

Make it easier: A narrative review of dual-career empirical studies Hacerlo más fácil: Una revisión narrativa de estudios empíricos sobre carrera dual

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Abstract. A dual career is a challenge faced by many athletes, who have to compaginate their sports training with the dedication required for study, work, or both. A narrative review was conducted to identify and analyze barriers to and resources for the routine of elite athletes. Eleven databases available in the Capes Journal Platform (Portal Capes) were searched using the keywords «dual career» and «athletes,» written in English, Spanish, or Portuguese. Twenty-two articles that met the established inclusion criteria and categories based on the characteristics of their samples were analyzed. The analysis showed that athletes' difficulty in organizing a routine to meet the requirements of the educational and sports fields was the main issue regarding the conciliation of their dual careers. Among the cited sports programs, there was some success regarding time management for sports practice; however, there was a lack of in-depth analysis of the reach of these services, and elite athletes lacked a more balanced adherence to university routine. Beside the objective dimensions of dual-career management, we highlighted the importance of new lines of investigation that analyze the life projects of both athletes and their relatives in different cultures and socioeconomic realities.

Keywords: Dual career, elite athletes, sports training, student-athlete, education.

Resumen. La doble carrera es un desafío para muchos atletas, que necesitan conciliar su entrenamiento deportivo con la dedicación requerida para estudiar y/o trabajar. Se realizó una revisión narrativa para identificar y analizar barreras y recursos de la rutina de los atletas de élite. Se realizaron búsquedas en once bases de datos disponibles en Capes Journal Platform (Portal Capes) utilizando las palabras clave «carrera dual» y «atletas», publicados en inglés, español o portugués. Se analizaron 22 artículos que cumplían los criterios de inclusión establecidos y las categorías basadas en las características de sus muestras. El análisis mostró que la dificultad principal de los atletas para organizar una rutina para cumplir con los requisitos de los campos educativo y deportivo era la conciliación de sus carreras duales. Entre los programas deportivos citados, hubo cierto éxito con respecto a la gestión del tiempo para la práctica deportiva; Sin embargo, falta analizar en profundidad el alcance de estos servicios, y los atletas de élite carecían de una adhesión más equilibrada a la rutina universitaria. Además de las dimensiones objetivas de la gestión de doble carrera, destacamos la importancia de nuevas líneas de investigación que analizan los proyectos de vida de los atletas y sus familiares en diferentes culturas y realidades socioeconómicas.

Palabras clave: Doble Carrera; atleta de élite, entrenamiento deportivo, estudiante atleta, educación.

Introduction

The term *dual career* corresponds to the challenges athletes face when combining a sports career with academic education and/or work (European Commission, 2012). This term appears in the EU White Paper on Sport, a document produced in July 2007 by the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council of the European Commission. Athletes who need to combine their sport training and educational background do so in different ways, whether prioritizing their sporting moment or balancing it with school / academic demands

(Pallarés, Azócar, Torregrossa, Selva & Ramis, 2011).

In the US, sports and academic development are integrated, which does not exempt this model from criticism or tension between the sports and academic pursuits (Gaston-Gayles, 2005). In Europe, sports training takes place in private clubs, often creating barriers for young men and women to fully develop their athletic condition and academic education, which occur at different levels because the academic system is not connected to the sports system (Aquilina & Henry, 2010; Damo, 2007; Lupo, Guidotti, Gonçalves, Moreira, Doupona, Bellardini, Tonkonogi, Colin & Capranica, 2015) or, in some cases, the student-athlete can be misdirected towards either academic or athletic drop out (Guidotti et al., 2013). In this sense, attaining balance between training sport and studies in a student-athlete's routine is an arduous task, and the athlete's

decisions involving the interests of the club, the social importance attributed to education, and the family's condition to invest in this sporting project.

Thus, the key question posed to stakeholders is how can student-athletes reconcile a dual career without losing the opportunities offered by both academic education and sports training? Answering this question requires us to examine not only the dynamics of sports and academic/vocational education but also the psychological, psychosocial, and financial levels (Wylleman, Reints, & De Knop, 2013). This entails observing athletes from a holistic viewpoint, analyzing their dual careers alongside themselves and their families, sporting and educational agents (teachers or coaches), sports and educational institutions (federations, schools, and universities), sponsors, and the state.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a review to analyze barriers and resources during the different stages of a dual career, to provide evidence for the topic, and to identify gaps that can be addressed by future studies. Review studies on the topic have been reported recently, but these focus on the European and American context, primarily through a psychological perspective (Guidotti & Cortis, 2015; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014; Stambulova & Wylleman, 2019). Therefore, in this review it is expected to reach different countries and realities already discussed, as well as to expand the debate from a database that has the scope of education in reference.

Methodology

This is a narrative review of international academic research on dual careers. This type of review is characterized by a synthesis of the contents of articles (Grant & Booth, 2009; Green, Johnson, & Adams, 2006). An advanced search by subject was performed on the Capes Journal Platform (Portal Capes) using the keywords «dual career» and «athletes,» with the active login of the researcher. This platform is connected to a network of federal universities with remote access to the Federated Academic Community. In the first step of the advanced search, only articles published in peer-reviewed journals were selected. We considered «human sciences» as the knowledge area and «education» as the sub-area. The Portal Capes allows for pinpointing specific databases, and it includes 140 databases for the selected sub-area.

After reading the scope of all databases, we established the following selection criteria: (a) databases

that contained articles in their collection, and (b) databases related to educational issues. Further, exclusion criteria were: (a) databases that contained only thesis or dissertations, and (b) databases that served as virtual libraries of books, photographs, and material other than scientific articles. This selection resulted in 11 databases: OECD Databases, Project Muse, ASP (EBSCO), Cambridge Core, ERIC (ProQuest), Sage Journals OnLine, Scielo.org, OECD Library, Science Direct (Elsevier), PsycARTICLES (APA), and Oxford Journals.

Once the databases were selected and the keywords inserted, the article search process started (identification). The search retrieved 81 articles (Figure 1), which were then organized for the second step of selection (screening). After reading the titles and abstracts, 50 articles were included in the third step, which consisted of reading the full text of the articles (eligibility). Articles that contained the term «dual career» in their title, keywords, and abstract, were written in English, Spanish, or Portuguese, and empirically addressed the topic of dual career conciliation were included (Figure 1).

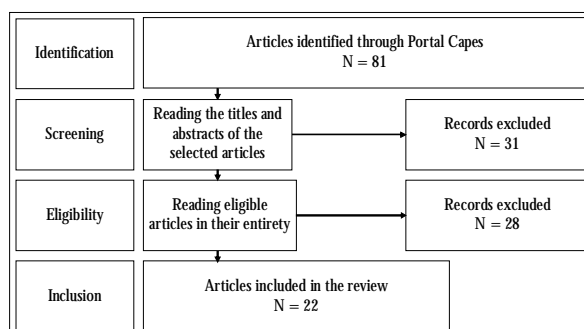


Figure 1. Flow diagram showing the selection of articles for inclusion in the narrative review

The following articles were excluded from the discussion: two editorials, three systematic reviews, two congress presentations, one article that did not satisfy the language criteria, five articles aimed at either validating data collection instruments or exploring new methodological and analytical approaches, seven articles that investigated the sport retirement process and eight studies with mixed samples – athletes, coaches, parents etc. Finally, 22 articles were included and analyzed (Figure 2).

The articles were analyzed, and results were reviewed and summarized considering the categories «barriers and resources» and the samples, presenting first the students-athletes (secondary and university) then the elite athletes' condition.

Authors	Title	Year
van Rens; Ashley; Steele	Well-Being and performance in dual careers: the role of academic and athletic identities	2019
Aunola; Selänne; Selänne; Ryba	The role of adolescent athletes' task value patterns in their educational and athletic career aspirations	2018
Kerstajn; Lupo; Capranica; Doupona Topic	Motivation towards sports and academics careers in elite winter sport Slovenian and Italian athletes: the role of internal and external factors	2018
Guirola Gómez; Torregrossa; Ramis; Jaenes	Remando contracorriente: facilitadores y barreras para compaginar el deporte y los estudios	2018
Sorkkila; Aunola; Salmela-Aro; Tolvanen, Ryba	The co-developmental dynamic of sport and school burnout among student-athletes: the role of achievement goals	2018
Graczyk; Nawrocka; Wylleman; Moska; Tomiak; Lachowicz; Drobnik	Type of education and life experiences in the dual career	2018
van Rens; Borkoles; Farrow; Polman	Domain specific life satisfaction in the dual careers of junior elite football players: the impact of role strain	2018
De Brandt; Wylleman; Torregrossa; Defruyt; Van Rossem	Student-athletes' perceptions of four dual career competencies	2017
Moreno, Muniesa, Bielsa, López de Subijana	La experiencia de ser deportista de élite: una comparativa entre generaciones	2017
Graczyk; Wylleman; Nawrocka; Atroszko; Moska; Tomiak. Krysztofciak	The importance of the type of sport and life experience in the dual career in elite sport based on the analysis of Poland	2017
Perez-Rivases; Torregrossa; Pallarés; Viladrich; Regüela	Seguimiento de la transición a la universidad en mujeres deportistas de alto rendimiento	2017
Ryba; Stambulova; Selänne; Aunola; Nurmi	"Sport has always been first for me" but "all my free time is spent doing homework": dual career styles in late adolescence	2017
Miró Moyá; Torregrossa; Regüela; Perez-Rivases; Ramis	Competencias para la planificación de la carrera dual de deportistas de alto rendimiento	2017
Stambulova; Engström; Franck; Linnér; Lindahl	Searching for an optimal balance: dual career experiences of Swedish adolescent athletes	2015
Baron-Thiene; Alfermann	Personal characteristics as predictors for dual career dropout versus continuation – A prospective study of adolescent athletes from German elite sport schools	2015
Blodgett; Schink	"When you're coming from the reserve you're not supposed to make it": stories of Aboriginal athletes pursuing sport and academic careers in "mainstream" cultural contexts	2015
López de Subijana; Barriopedro; Conde	Supporting dual career in Spain: Elite athletes' barriers to study	2015
Ryan	Factors impacting carded athlete's readiness for dual careers	2015
Geranosova; Ronkainen	The experience of dual career through Slovak athletes' eyes	2015
Ryba; Stambulova, Ronkainen, Bundgaard, Selänne	Dual career pathways of transnational athletes	2015
Brown; Fletcher, Henry, Borrie; Emmett; Buzza; Wombwell	A British university case study of the transitional experiences of student-athletes	2015
Corrado; Tessitore; Capranica; Rauter; Doupona Topic	Motivation for a dual-career: Italian and Slovenian student-athletes	2012

Figure 2. Flow diagram showing the selection of articles for inclusion in the narrative review.

Results: barriers to and resources on dual careers

Overall, the first aspect that should be considered for students is the need to guarantee balanced study, training, and leisure routines. If this balance is not achieved, students can reach a point where they must drop out of their sports career, and this may be caused by different factors, such as physical and mental fatigue, injuries, and performance loss (van Rens, Borkoles, Farrow, & Polman, 2018). Brown et al. (2015), within a British university, analyzed the process of transitioning from high school to university, concomitantly with an increasing demand for athletic performance. If not addressed effectively, these demands, that may have implications (possibly negative) for student-athletes' academic performance and mental or psychosocial health, should be made clearer and would appreciate the assistance of more experienced student-athletes during adaptation (Brown et al., 2015).

Some competencies were considered important for successful dual career planning: (a) knowledge regarding the options for an academic and sports career, (b) capacity to cope with stress, (c) self-discipline, and d) capacity to set priorities (Baron-Thiene & Alfermann, 2015; Stambulova, Engström, Franck, Linnér & Lindahl, 2015).

Among university students, aside from these, there is also the willingness to make sacrifices and to prioritize what one wishes to accomplish as a student-athlete. These appear owing to the concerns of this specific group about their professional future, which is both a necessity and a reality to be faced (Graczyk, Nawrocka, Wylleman & Moska, 2018; Miró Moyá, Torregrossa, Regüela, Perez-Rivases & Ramis, 2017; Perez-Rivases, Torregrossa,

Pallarés, Viladrich, & Regüela, 2017). Van Rens, Ashley & Steele (2019) sought to understand the association between the athletic and academic identities of Australian elite athletes, their academic and sporting performance, and life satisfaction; their results showed that this specific sample of elite athletes not only associated higher education with future career prospects and financial security but also highlighted their athletic identity.

The impact of these abovementioned factors will be higher or lower according to the established institutional conditions (e.g. support for transitions and ability to skip classes during official events); however, during this transition phase, cultural and social factors can also affect young people's adaptation (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Ryba, Stambulova, Ronkainen., Bundgaard, & Selänne, 2015; Ryba, Stambulova, Selänne, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2017). Thus, these findings denote that stress-inducing factors among student-athletes need further debate because they may suffer from stress owing to school and sports problems. Sorkkila, Aunola, Salmela-Aro, Tolvanen & Ryba (2018) analyzed how school and sport goals can cause the exhaustion of young Finnish student-athletes in Secondary Sport Schools. Observing the levels of sports and school exhaustion, the results showed that it is fundamental to consider a balanced routine between the time devoted to sports and school; this contributed to promoting positive adherence and adequate perceptions about themselves, both in sports and at school. Transitioning from basic to secondary education usually occurs between the ages of 16–18 years; this period has a high sport dropout rate (between 10% and 20%) and is an important time for determining a successful dual career (Aunola, Selänne, Selänne &

Ryba, 2018). Such differences in sport regulation were addressed by Corrado et al. (2012), who underlined the political efforts made in Europe to ensure the dual-career condition. They cross-culturally analyzed the motivation of Italian and Slovenian college athletes for a dual career. Regarding gender, men and women of both nationalities showed high levels of motivation for dual careers with strong commitment to the sport. This indicates a possible development in women's sports and, consequently, a reduction in differences in gendered sport. Moreover, Italian athletes showed higher academic motivation, explained by the condition offered by the military sports system, mainly regarding individual sports. Further, female students prioritize academic education owing to a lesser self-perception toward an athletic identity and to the greater mental effort required to withstand the stress generated by dual career management (Baron-Thiene & Alfermann, 2015; De Brandt, Wylleman, Torregrosa, Defruyt, & Van Rossem, 2017).

Thus far, dual career has been shown as a long-term process influenced by many factors. López de Subijana, Barriopedro & Conde (2015) investigated whether a career assistance program (PROAD) facilitates the development of a dual career. In total, 575 male and female Spanish athletes participated; athletes enrolled in the PROAD were more aware of their rights compared with non-PROAD athletes, and the former had better education levels than the latter.

Further, Guirola Gómez, Torregrosa, Ramis & Jaenes (2018) analyzed Spanish elite rowers' barriers and resources toward developing a dual career. They identified intrinsic motivation, teaching flexibility, and financial support (sports and academic scholarships) in addition to social support as resources. They identified long concentration, training concurrent with classes, stress, tiredness, little time for leisure, and no economic compensation as an athlete as barriers. Further, the sample reported how teachers and classmates misunderstand the daily demands of an elite athlete, especially in the amateur sports setting.

Moreno, Muniesa, Bielsa & López de Subijana (2017) compared different generations of Spanish athletes. Between these generations, measures were created that favor the construction of a dual career in Spain; some were athletes at a time when there were no such measures (pre-facilitation), whereas others had access to them (post-facilitation). They analyzed these different athletes' experiences of dual careers at different points in time and their expectations regarding reward and

support after retirement. The generation pre-facilitation measures considered themselves privileged for being able to dedicate themselves to the sport, and they did not have an expectation of any rewards; the generation post-facilitation measures expected some rewards for having developed an elite sports career, indicating a certain sense of abandonment by the sports institutions. Regarding academic background, the two groups achieved similar levels of study, and both could organize their resources to successfully lead a dual career. The generation pre-facilitation measures showed a natural orientation to the dual career, mostly because they did not have expectations of returns, which then strengthened their feeling of having been privileged because they were able to dedicate themselves to the sport.

Ryan (2015) conducted semi-structured interviews with 17 athletes from eight different sports to analyze the influence of a dual career on topics such as conflicts resulting from the sports lifestyle, career stage, and influence of coaches and managers. Results showed that lifestyle is compromised by dedication to sport, especially as athletic demands increase. This implies, for example, a restricted circle of friends, and despite the desire to build a life beyond sport, athletes try to minimize external distractions. Regarding career stage, the most experienced athletes realized the importance of holistic career development, while the recently carded athletes believed an exclusive focus on the sport was necessary to guarantee the conquest of the elite. In summary, despite the provision of scholarship and other positive actions, the support and encouragement of a dual career were insufficient.

Moreover, Graczyk et al. (2017) examined how sport type (individual or team) could affect the development of a dual career for Polish elite athletes; results showed individual sports athletes are more patient regarding dual careers, while collective sports athletes are more willing to make sacrifices. Further, they showed that both groups can develop dual careers, and personal life experience is a determining factor in this regard.

Kerstajn, Lupo & Capranica (2018) analyzed the relationship between internal and external factors impacting the dual career of Italian and Slovenian winter sports athletes. They found a higher status of sports amateurism for Slovenian athletes, which could explain greater motivation and academic engagement. In contrast, as Italian athletes were recruited by the Italian army, they showed higher levels of sporting

professionalism and, consequently, less academic motivation than Slovenian amateurs. It is noticed that possibilities in the sports career influence educational dedication, observing the opportunities provided by either the local sports culture or state incentives.

Geranosova & Ronkainen (2015) examined how Slovak athletes experience a dual career «to compare the actual experiences of athletes with the EU guidelines and examine whether these guidelines are in effective use» (p. 54). The first finding of this research shows that professional athletes were more satisfied with their condition than non-professional athletes were. For all athletes, the personal effort to organize a dual career is significant, involving time management, discipline, and responsibility when executing tasks. These athletes perceive university education as being important for life after sport, despite reported concern about finding jobs in their field of study. As limiting factors point out the teachers' incomprehension, who believe that the dual career is unachievable, that the financial condition reached is insufficient, and that studies are inflexible. One athlete who pursued sports career in the United States reinforces the appreciation he receives in that country as an athlete, which is very different from that who lived in Slovakia.

Discussion

The literature analyzed in this study showed that the organization of routines by student-athletes to meet the requirements of the education field is an important challenge that deserves attention. Family support, including encouragement and provision of logistics and financial investment, are important factors that contribute to young athletes' capability to overcome psychological resistance related to the pressure surrounding school- and sports-related results. The understanding that this pressure for results is not linear—that is, it varies according to the sports and educational calendars that sometimes results in the overlap of stress peaks owing to the imposed demands by these two fields in their lives—may help improve the compatibility of daily routines, balancing the time engaged in different activities (Mateu et al., 2020). Further, our analyses showed that understanding and respecting the situation of these individuals, who are usually seeking strategies to reconcile training and study routines, is the first step to helping them accomplish a dual career, achieve maximum sports performance, and have good academic performance—even if studying is

not a priority at that time.

Once a sports-school relationship is established, many attempts at conciliating these two fields occur, and they are varied and strongly dependent on the sports and educational policies of the country, economic possibilities provided by each sport and labor market, support offered by the family, and successful transition between the training stages (Torregrosa, Chamorro, & Ramis, 2016). The strategies built to adapt student-athletes' sports training times to their other schedules are diverse (Vilanova & Puig, 2016), but they converge on a fundamental point: the understanding that young people cannot distance themselves from their formal education and social roles (Radtke & Coalter, 2007).

The sports career is a highly selective path that does not provide any guarantees of success and requires time and dedication; such dedicated time may subsequently compromise young athletes' academic education, as well as hinder their entry into the ordinary labor market (Alfermann & Preis, 2013; Borggreffe & Cachay, 2012; De Bosscher & De Croock, 2011). However, such adversities can be minimized by planning and support from the competent agencies (National Sports Federations, Olympic Committee, Educational and Sports Secretaries, clubs, schools, and universities) and by anticipating the impact of sports retirement—especially unplanned retirement. Thus, organizing young athletes' training in different disciplines and sports markets and balancing their student-athlete status become key points for the promotion of dual careers in several societies.

In Denmark, as in various other European countries (Radtke & Coalter, 2007), a specific measure was taken to attenuate the tension between sports training and education: flexibility of the school curriculum, which involved the diminishing of weekly class hours for student-athletes for dedicating more time to their sports training (Henriksen & Krogh, 2013, 2013; Christensen & Sørensen, 2009).

Another strategy that could satisfy the demand of young athletes for a dual career is the organization of training centers designed to combine school routines and training spaces. Verkooijen et al. (2012) reported that the development of Elite Sport and Education Centres was implemented in 2007 in the Netherlands, aiming to provide athletes with a single space in which they can train, study, and live. However, even in this type of program, which combines athletes' daily routines related to school and sports in the same space, the school curriculum remains subordinated to the training of the

elite athlete. The same study has shown that the athletes who train in these centers spend more hours in sports activities than athletes who perform their sports activities in other places (Verkooijen et al., 2012). Further, similar to the Danish case, the access to elite centers is limited, as only 40% of Dutch sport talents attend them (van Rens, Elling & Reijgersberg, 2015).

Radtke and Coalter (2007) provided data that demonstrated some success in the implementation of the abovementioned Dutch model, both in sports training and academic education; this success in conciliation relates to reorganization of the school curriculum, adaptation of exam schedules, and presence of tutors. Another study showed that there was a reduction in school tasks and exams, which enabled young athletes to focus on their training without dropping out, mainly because they were not overloaded with school demands (Borggreffe & Cachay, 2012; Radtke & Coalter, 2007). However, such curricular flexibility or inclusion of sports training in the school content may also threaten the quality of the academic education of young student-athletes, because these can work as factors that jeopardize education (Borggreffe & Cachay, 2012; Ryba & Stambulova, 2013). We observed that most of the studies analyzed focused on the objective dimensions of dual-career management (e.g. time, activities, curriculum, and support) within the institutional models proposed by different countries and, consequently, by different cultures, economies, and values.

Conclusion

Based on the abovementioned studies and their findings, we believe that various factors can exert pressure on dual-career athletes, such as the transition between different education stages (which may require an increase in training load or in academic performance), daily routine organization, and the possible need to change town, school, or club. The routine of athletes in a dual career condition requires dedication to two training systems, which need to connect to offer the necessary conditions for attention to studies and sports, respecting the different transitions present in the dual career training process. For this to happen, it is essential that athletes are monitored in an institutional and systematic way, offering them information about their sporting and academic condition, envisioning their sporting retirement and adapting to new work possibilities. Universities need to recognize this student and his atypical condition, offering the means for them to

develop their athletic career, taking advantage of sports and academic opportunities.

Specifically, our literature analysis suggested that we could not consider standardized models for any dual-career context for athletes owing to the existing variations in this type of experience, which differ by country and a wide array of influencing factors. Although we make such an observation, previous studies have highlighted noticeable advances toward a deeper understanding of this topic in the literature, as comparative studies in different countries are expanding in number.

Finally, it is necessary to develop cross-national comparisons by conducting longitudinal research methods. In particular, such research should be conducted on «emerging» countries in Asia, South America, and Africa.

Practical applications

Therefore, we highlight the importance of new lines of investigation using anthropological, sports and educational perspectives that analyze athletes' life projects and their families in different cultures and socioeconomic realities; the management of athletic career, the adequacy of the school or academic curriculum (and its impact) to identify the subjectivities, rationalities, and beliefs that offer meaning to the trajectories of these young athletes during the different stages of their dual-career transitions.

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