

An Overview of Studies on Elite Athletes, Education and Performance Lifestyle Management at Loughborough

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Three (and a half) completed studies and one in prospect

1. ***Education and Elite Athletes in Europe: a review of policy and practice in higher education and professional sports academies in the EU Member States*** (Amara, Aquilina, Henry & PMP Consultants, 2004), commissioned by the EC Sport Unit

[Plus ***A Review of Data on the Non-sporting Activities of Elite Athletes*** (Aquilina, Argent, Henry 2005), commissioned by UK Sport]

2. ***Degrees of success : negotiating dual career paths in elite sport and university education n Finland, France and the UK***, PhD Thesis by Dawn Aquilina (2009)
3. ***Evaluation of Performance Lifestyle Service*** (Fletcher and Henry), commissioned support for a UK Sport and English Institute of Sport self evaluation of services (2010-2011)

Study 1: Education and Elite Athletes in Europe: a review of policy and practice in higher education and professional sports academies in the EU Member States

The Education of Elite Young Sportspersons

- E.C. funded project lasting 8 months
- Spanning 25 member States
- Focused on young elite athletes
- Five levels
 - Compulsory education and sport
 - Post- compulsory education and sport
 - Professional and semi-professional sport
 - University Provision
 - Post athletic career education and training /vocational support and lifestyle management

Methodological Approach

- Stage 1 – Flexible template for provision of data on educational programmes for athletes
- Stage 2 - Flexible template for evaluation of existing programmes
- Stage 3 – Detailed comparative studies in four nation States

The Roles of Universities and Professional Academies in Supporting Elite Athletes

Outcomes

- Established ways in which H. E. institutions / universities define their responsibility for the education of elite athletes in the Member States, and establish a taxonomy of approaches.
- Identified the range of approaches to education in professional sports club academies.
- Evaluated the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the key actors on the system – the athlete, the university, the professional sports club, the nation state, and the EU.
- Identified some abuses and opportunities in respect of the roles of key actors.
- Clarified what the role of the EU in respect of education for elite young sportspersons might be.

Roles of Universities



A Taxonomy of Approaches to Services for Elite Athletes at University level

1. **State-centric / Statutory action**: *state places legal obligation on universities to make special provision.*
2. **State as facilitator / sponsor of measures**: *state formally advises universities to adopt special measures*
3. **National Federation / Institute as Intermediary**: *Sporting bodies liaise with universities to negotiate flexible arrangements*
4. **Laissez faire – Few or No formal structures**

A Taxonomy of Approaches to Services for Elite Athletes at University level

1. State centric / statutory action:

- Legal requirement is placed on Universities to provide adapted opportunities for student-athletes in terms of entry-requirements, time-tabling flexibility, exam dates, type of course delivery, study councillors and so on.
- Some examples include Belgium, France, Hungary, Spain and Portugal.

Belgium (Flemish-speaking community):

- In 2003 through the agreement 'Topsportconvenant HO' between the Ministry of Sport, Flemish Sport Governing body (Blosa), Belgian Olympic Interfederal Committee and Sport federations, two universities – three polytechnics took on a whole new set of responsibilities with regard to elite athletes.
- 70% of a full time professional contract is awarded to student-athletes on Olympic lists which allows them to combine elite sport and studies in higher education professionally.

A Taxonomy of Approaches to Services for Elite Athletes at University level

2. State as sponsor / facilitator:

An approach where by the state promotes formal agreements to ensure that student-athletes' needs are being met at University level.

Illustrative examples include Denmark and Germany.

Germany

- In 1999, cooperation between elite sport and universities was certified through the agreement 'Partneruniversity of elite sport'.
- Members of the cooperation included the German Conference of Education Ministries, Association of University Sports, Student Union, German Sport Confederation and Olympic Support Centre

A Taxonomy of Approaches to Services for Elite Athletes at University level

3. National Federation as Intermediary:

Athletic development needs of the individual are catered for by the sporting institutions and where sporting advocates act on behalf of the student to negotiate flexible arrangements with the university. Examples include Greece and UK.

United Kingdom

- Through the various national Institutes of Sport, elite athletes enjoy the services of a support network of professionals, who amongst other things represent them and liaise with academic institutions on their behalf.

A Taxonomy of Approaches to Services for Elite Athletes at University level

4. Laissez Faire - No formal structures

There are no formal structures and therefore any arrangements fall back on individually negotiated agreements where these prove possible. This category is very broad...

- Some institutions have taken the responsibility upon themselves to accommodate student-athlete needs such as some universities in **The Netherlands, and Cyprus.**
- Some institutions remained quite rigid in nature in relation to student-athletes' needs such as in **Italy, Ireland and Malta** making it increasingly more difficult to combine an academic and sporting career successfully.

Professional Sports Clubs Academies

1. State Centric - State Regulation of Professional Academies

- *e.g. French football and rugby academies*

Number of French Rugby Union Players under Training Agreements

	2001/02 *	2002/03 **	2003/04 **
TOP 16	297	226	237
PRO D2	112	97	142
TOTAL	409	323	379

French Rugby Academies (Training Centres) and Player Data

Of the 379 Academy Players in 2003/4:

- 62 played for the professional team;
- An average of 3 players per Academy / Training Centre played and average of 15 Matches;
- 47 gained professional contracts at the end of the season (12%)

This highlights two important contributions of the Academies / Training Centres to the Professional Clubs ...

1. The **financial contribution**.
2. The **educational contribution** – which is important for all players but particularly crucial for the 88% who do not receive professional rugby contracts

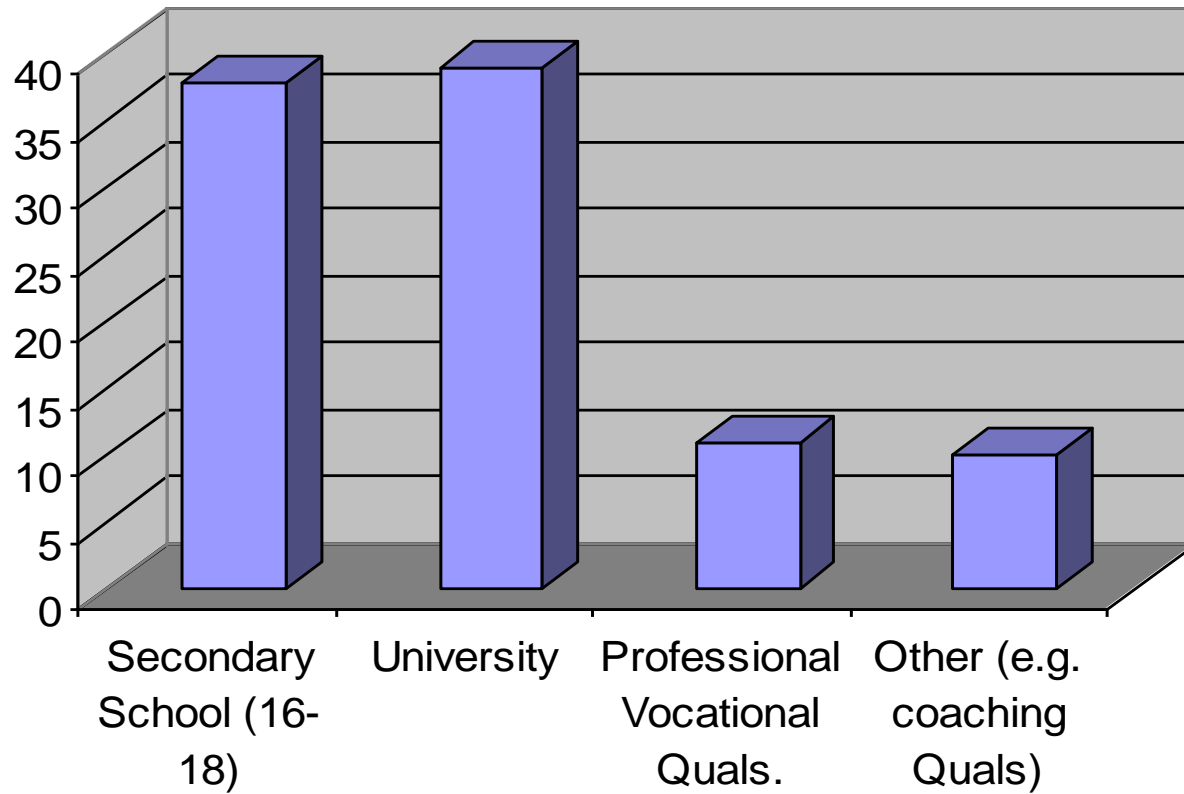
The Financial Context

- TV rights income grew by 46% from 1998-2007 – (€55.7 m. to €78.2 m);
- In the top division (Top 16) club expenditure grew by 56% 1998-2003 (€2.13 m. to €3.32 m.);
- Player salaries grew by 70% 1998-2001 (€2200 - €3800 per month)
- Salaries represent 58% of club expenditure in 2002;
- State auditor puts ceiling of 60% on salary as proportion of total expenditure for sustainable budget.

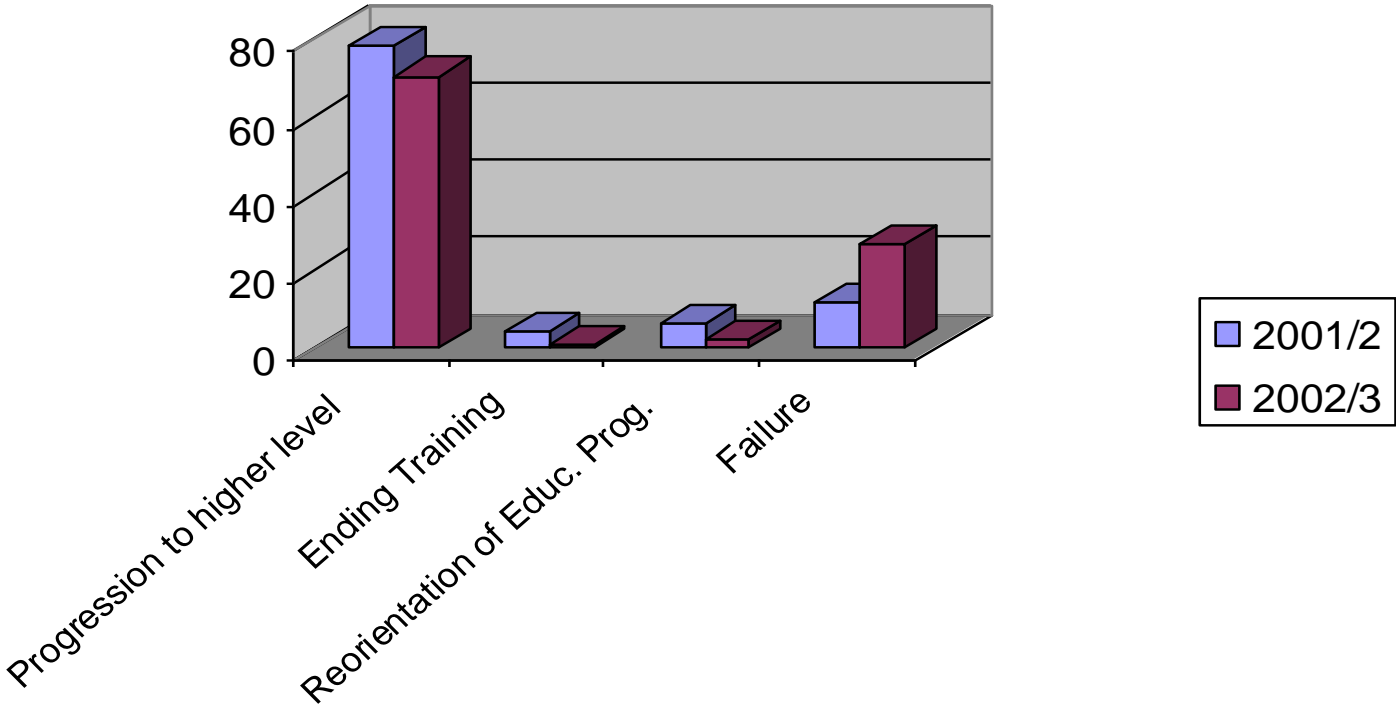
The Financial Implications

- Academy players are a marginal playing resource but critically are cheap, and make the difference in not going over budget.
- However, unless the players meet their educational goals – the club loses 90% of its funding for a player's education.

Educational Programme of French Rugby Academy Players in 2002/3



Educational Performance of French Professional Rugby Players in Academies



Professional Sports Clubs Academies

1. State Centric - State Regulation of Professional Academies

- *e.g. French football and rugby academies*

2. State Sponsored - Formal system of educational accreditation

- *e.g. English football and rugby academies*

3. Laissez-faire: Little or No Formal Control

- *e.g. Italian football academies*

The Roles, Rights and Responsibilities of the Actors in the System

1. The athlete

Roles: Citizen; Athletic representative of the state

Rights: access to education; support from state and from the university (where there is an implicit or explicit 'contract') in meeting demands of sport / education

Responsibilities: to the university and the state.

2. The University

Roles: provision of educational, sporting and lifestyle management services

Rights: responsible representation by athlete

Responsibilities: to maintain the quality of provision while enhancing athlete well being.

The Roles, Rights and Responsibilities of the Actors in the Systemcont. ...

3. The Professional Academy

Roles: Developer of sporting skills on behalf of (a) club, (b) the National Sports Federation;

Rights: Return on investment in terms of access to player services.

Responsibilities: to commercial stakeholders to provide return on investment;_ to ensure that commercial exploitation does not impinge on players' rights

4. The Member State

Roles: Guarantor of social rights; allocator / regulator of educational and sporting resources

Rights: to be represented responsibly by athletes supported

Responsibilities: equality of treatment of citizens; where additional demands placed on citizens, additional resources provided.

The Roles, Rights and Responsibilities of the Actors in the Systemcont. ...

5. The European Union

Roles: Enhancing the knowledge base of Member States and highlighting inequities; protection of the individual's rights against the Member State (ECJ);

Rights: for Member states to conform to appropriate legislation; to negotiate with Member States where shared competence exists

Responsibilities: subsidiarity principle applies, responsible (either alone or jointly with Member States) for resource allocation or regulation

Four Abuses

1. By the Athlete:
 - National affiliation swapping for financial reward
2. By the University
 - Admission of 'student' athletes with no chance of educational success.
3. By the Professional Academy
 - Rejecting >80% of trainees without adequate educational / vocational preparation.
4. By the Nation State
 - Over demanding of athletes effectively denying access to higher education.

.... and an Opportunity

Summary Conclusions

1. Range of responses across Member States from legal requirement for action to laissez faire
2. This has implications for equity and justice – unequal treatment across the EU.
3. This represents a question of rights and responsibilities of the athlete, the university, the state, and the EU. Some states are placing athletes in an invidious position.
4. The issue of young athletes' rights in relation to professional sport and the educational provisions of academies
5. EU's role to highlight inequities, regulate on a transnational basis where necessary and foster good practice. Subsidiarity and the new competence in the Lisbon Treaty could be employed to develop a new role for the EU.

Study 2: Degrees of success : negotiating dual career paths in elite sport and university education in Finland, France and the UK, PhD Thesis by Dawn Aquilina (2009)

A Three Nation Study

6 athlete life stories (18 in total) from each of

1. France (a state centric example)
2. Finland (state as sponsor / facilitator)
3. UK (national Federations as Intermediary)

Selection criteria for subjects

- Sport: Olympic or professional
- Athlete status: NOC / government list of elite performers; professional contract
- Career stage: range of stages from beginning of international career to retired
- Student status: current or former
- Gender
- Language

The French Interviewees

	Age	Individual / Team	Male / Female	Early/ Late age of Specialisation	Student / Graduate	Active / Retired
<i>Athletics</i>	28	Individual	F	Late	Graduate	Active
<i>Badminton</i>	31	Individual / Team	M	Late	Student	Active
<i>Handball</i>	21	Team	M	Late	Student	Active
<i>Judo</i>	27	Individual	F	Early	Graduate	Retired
<i>Swimming</i>	22	Individual	M	Early	Student	Active
<i>Synchronised Swimming</i>	20	Team	F	Early	Student	Active

Developing skills to combine a dual athlete / student career successfully

- Planning and Organisation
- Team Working
- Interpersonal skills
- Able to prioritise
- Commitment
- IT Literacy, Analytical skills, Written communication
- Leadership
- Networking
- Business Awareness

Themes: Benefits of pursuing a dual career

- The need to focus on more than one aspect of life
- Belief that the two aspects; education and sport support each other
- Putting things in perspective
- Experience of dedicating time exclusively to elite sport with minimal improvement
- Intellectual stimulation
- Perform better at the sport
- 'Safety net'
- More to life than sport
- Life stage and preparation for post-athletic careers

Balance in Life: how much effort do you make / value do you place on particular life domains?

Athlete	Age	Sport	Education	Personal /Social
Athletics	28	50%	40% (job)	10%
Badminton	31	30%	30%	40%
Handball	21	30%	25%	45%
Judo	27	60%	30%	10%
Swimming	22	60%	10%	30%
Synchronised Swimming	20	80%	20%	

**Study 3: *Evaluation of Performance Lifestyle Service*
(Fletcher and Henry), commissioned support for a UK Sport
and English Institute of Sport self evaluation of services
(2010-2011)**

On-going - Performance Lifestyle – Maximising impact and opportunity 2010-2016 : A logic model approach

- Working with UK Sport and English Institute of Sport to develop logic models to evaluate the contribution of the Performance Lifestyle System to Medal winning success.
- Performance Lifestyle inputs include:
 - Educational support
 - Career management
 - Personal development and Life skills
 - Professional Development skills (e.g. sponsorship/ media)
- The aim of the review is to identify and evaluate the policy assumptions which posit **causal mechanisms** converting Performance Lifestyle inputs into long term outcomes

Thank you for your attention