

DUAL CAREER MODEL FOR LATVIA'S ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract. *Combining the systems of high-performance sport and the general education on the high school level is a research object in sports science since the 1980s (Teubert, 2009). While a large number of scientists have studied the dual overload of athletes/students in school and high-performance sport, only a few have focused on the coordination or collaboration of these two structures - school and high-performance sport (Teubert, 2009). Therefore, in this study will be research the Murjani Sports Gymnasium (MSG) as the only specialized sports education institution in Latvia which provides high school education and simultaneously the realisation of high-performance sports career. Furthermore, the aim of this study is to develop a dual career model for Latvia's socio-economic environment. Additional to the literature research and review of national and European regulations, an online survey was carried out. MSG teachers and coaches were invited to complete voluntary an online survey, a questionnaire related to theoretical issues. Overall, 32 persons completed the questionnaire. MSG teachers and coaches were asked to evaluate the dual career system in MSG and to give suggestions for development which has significant meaning in dual career system improvement and development in the Latvian sports industry. The data were analysed with the statistical analysis by using IBM SPSS 21.0 software: a) quantitative descriptive statistics; b) correlation analysis. Furthermore, the induction or cognition method as qualitative research method were used to draw conclusions and establish a dual career model for Latvia's socio-economic environment.*
Keywords: *education, dual career, high-performance sports, model, successful transition.*

Introduction

Dual career focuses on linking and interaction between sports career and education process (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007; Stambulova & Wylleman, 2014) to ensure successful and simultaneous transitions in both athletes' careers.

Currently, the interest in dual career has grown strongly by producing recommendations, models and guidelines on the dual career realisation and improvement in its structures. However, initially it is necessary to develop a comprehensive understanding of dual career.

The successful development of national standards and environments for dual careers requires the design and development of a holistic life span perspective

focusing on dual career development and successful transition (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Dual career transitions take place simultaneously in several spheres of life: (a) sport, (b) education, (c) psychological and (d) psychosocial contexts (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Likewise, in sport psychology the dual career models (Stambulova, 1994; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) describe the characteristics of a dual career sequences and transitions. Dual careers also depend on athletes' age, gender, the sport they represent, their individual characteristics, the sport system in the sport they represent and the country, their social environment and culture (Stambulova & Wylleman, 2014). This great variety of traits, factors, circumstances and contexts can stimulate or hinder the successful transition of dual career paths.

Furthermore, these scientific models and recommendations should attain all involved stakeholders and their consciousness in this dual career system. The most important stakeholders or drivers of dual career development and promotion are the athletes themselves, coaches, teachers, sports and education systems, sports federations, government, society et al. Moreover, based on data from the European Union conducted research study "Study on Minimum Quality Requirements for Dual Career Services" (2016), the importance of qualitative dual career maintenance or realisation persist in the interaction between all stakeholders. Therefore, qualitative dual career structures offer potential and opportunities for positive development. According to this EU study there are real operational steps:

- a) the participating organizations evaluate their willingness and support for dual career development and support;
- b) new opportunities for international cooperation;
- c) encouragement of existing dual career cooperation;
- d) establishment and enhancement of the dual career monitoring and/or evaluation system(s).

In this context, to develop a dual career model for Latvia's socio-economic environment were selected factors as age, academic level of the athletes and all involved stakeholders as well as the affectual environments which foster the dual career realisation and development in Latvia. Additionally, MSG teachers and coaches as relevant micro-environment stakeholders in the dual career realisation were asked for their professional opinion about the dual career maintenance in the MSG and the future perspective of the MSG and development opportunities.

Theoretical background

According to the model of dual career transition phases (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004), only one age range - adolescence and early maturity, which is mostly in the developmental phase of the high-performance sport career. Also, it

contains only a small number of first steps in the professional sports career. Therefore, the focus will be set on the first transition phase of the high-performance sports career, the preparatory phase according to the work of Stambulova et al. (2012). This empirical study is based on the dual career transition model developed by Stambulova (2003). Besides, very little research has been done into this transition from junior sports to adult high/performance sports career (Stambulova et al., 2017). Vanden, Auweele et al. (2004) found that only 17 percent of athletes successfully completed the transition from junior sports to adult high-performance sports career.

Successful transition is defined as the process of finding solutions for a positive and successful transition from one career phase to next one. In the process of developing solutions and strategies (planning, work of the training process, professional support from sports experts, etc.) are looked for answers and solutions (Stambulova, 2003). In particular, for a positive and effective strategy-making process a balance needs to be found between available resources and existing obstacles. Stambulova (2003) divides available resources and existing obstacles or barriers into internal (personal experience, low self-esteem, etc.) and external (social and professional support, lack of financial resources, etc.) factors.

This model provides two outcomes for the transition of a sports career: (a) positive transition to the next phase of sports career i.e. successful development of a sports career; (b) negative outcome or crisis in sports career, when inappropriate strategy is chosen within given resources and existing obstacles. There are two ways in which this can happen: the transition to a subsequent career is delayed or the sports career is interrupted.

In the preparation phase of high-performance sports career, the first step is to define the requirements for successful completion of this phase. Psychological preparedness plays an important role in the development of adult high-performance sports. One of the requirements is to increase the volume of training and mental endurance (Stambulova et al., 2012). Subsequently, the available resources needed to achieve the goal and the existing or potential obstacles should be identified. The focus of this phase should be on external resources such as family support and a supportive environment for professional sport (Stambulova et al., 2012). In addition, internal resources, such as commitment and professional attitude, also play an important role in developing a successful sports career. Therefore, a coordination of external and internal resources plays a crucial role to achieve a successful sport career transition in the next phase.

Organizational leadership should lead this coordination process on the institutional level, where time is structured to provide athletes with the necessary training units and to connect the more intense phases of competition calendars to less intensive phases in the school, when are carried out less tests, exams, scientific research, etc. The better you coordinate and meet the demands of school

and high performance sports, the more resources available for high performance sport education, and the more planning and quantifiable development of achievements, the less you will have to deal with unwanted dropouts (Kreisel & Pfeiffer, 2002). In other words, success is based on a solid organizational structure between educational system (i.e. school) and high-performance in defining and applying the necessary tools and measures, independently of the work of each individual (Teubert, 2009).

In addition, the question arises about the drop out situation or the early conclusion of a sports career. As there is no research about the drop-out situation in Latvia, the statistics about the drop-out situation in the neighbourhood region Scandinavia will be analyzed. Enoksen (2011) in his study indicate that within five years of starting training 90% of girls and 75% of boys in Sweden have interrupt their high-performance sports career in youth age. Continuing to look at this issue in the Scandinavian countries, only one of 90 young Finnish athletes specializing in ages 11 to 13 continues his/her high-performance sports career ten years later (Wörz, 2012). To conclude, there is a great need for concepts or guidelines to support young high-performance sports talents, by individually assessing their workload and mental readiness.

Furthermore, on the daily basis the high-performance sports athletes not only face high levels of workload through a combination of school, continuing education in the universities and high-performance sport, they also face limited social resources and lack of time for leisure activities, communication with friends and to build new social contacts. To sum up, requirements and norms at school and in the training process, as well as social commitments and other constantly competing interests could lead young people to burn out or drop out. Consequently, one of the major challenges in reducing these issues is the development of an interdisciplinary and interinstitutional dual career model to prevent early school and sports career interruptions and to strengthen cooperation between the athlete, his/her family, school, teachers, coaches, sports federations, governing bodies etc.

Sequential, the involvement of all engaged stakeholder in the dual career is crucial for a successful sports career. Thus, these scientific models and recommendations should attain all involved stakeholders and their consciousness in this dual career system. The realisation of the dual career can be successful if clear and open communication and information on the rules and decision-making process is provided. Besides, if the clear communication and transparency is required then the analyse of the environment plays a crucial role as well. When studying the influence of the environmental factor on the dual career, it is necessary to distinguish between external or macro-environmental and internal or micro-environmental effects. Macro-environment as an essential factor in the process of personalization includes:

- a. society - economic, political, cultural, climatic, ecological, geographical, hygienic environment and its factors that directly interact with personality throughout one's life;
- b. social conditions - social, material and mental - that in one way or another influence personality and its development. Additionally, particular importance has the daily life, well-being, traditions and customs of a certain part of the society (Masteralexis, Barr, & Hums, 2011; Abele, 2009; Korna, 2011).

The microenvironment is related to the social environment surrounding the athlete's daily activities. Family, childhood experiences, peers, friends, school or study environment as well as media have traditionally provided the greatest impact on the micro-environment (Abelkalns, 2013). Likewise, the scholars Henriksen et al. (2010) divided the micro- and macro environment in his athletic talent development environment model - ATDE. The ATDE model consists of micro and macro levels in sports career and in other non-sports fields, which comprises education and private life. The main purpose of the ATDE model is to help create the necessary conditions and support for young athletes to make the transition from junior to high-performance sports career in adulthood (Henriksen et al., 2010). Contributing factors to dual career development are traditionally recognized drivers / stakeholders at the micro level, such as coaches, coaching staff, family, and more. (Cote, 1999; Cote, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007). In contrast, Alfermann, Stambulova and Zemaityte (2004), as well as, from a comprehensive perspective discovered new factors at the macro-environmental level: national culture and national sport system. Macro-environment describes the social environment that influences but not forcibly interact with young athletes.

Hence, the coordination of these two dual career structures – sport and education – is less scrutinised in the students' / athletes' school age. In this particular research the MSG teachers and coaches as stakeholders from the microenvironment were examined and their evaluation about the dual career's systems development in Latvia were compiled.

Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were chosen in order to carry out the research tasks and to achieve the aim of this study. On the one hand, quantitative analysis is based on statistics, the main purpose of which is to find out some quantitative variable or other statistical measure. On the other hand, in qualitative research analysis is based on the essence or meaning of things, that is, the purpose of the analysis is to determine what the research problem means and how the respondent evaluates the research problem (Kristapsone, 2015).

Research data were collected via online questionnaire. The selected respondents of this online questionnaire were MSG teachers and coaches as the experts about the dual career maintenance in Latvia. Expert judgment is a qualitative research method and gives an objective and reliable insight into the phenomenon being studied, as experts impart the knowledge in this field (Albrehta, 1998). According to this definition, the expert's selection was based on their academic and work experience. Concretely, all selected experts have obtained an academic degree and they have at least 5 years' experience in the sports / education sector.

The questionnaire consists of questions the respondents had to answer without the assistance of the interviewer. It contains 25 questions reflecting the dual career quality and maintenance in the only dual career educational institution in Latvia – Murjani Sports Gymnasium. Moreover, the collected data were analyzed performing statistical analysis (using IBM SPSS 21.0 software): a) quantitative descriptive statistics; b) correlation analysis. Furthermore, the questionnaire's results of the open questions were analyzed with induction or cognition method to draw the conclusions. While letter help conducting a dual career model for Latvia's socio-economic environment.

In particular, 59,4 percent or 19 persons of respondents were women and 40,6 percent or 13 persons were man. Also, 65.6 percent are older than 55 years and only two of the respondents are in the age group of 25 to 30 years. Regarding the working experience only eight respondents have working experience less than 25 years and the rest 24 persons work in this field more than 25 years. In average, respondents have a postgraduate education (Master's degree) with a standard deviation of 0.504. Thus, 56.3 percent or 18 persons have a master's degree but 44 percent persons have obtained a bachelor's degree.

Research results

The results show how the coordination of the two dual career structures – sport and education – is carried out for students / athletes in school age, especially, in the MSG. The importance' evaluation of dual career components for MSG students reveals that 56 percent see "trainings and competitions" as the most important component in dual career, while 34.4 percent or eleven respondents believe that education is more important. Only three educators consider family, friends and personal life to be the most important in athletes' lives. There should be more balance of all components in dual career. However, respondents regard sport and education as two central aspects of dual career and it is important for athletes to receive qualitative education to achieve their life goals.

In this matter, MSG teachers and coaches see professional qualification as one of the solutions for individual life-long development. The vast majority or 50

percent agreed to this necessity, but 28 percent see professional qualification as one of possibilities for professional development of students / athletes.

The correlation analysis positively stressed the importance about the two central components in dual career. The collected data is not normally distributed. Referring to the theory of statistics, the authors considered correlation coefficients according to Spearman's methodology in the framework of cognition or inductive method. A less strong positive correlation ($\rho = 0.419$) was observed, depending on the age of the respondents and on the importance of the education in the lives of young athletes. This shows that senior teachers and coaches attach greater importance to education in the lives of MSG students. Moreover, it indicates that coaches and teachers are aware that they need to prepare not only professional athletes, but also knowledgeable students and professionals. This is certainly a good result for dual career understanding and maintenance in this institution.

Likewise, correlation result was positive between questions about the significance level of sport and the importance of personal life in an athletes'/students' lives. Thus, the teachers and coaches who responded that sport is the most important component in athletes'/students' lives as well assess the personal life as negligible with a 95% probability. A similar situation was reflected in the answers regarding the level of relevance of education and personal life in the athletes'/students' lives. The Spearman's correlation coefficient showed a negative correlation ($\rho = -0.55$), indicating that teachers who believe that education is important for the MSG students think that personal life is not important.

The open structured questions about the quality of the coordination of the two central components in dual career, especially in the MSG, indicate a strongly positive assessment. Answers on the questions about the students preference to learn in the MSG, positive environment and given support to successfully realize a dual career underlines benefits like: qualified coaches and teachers, organized environment for learning and training, support system (engagement of all stakeholders), individual approach, logistics, infrastructure, time savings and prestige / image. Besides the benefits the respondents were asked about the obstacles and solutions for these obstacles in dual career. The most identified obstacles were lack of time, lack of discipline and self-sufficiency of the students, miscommunication between the stakeholders and lack of financial resources. The most esteemed solution for the previous mentioned obstacles is a well organized and balanced dual career system and environment. Furthermore, there should prevail an individual approach with an elastic timeframe and well-established communication canals to identify immediately occurred problems and develop the necessary solutions. To conclude, according to the literature the MSG coaches and teachers identified multiple relevant resources and conditions for successful

transition in the final dual career level – professional high-performance sports career combined with the academic career or working life.

Following, the next step i.e. result is the established dual career model adapted to Latvia's sport and education systems. In the focus of this model is the national youth team candidates aiming for a successful transition from high-performance sports' youth career to high-performance sports adult's career. Based on Wylleman and Lavellee's (2004) athlete's transition phase model in sport, it can be specified that the selected research sample is young people aged 15 and over. The dual career model is represented by terms of interconnected and chronologically hierarchical units of two main components – education and high-performance sports career (see figure 1). For example, after graduating elementary school follows the studying in the high school, and entering the U16 national youth team, the next step in a sports career would be to be selected for the U18 national team position.

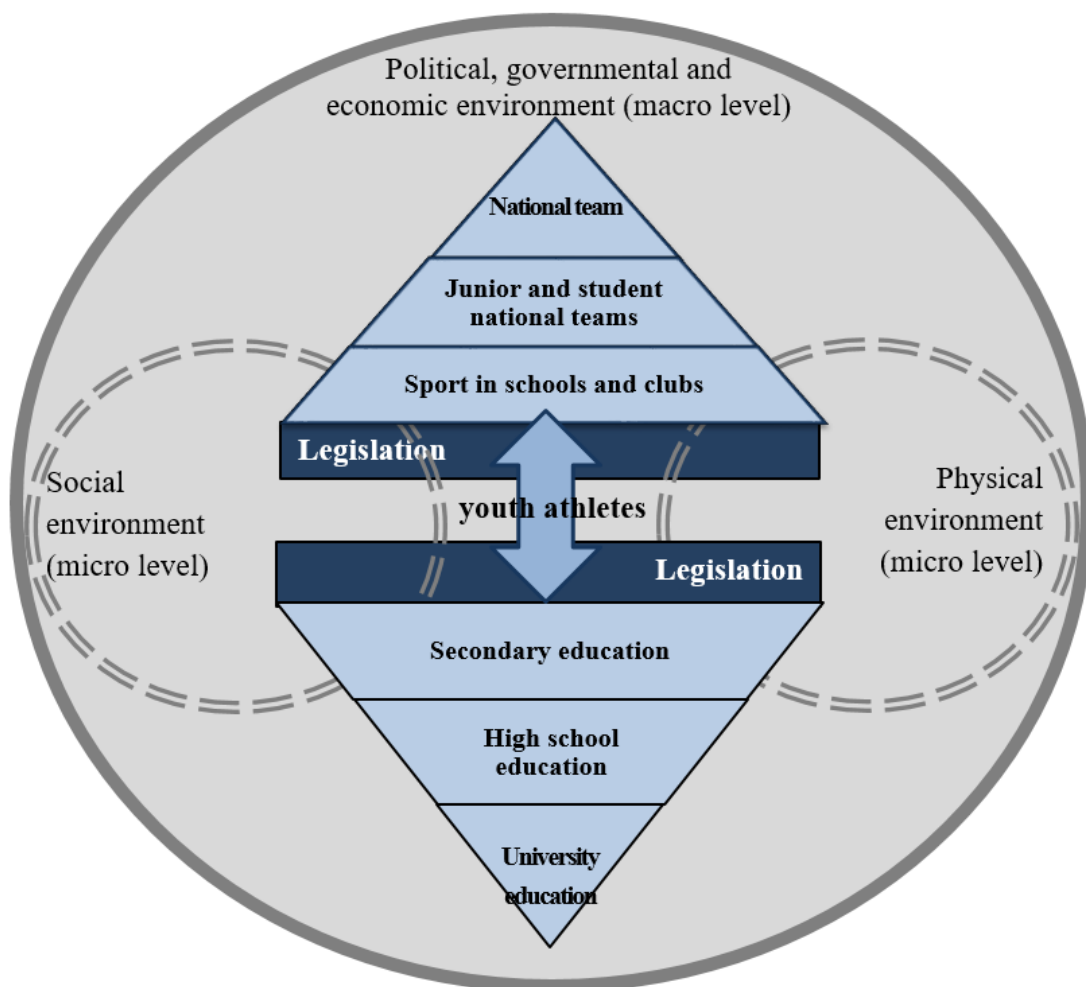


Figure 1 Dual career model in Latvia's environment (developed by authors)

These career transitions give the established dual career model a holistic and dynamic perspective to look back on past experiences and advance to the next level of dual careers, as well as constructively evaluate the level of achievements so far. Furthermore, the microenvironment is represented by the social and physical environment, where the middle-aged athletes lead their daily lives, communicate and interact with dual-career drivers such as coaches, teachers, family, teammates, peers and more.

In this model these drivers are not specifically identified or included in the final list because the dual career environment must be flexible and capable of adapting to rapidly changing requirements and environmental conditions. On the other hand, the macro environment is represented by a socio-political and economic environment that directly influences young athletes but does not involve them in the process of interacting with dual career drivers, such as communication with federation presidents, mayors and deputies or ministry professionals.

Conclusion

Qualitative education and successes in the high-performance sports are two of the most important components for athlete's overall growth and achievement of his or her life's goals. Applying a holistic and complementary counterattack approach, a dual career model was developed based on previous analyzed empirical research in sports science (Stambulova et al., 2012; Henriksen, Stambulova, & Roessler, 2010) and on the qualitative theoretical findings and qualitative and quantitative results of the MSG teachers' and coaches' questionnaire.

The develop model offers structurally organized and balanced dual career system and environment. Furthermore, as the students/athletes play the central role of this model where is applicable the individual approach with an elastic timeframe and well-established communication canals. Thus, this would a be an optimal way to identify immediately occurred problems and develop the necessary solutions for successful transitions in the dual career. So, dual career includes requirements for successful entry into, pursuit of, and completion of high-performance sports careers, academic career, lifelong learning and other career opportunities like social integration, well-being and fortunate private life.

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