

Title: A Taxonomy of Dual Career Development Environments in European Countries

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Aims: The aim of this study was to investigate the types of environments that support dual career athletes within 7 countries across Europe. For the purpose of the study, dual career development environments were defined as: purposefully developed systems that aim to facilitate athletes' investment in combining their competitive sporting career with education or work.

Method: This study used a multi-stage data collection process: first, researchers (in seven European countries) searched relevant documents (e.g., school brochure, prospectus for university) of environments to find information regarding the support they provide and the types of athletes they support. Second, researchers conducted interviews with stakeholders in these environments (e.g., directors, department managers, dual career coordinators). Third, to conduct a cross case analysis there was a researcher discussion with representatives from all seven countries in Europe (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom).

Results and Practical Implications: Results highlighted that there are 8 types of DCDEs - (a) sports friendly schools, that enable their pupils to compete in high level or elite sport; (b) elite sport schools / colleges, that are purposefully developed for high level or elite athletes (c) professional and / or private club programs, clubs that support educational and / or vocational pursuits for their athletes; (d) sport friendly universities, that enable their pupils to compete in high level or elite sport; (e) combined dual career systems, that are

purposefully developed to work in tandem with both sport and education / vocational providers to deliver an all-round support package; (f) national sports programs, federations or organisation that support educational and / or vocational pursuits for their athletes; (g) defence force programs, that provide support for athletes combining vocation and sporting excellence and (h) players' union programs, that can offer guidance about educational provision and vocational courses for registered members.

The study provides an overview of the different types of environments a dual career athlete might be involved with or who dual career support providers might work with. By understanding the different types of environments and the different approaches these have to supporting dual career athletes, a dual career practitioner can support an athlete to make an informed choice on the environment that will compliment their dual career plan. For example, some environments (e.g., sport-friendly schools or universities) had less formal lines of communication between sport and education than others (e.g., a combined dual career environment). Depending on the athletes priorities, they might prefer a more formalised dual career program, such as a combined dual career environment, or they might prefer to choose an environment that requires them to take responsibility for managing their dual career themselves, such as a sport-friendly school or university. This framework can be used by practitioners to develop sport-specific taxonomies or “maps” of the dual career environments within their pathway.

TASS have produced this lay summary. The full article is available (permissions may apply):

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