

Title: Evaluation of the Elite Schools of Sport: Empirical Findings from an Individual and Collective Point of View

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Aims: The aims of the evaluation was to begin to answer the following questions: 1) To what extent do upper-level student-athletes from an ESS differ from student-athletes of similar age and education from other schools with regard to the key statistic of Olympic medals won? 2) To what extent do upper-level student-athletes from the ESS system differ from their non-ESS counterparts with regard to educational achievement? 3) How are basic structural conditions such as support services for elite pupils assessed and appraised?

Method: A comparative perspective at the individual level was chosen for this study. In summary, 611 German participants of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games as well as the 2006 Winter Olympics were questioned by means of a standardized survey. Both former as well as current pupils of ESS institutions as well as pupils from 'normal' schools were compared with regard to their level of success in sports as well as their post-school educational career. Structural conditions and forms of cooperation in the ESS system were also recorded at the collective level by means of a nationwide standardized survey that was conducted for the German Olympic Sport Federation to examine the quality of these facilities for the period between May 2004 and February 2005.

Results and Practical Implications: The results show that there was no difference in athletic performances between ESS pupils and others in the 2004 Summer Olympics, while in the 2006 Winter Olympics, there was a significant difference. Furthermore, there were no differences in school performances between the groups. Pupils at ESS often go on to pursue careers in the federal police and the armed forces, while many more non-ESS pupils work toward earning a university degree. The available data suggest that attending an ESS results in higher individual social costs which are not matched by comparable success in athletic competitions.

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