



Work Package 2

Comprehensive review of the scientific literature on the current state
of the athletes' dual career through media

(report)

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Introduction

There has been an increasing interest in the last few years in the research field and at the level of promotion of dual career (DC), i.e. the combination and coordination of education and elite sport commitment. While the integration of academics and sports has already been more institutionally established in the United States under the National Collegiate Athletic Association that guides student athletes towards achieving their educational and sports career goals, European Member States still function in a much more fragmented policy environment and under heterogeneous ways of managing the dialogue between the two. From the perspective of scientific contributions on the topic of dual career an emerging and multidisciplinary academic conversation on different aspects of dual career of European student-athletes, as well as a methodological variety of studies on dual career in the European context has been identified and highlighted (Guidotti, Cortis & Capranica, 2015). However, despite the fact that the scientific sphere has already made some important breakthroughs dealing with introduction and promotion of the need for successful coordination between education and athletic career (the contributions have already addressed some micro (individual), meso (interpersonal), macro (social) and global (policy) dimensions of DC), a deeper understanding of the relation between DC and media is still lacking.

How does the media report on dual career? Are the attitudes on dual career in media positive or negative? What image does the media form on the topic of dual career and what is to be done in order to contribute and promote more positive image formation on this subject? Moreover, the use of the term “dual career” is still not well consolidated and there is even less awareness of it at the level of public sphere. Precisely for this reason the adequate understanding of the image of DC created by media is all the more important for achieving the goals of its successful implementation.

Before researching the frequency and quality of reporting and writing on dual career in the media, it is reasonable to first review and analyse existing scientific literature on this subject. A comprehensive analysis of scientific articles that addresses the relationship between the media and DC has also been identified as one of the main outcomes of the present project on the first level, which will provide the empirical and theoretical basis for its further developments.

The main aims of systematic literature review

Since dual career is an emerging research area, the main goals of systematic literature review in the context of this project are to identify, gather, systematize and analyse the most suited scientific articles, i. e. articles that focus on the dual career and media intertwine. Starting from this point, in the second step, we want to identify and highlight the key aspects of dual career in relation to the media.

It is anticipated that such an overview and analysis of scientific publication activity would provide us a general frame for further investigation of relevant aspects of athletes' dual career support through media.

Methodology

The basic framework for carrying out an existing task was provided by steps to conducting a systematic review as proposed by Khan et. al. (2003). In their article they identify and set the guidelines through proposing five key steps in a systematic review:

- framing questions for a review
- identifying relevant work
- assessing the quality of studies
- summarizing the evidence
- interpreting the findings (Khan et. al., 2003).

In connection with the first criterion, the addressed subject of review was specified in the form of some structured questions, the basic one being: "In what ways did the research field study the relationship between dual career and the media so far?" Since this relationship frames the context of dual career very narrowly, we also expanded it with additional questions to the field of social media and public relations.

The period of publication of scientific contributions, which was determined as relevant for the task, was set at the range between 2000 and 2019. The essential databases that were used as

our data source were Scopus, Sportdiscus, PsyARTICLES, Web of knowledge, ERIC and Google scholar. The chosen language was English, but the research was not limited to English, since each of the participants did a research on articles in their own language as well (German, Romanian, Italian, Lithuanian and Slovenian).

By determining the keywords and their combinations, we then wanted to identify and compile a list of scientific contributions that represented potential hits for further research. The search combinations used were as follows: “dual career” AND “media representation” AND “sport”; “dual career” AND “media representation” AND “physical activity”; “dual career” AND “mass media” AND “sport”; “student athlete” AND “mass media”; “dual career” AND “sport journalism”; “dual career” AND “journalism” AND “sport”; “student athlete” AND “journalism” AND “sport”; “dual career” AND “social media” AND “sport”; “student athlete” AND “social media”; “dual career” AND “tv news” AND “sport”; “dual career” AND “printed media” AND “sport”; “student athlete” AND “printed media”.

Sum of all combinations and all searches (for articles in English) resulted in 1501 hits. Taking into account the elimination of duplications, screening technique for the minimum level of acceptability (screening the titles and abstracts in order to determine a list of relevant papers to be included for more quality assessment) and snowballing technique (to allow the identification of relevant papers not identified through the electronic search) 33 English articles were identified that represented the base for a further selection, together with 9 German, 9 Romanian, 4 Italian and 2 Lithuanian hits. Through additional title and abstracts’ reading a final selection of 14 articles closest to the needs of our project was determined for more detailed reading and quality assessment.

Findings and interpretations

Firstly, it seems worthwhile to emphasize that literature dealing with the specifically adapted and narrow subject for this project is rather limited. For illustration: one of the most striking findings in the process of searching for past academic work was that there was not a single article that would directly deal with the specific relationship mentioned, i.e. the relationship between dual career and media. None of the articles identified addresses the question of how does the media frame the subject of dual career, how the dual career is represented in media narratives, what implications can the media depictions of dual career have for its main stakeholders etc.

However, we identified some articles that either relate to the mentioned relationship in a more indirect way, or are insightful and useful for addressing the questions of present project due to the structural similarities of their content. The 14 articles identified for more detailed reading were first organised and arranged into three basic groups, which were designed according to the common central content focus in articles. These three main categories are named and presented in Table 1 under the umbrella topic as follows: (1) Media representations, (2) Media consumption, (3) Social Media. The Table 1 further specifies the narrower focus of each article in relation to different aspects of dual career. We present the main findings from each individual group below.

Table 1: The main classification of articles

Author(s)	Country	Umbrella topic	Specific focus
Cosh, Crabb & Tully	Australia	Media representations	Media representations of post-retirement athletes.
Cosh, Crabb & LeCouteur	Australia	Media representations	Media representations of post-retirement athletes.
Stan	EU (Romania)	Media representations	Media representations of retired Romanian athletes.
McGannon, Curtin, Schinke & Schweinbenz	Canada	Media representations	Media representations of an athlete identity and motherhood.
Cosh & Crabb	Australia	Media representations	Media representations of an athlete identity and motherhood.
Beamon & Bell	USA	Media representation	The relationship between (media) image of an elite athlete and African American student athletes.
Lee & Browne	USA	Media consumption	The use of media for sport information among African American student athletes.
Moore	USA	Media consumption	Media consumption of sport related topics and their reliability from the perspective of retention.
Filo, Lock, & Karg	Australia	Social Media	Social media and sport management for optimisation of social media usage.
O'Hallarn, Shapiro, Wittkower, Ridinger & Hambrick	USA	Social Media	Social media as a mechanism for forming public opinion in the context of sport.
Ruihley, Pratt & Carpenter	USA	Social Media	Social media in the context of public relations and college athletics.
Hull	USA	Social Media	Student athletes' usage of social media for raising awareness.
Sanderson, Stokowski & Taylor	USA	Social Media	Social media as marketing and promotional tool for intercollegiate athletic departments.
Yan, Pegoraro & Watanabe	USA	Social Media	The organisational capacity of social media for student athletes.

1) Media representations

The main common focus of articles in this group, which, in the light of their narrow focus, were further diversified, was their dealing with media representations. The dual career as such is not addressed in these articles. However, articles deal with media representations of post-retirement athletes (Cosh, Crabb & Tully, 2015; Cosh, Crab & LeCouteur, 2013; Stan, 2017) and media representations of an athlete identity in combination with motherhood (Cosh & Crabb, 2012; McGannon et. al., 2012), both relationships being informative also for the topic of dual career. In addition there was one article that addressed the problem of obsessive pursuing of sports career at the expense of all other developments, partly also caused by mass media narratives (Beamon & Bell, 2002).

One article deals with the transition out of elite sport and addresses the socio-cultural and discursive context through a discursive analysis of media articles reporting on post-retirement experiences of two Australian swimmers (Cosh, Crabb & Tully, 2015). Since mass media is one of the means that offers us insight into culture and its perceptions and since mass media participates in construction and constitution of our experiences of the world, the specific aim of this article was to find out how the cause of transition difficulties was attributed in media. The results highlighted that identities of athletes were repeatedly constructed in terms of an athlete identity, excluding all other identities. Furthermore, the responsibility for transition difficulties was attributed to individuals, with wider contexts being neglected. In the context of dual career this could teach us about the need to promote a holistic approach for representations of dual career in media.

The similar aspects and focus were depicted in article that dealt with retirement from elite sport and used discursive psychological approach to explore constructions of choice and identity around elite athletes' retirements within Australian newsprint media (Cosh, Crabb & LeCouteur, 2013). The article identified three types of retirement (in relation to age, injury or active choice) and inquired which ways of retiring and identity positions are deemed more appropriate. One of the main findings relevant in our context is the identification of athletes that are more vulnerable to transition difficulties: the authors found that athletes that display an exclusive athlete identity are more vulnerable to transition difficulties. The promotion of

dual career seems particularly important in that context to facilitate more smooth transition and distance from elite sport.

Another article that also analysed media representations on retired (Romanian) athletes focused on differences between gender (Stan, 2017). The main finding of the article was that the women athletes in the post-retirement phase are de-centred from competing roles and depicted in typical feminine practices, whereas men are represented as remaining strong and competitive and therefore more appropriate to act as a role model for successful aging. If motives of pain, suffering, struggle, sacrifice etc., are portrayed in media accounts on female athletes (and conversely, the transition for men is portrayed as continuity rather than discontinuity) then it can be argued that positive attitudes for promotion of dual career must be carefully crafted in order not to lead into such stereotyping.

Two additional articles in this section addressed the media narratives on the dialogue (or lack of it) between an athlete identity and the status of motherhood. Cosh & Crabb (2012) argue that the identities of elite athlete and mother were depicted as mutually exclusive. Moreover, they found that the broader cultural context (and the context of sporting organisations specifically) was rendered invisible at the level of influencing and supporting the management of motherhood and elite sport participation. If the dominant cultural perceptions, obtained from the media, reveal reproduction of the context in which it remains difficult to combine both roles (i. e. that of the mother and the elite athlete), then we could speculate the similar perceptions could result from misunderstanding and mutually exclusive media representation of sports and educational career. In fact, one of the articles mentions the possible link between mass media and tendency toward obsessive pursuit of sport career at the expense of all other educational and intellectual developments. Beamon & Bell (2002) address the problem, which is specific to African-American male student athletes that acquire too high aspirations and expectations from pursuing professional sports career only. The mass media was mentioned as one among several actors (family, peers, community agents and schools are also highlighted) that contribute to socialisation into sport and perceptions of professional athlete image. McGannon (et. al., 2012) tries to identify the way in which media constructs an elite athlete identity in its connection to motherhood, since identity integration is achieved through the negotiation of socio-cultural constructs, partly defined by media. The results from

the case study revealed that the motherhood was mainly framed as redemption – to be a better athlete and more complete person (McGannon et. al., 2012).

2) Media consumption

The articles that were framed around media consumption tried to measure the use of media for sports information among African American student athletes (Lee & Browne, 2009) and investigate from which medium the audience (students specifically) gets most sports related information (Moore, 2018). TV was identified as the primary source of sports information, followed by the usage of multiple sources, internet, newspapers and very limited usage of radio (Lee & Browne, 2009). These results were also confirmed by the second article in these group that identified TV as preferred source, followed by social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) and print news (Moore, 2018). The knowledge on media consumption preferences could be useful in making decisions on where to focus the promotion of positive attitudes on dual career. Additional orientations could be possible based on the decisions of the basic promotion objectives: if, for instance, we are interested in retention of media stories, then the most meaningful focus should be put on the print media. The print media is still the most reliable when it comes to retention (Moore, 2018). If, on the other hand, we want to communicate effectively through social media, where the possibility of interaction is appreciated and assumptions of more active audience are made, the usage of visual material is suggested (Moore, 2018). These findings are important for guidelines on which media to choose and how to report or craft stories for better retention and most efficient results.

3) Social Media

Social media perspectives on dual career mainly aimed at the level of studying the efficiency of social media communication. We can further divide these articles on the ones that focus on student athletes and their use of social media for the pursuit of various objectives (Hull, 2014; Sanderson, Stokowski & Taylor, 2019; Yan, Pegoraro & Watanabe, 2018), article that addresses the relationship between social media and sport management (Filo, Lock & Karg,

2015), article on social media in the context of public relations and collegiate athletics (Ruihley, Pratt & Carpenter, 2016) and article that establishes the link between social media and public sphere in the context of sport (O'Hallarn et. al., 2018).

Hull (2014) addresses and analyses the case in which student-athletes used Twitter to help their teams from being eliminated. The generability of this research comes from its focus on case, that served as illustration of student athletes' activities in social media (in this case Twitter), which can be used as a means to raise awareness about their cause. Hull identifies several techniques through which student athletes were successful in their aim: alerting as many people as possible was achieved through twitting consistently, becoming opinion leaders, engaging celebrities and using weak ties to get followers of other accounts (Hull, 2014). The effectiveness of weaker ties in information dissemination lies in fact that weaker connections act as a connector between different groups and are crucial in introducing new information into the group. The usage of Twitter (or other social media) can therefore act as a way to organize and unify particular message, as well as a way of reaching a large number of people. Similarly, the systematic examination of the organizational capacity of social media for activism on social issues was addressed through the analysis of one university football players' strike on Twitter (Yan, Pegoraro & Watanabe, 2018). The article concludes that Twitter can function as locus for organisation of protest (through breaking news, building public networks, narrating positions in interconnected environment). Modern technology in that context offers important communication tools for student athletes, providing them networking possibilities, which were previously very limited. Collective actions, sharing similar purpose, can be mutually strengthened on digital platforms. In the context of student athletes and their social media usage, one study identifies further possibilities of social media usage optimisation: a survey of one particular campaign that took place for marketing and promotion of intercollegiate athletics program showed that allowing players to involve resulted in several positive outcomes (favourable media coverage for the program, fostering student athlete buy-in) (Sanderson, Stokowski & Taylor, 2019). Since social media is a complex enterprise it can also be used as branding, marketing and recruiting tool: "Thus, it is crucial for intercollegiate athletic departments to foster educational opportunities for student-athletes on these platforms /.../ social media efforts that collaboratively involve student-athletes and athletic department personnel offer meaningful teaching opportunities, along with potentially

generating favourable media coverage for the athletic department, as these social media partnerships are infrequent.” (Sanderson, Stokowski & Taylor, 2019, p. 109). In the context of sport marketing this leads to the conclusion that social media is something to be embraced and that departments and students can work together in social media campaigns. Making student athletes visible, fans and other can connect with them, which can in turn enhance visibility of the program (Sanderson, Stokowski & Taylor, 2019).

The existing literature on social media and sport management with a focus on specific social media characteristics that cultivate more meaningful exchange relationships (interactivity and content co-creation) offers us insights in how to optimise social media usage from strategic and operational points of view (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015). The article that analysed the existing literature doesn't mention student athletes as a distinct category, but could be useful in understanding the role of social media in promotional context.

Effective and efficient communication is important, even more so in times of concerns about educational programs, increased media presence and high budgets (Ruihley, Pratt & Carpenter, 2016). One article on that topic deals with roles and perceptions of PR chief executives within an athletic department in order to find some guidelines to communicate strategically, efficiently, to stay ahead of the media cycle etc. Social media strategy is described as one where fluency with its language is needed, as well as with its public and understanding of how to use that medium to connect, inform and motivate (Ruihley, Pratt & Carpenter, 2016). At the ultimate level, social media can – as much as acting as a tool for bullying, spreading homophobia, sexism and racism – also serve as a venue and motivation for enhancing democratic processes and establishing Habermasian public sphere (O'Hallarn et. al., 2018). As one article argues, society's passion for sport and its consumption, together with Twitter unique architecture and hashtags, can promote behaviour akin to public sphere (O'Hallarn et. al., 2018) – hashtags specifically are understood as a possible mechanism through which public opinion can be formed.

Conclusion

To summarize, authors of articles in our first group were well aware of the fact that media and journalists do not only report on reality, but actively create it as well. Mass media is one of the privileged means of learning on culture, its values, norms, preferences etc., and media depictions are as much a mirror as something that contributes to forming the picture in the mirror. Therefore, it is important to study media representations, since it can help us understand different aspects of different topics. In our case, we saw that the main problem was one-sided reporting, which while exposing sporting aspects neglected all the others. Moreover, the omitted aspects did not occur only at the individual level, but also at the level of the wider social context. The suitable media representations on dual career, i. e. the representations that are holistic, gender neutral, attentive to more aspects, are therefore all the more needed and all the more important to avoid or at least to minimize the problems that athletes can face later in life and to give value not only to sports performances and achievements, but also to academic endeavours.

The knowledge that we gained from articles in our second group, that is the findings from the research on media consumption preferences, could be informative in making decisions on where to focus the promotion of positive attitudes on dual career. More than the decisions about a particular type of media, which might be different in the European context, the studies were important in helping us to understand the specific functions of specific type of media. The retention of information is, as we saw, still best achieved in print media, while the focus on social media demands the acknowledgement of the interaction aspect.

Effective communication via social media was addressed in more detail through the review of articles from our third group. We mentioned and reviewed several mechanisms, identified in articles, which can help us to communicate more efficiently (twittering consistently, becoming opinion leaders, using the weak ties etc.). We also saw that the involvement of student athletes is helpful in raising awareness and promoting different events, programs etc. Functions that are distinctive for (digital) social media and should be taken into account when designing messages are interactivity and content co-creation.

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