Dual career in higher education
Student-athletes, support providers and organisations

Paul Wylleman

Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Department Topsport and Study • Brussels Olympic Research and Education Center
Thank you

Finnish Olympic Committee • Foundation for the Enhancement of Athletes Education
Dual career (DC) research

- 1939: The dual career (The Lancet)
- 1960s: DC & vocational development
- 1970s: DC & the family
- 1980s: DC & women
- 2012: DC & elite sport with strong impulse from EU (e.g., EU guidelines, Erasmus+ Sport projects):
  - 2015-2016 GEES Gold in Education and Elite Sport (www.gees.online)
  - 2017-2018 B-WISER Be a Winner in elite Sport and Employment before and after athletic Retirement (www.bwiser.eu)
  - 2021-2022 DC4MH Dual Career for Mental Health (to be confirmed)
- ± 6,000 DC athletes (+16 years of age)
- ± 1,200 experts (DC researchers & expert practitioners, career support providers) & stakeholders (e.g. employers, player & project managers)
- 15 countries (Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK)
- 40 partners (research & elite sport organisations).
Dual career (DC) research
Career development

(Wylleman et al., 2017)

(Wylleman, 2022)
**Career challenges • Dual career transitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition into SE</th>
<th>Transition SE to HE</th>
<th>Transition out of HE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DC Secondary education</td>
<td>DC Higher education</td>
<td>Discontinuation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Athletic development**
- False positive/negative
- Young child
- Cognitive readiness
- Adolescents
- Mental (ill-)health
- Support team
- Role engulfment
- Development identity

**Psychological development**
- Schoolchild
- Family
- Cognitive readiness
- Adolescents
- Mental (ill-)health
- Support team
- Role engulfment
- Development identity

**Psychosocial development**
- Parents
- Siblings
- Peers
- Parental pressure
- New social network at uni
- Partner relationship
- Family – Peers (Coach) Colleagues

**Academic & vocational development**
- Primary education
- Secondary education
- (Semi-)prof. athlete
- Higher education
- Dual career study-sport
- Dual career work-sport
- Occupational delay

**Financial development**
- Family
- Expectations parents
- Restricted financial support
- Non/NOC sponsor
- Loss contract
- New employer

**Legal development**
- Parental responsibility
- Anti-doping regulations
- Legal responsibility

(Wylleman, 2022) (Wylleman et al., 2017)
### Push & pull towards HE

#### Transition SE to HE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Push</th>
<th>Transition SE to HE</th>
<th>Pull</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DC Secondary education</td>
<td>DC Higher education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Push
- Desire to continue elite sport
- Risks professional athletic career
- Lack sporting success

#### Psychological development
- Feeling competent
- Positive attitude towards DC & Dc 'habit'
- Reducing foreclosure as 'athlete'

#### Psychosocial development
- Direct supportive influence
- Direct pressuring influence
- Indirect 'expectation' influences
- Independence from parents/family

#### Academic & vocational development
- Positive academic preparation
- Being well-informed about HE
- Able combine elite sport-other interests
- Post-retirement vocational plan

#### Financial development
- Increase future employability
- Increase opportunities financial security

#### Legal development
- Status as student(athlete)

#### Pull
- Back-up for athletic career
- Supportive sport environment & positive impact elite sport
- Reduced impact academic career on sport career
- DC as valuable experience & develop competencies
- Identity as 'student' & feelings of security
- Greater responsibility own development & more autonomy

- Social advantages
- Social support
- Student life
- New relationships
- Development vocational competencies & enhanced job opportunities
- Flexibilities in HE
- Importance awarded to HE by significant others
- Academic competencies & results

- Financial status as student & financial safety net
- Financial support during DC
- Student job

- Status as student(athlete)

---

(Defruyt et al., 2019; Wylleman, De Brandt & De Knop, 2021)

(Wylleman, 2022)
Anti-pull & anti-push towards HE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition from SE to HE</th>
<th>Anti-pull</th>
<th>Anti-push</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DC Secondary education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC Higher education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Athletic development**
- Reasons to focus purely on elite sport
- Need to move to new training group
- Need to change coach

**Psychological development**
- Need more autonomous behaviour
- Need to focus & possible lack motivation
- Double identity 'student' and 'athlete'

**Psychosocial development**
- Adjusting new social environment
- Social comparison difficulties
- Away from home & into student housing
- Reduced support parents/family

**Academic & vocational development**
- Need time management, study planning
- Lack study flexibility & academic support
- Occupational delay
- Lack transfer competences sport-study

**Financial development**
- Financial costs study
- Lack support (parents, scholarship)

**Legal development**
- Increased training/competition loads & standards
- Increased performance expectations
- Reduced changes being successful at senior level

**Feelings of incompetence & reduced self-belief/motivation**
- Role conflicts & increased goals and expectations
- Performance stress & mental fatigue due to elite sport

**Already missing social contact**
- Inadequate role modelling
- Social pressure
- Reduced friendships

**Studies too time-consuming & increased course requirements**
- Disliking studying & no interest subject of study
- Lack of information & lack of DC support
- Opportunities to develop professional sport career & sabbatical year

**No need financial support**
- Contractual obligations (club, NGB)
- Losing contract/financial income as professional athlete

**Loss of status as professional athlete**
Basic and transferable competencies of student-athletes

- Dedication to succeed
- Perseverance during challenging and setbacks
- Self-discipline to manage the demands
- Willingness to make sacrifices and choices
- Ability to prioritize what needs to be done
- Ability to use time efficiently
- Ability to make own responsible choices.
Recommendations for student-athletes (selection)

1. Use holistic perspective on development DC career
   - Factors of impact on DC (e.g., quality DC support providers, professionalization status DC athlete, DC tools, distance learning)
   - Consequences of DC (e.g., mental health, post-DC career development, other types of DC)
   - (Non-)normative transitions and challenges via push-pull analysis (e.g., transition out of SE, into HE, out of HE)

2. Use competency frameworks
   - DCCQ-A: assist athletes to assess their competencies (www.dualcareertools.com)
   - ACQE: competency framework prepare transition from elite sport to new employment (www.dualcareertools.com)

3. Role models to engage athletes/players in career planning and development activities
   - Share (success) stories from athlete’s perspective
   - Relate study to athletes’ own athletic development (e.g., elite sport specific career planning).

(Wylleman, 2022)
Competencies DC support providers

- Athletic development
- Psychological development
- Psychosocial development
- Academic & vocational development
- Financial development
- Legal development

DC Secondary education
- Advocacy and cooperation
- Reflection and self-management
- Organisation
- Awareness of student-athlete's environment
- Empowerment
- Relationship

DC Higher education
Recommendations for DC support providers (selection)

1. Prepare athletes to cope with transitions
   - Holistic perspective translated into individual support provision
   - Prepare and enhance coping via expert support (e.g., psychologists)
   - Mental well-health = optimal development + maximizing performances (sport and study)
   - Close collaboration between SE and HE to ensure less transitional challenges
   - Enhance development via use of transferable skills in teaching (+coach) and coaching (+teacher)
   - Proactive, structural monitoring mental health and increase mental health literacy (www.dualcareertools.com)

2. Use competency frameworks
   - DCCQ-SP: assess DC support providers’ competencies (www.dualcareertools.com)
   - Handbook for DC support providers, online tools monitor student-athletes (www.gees.online)

3. Ensure competencies of teaching staff at SE and HE
   - Acceptance of and professional attitude towards DC-students (e.g., new faces, exam before end of course, challenging attitudes)
   - Flexibility and adaptability
   - Educational competencies (e.g., distance learning, teaching online)
   - Elaborating role of education institutes for expert (talent) development

4. Show effectiveness and efficiency measures in career support provision (ROI)

5. Ensure education, training and certification of DC support providers and teaching staff.
Characteristics DC environments

(Wylleman, 2022)

(Henriksen et al., 2020)
Recommendations for successful DC organisations (selection)

1. Shared DC philosophy and vision (e.g., recognised status, clear regulations)
2. A whole person approach
3. An empowerment approach
4. Dedicated and integrated DC support team (incl. expert support, online courses and exams)
5. Flexible DC solutions and mentorship
6. Care of DC athlete’s mental health and wellbeing
7. Continued evaluation (self & by others) effectiveness and efficiency (www.ljmu.ac.uk/projects/dual-careers)
8. Understand and ensure support from the environment (e.g., TDs, team managers, employers on employing [former] elite athletes).

(e.g., Storm et al, 2021)
Final recommendations

1. Ensure research on development of DC systems
2. Enhance national and international collaborations
3. Develop the career of elite athletes as a full vocation
4. Focus on the DC (e.g., family-work) of coaches and staff!