching with the concept of physical literacy or embed physical literacy concepts into their coaching practice.

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COMMENTARY 8

An International Survey of Sports Coaches' Knowledge, Understanding, and Definitions of Physical Literacy

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Physical literacy (PL) has surged in popularity in recent years (Corbin, 2020), gaining widespread acceptance across numerous countries and evolving into a central focus within the realms of physical education, physical activities, and sports promotion (Bailey, 2023). Scholars are increasingly drawn to the exploration of physical literacy from philosophical, conceptual, and practical viewpoints (Brown & Whittle, 2021; Young et al., 2020; Elsborg, 2023). Nonetheless, the ongoing debate surrounding physical literacy's definition and fundamental concepts persists in research and practical applications (Shearer et al., 2018; Keegan et al., 2017). Consequently, a comprehensive examination of physical literacy from diverse perspectives holds substantial theoretical and practical significance.

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This study employs an appropriate research methodology. The Leximancer text analysis software is adopted to analyse the conceptual content of the collected data automatically and qualitatively. PL themes and their concepts are generated automatically based on the relationship levels among PL concepts and the proximity rate between concepts and critical terms in the document. It enhances the discovery of latent associations and patterns related to PL that are hidden in the text. It also presents PL concepts and themes in a graphical and reader-friendly format.

Additionally, this approach delves deeper into mining data information by building upon an understanding of the global structure suitable for various contexts. Through this approach, researchers have conducted a more in-depth analysis of PL. Readers can also gain a more intuitive understanding of the conceptual scope of PL in the study. While scholars have previously employed similar methods to study PL (Hyndman & Pill, 2018), this research makes a breakthrough in the sample selection. It primarily focuses on sports coaches, providing a more practical insight into understanding the PL concept among sports practitioners.

The research conclusions are innovative. Previous studies on PL were primarily associated with notions such as education, activities, fitness, health, abilities, understanding, roles, curriculum, and assessment (Kirk, 2013; Tristani, 2014; Dudley et al., 2017). However, this paper puts emphasis on motor skills and physical activities. Although this definition of PL diverges from some recognised concepts, like Whitehead (2019) that defined PL as the “motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engaging in physical activities for life”, it prioritises bodily movements, focusing on the physical aspect, making it more closely related to everyday life. This focus on the physical aspect gives it stronger practical value, particularly in the context of sports coaching, enabling a better grasp of the core

concepts of PL. As Bailey (2020) mentioned, categorising PL into different camps may impose constraints on the capacity to deduce meaningful conclusions concerning efficient implementation. However, it can also serve as a source for creative and innovative discourse, guiding the field towards maturation. There are also some questions that need to be addressed. The sample selected for this study was predominantly comprised of sports coaches representing individuals from private capacities and national federations. This resulted in different levels of awareness of the concept of PL among the participants' colleagues and organisers. While this approach allows for the introduction of the PL concept from a fresh perspective, it falls short of providing a comprehensive definition of PL. Additionally, these coaches show a clear bias in the distribution of sports disciplines. Therefore, there is room to expand the sample size to improve the breadth and depth of the PL concept.

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