



UPDATING DUAL CAREER SELF-MANAGEMENT IN INDIVIDUALIZED MENTOR-MENTEE COLLABORATION IN SPORTS AND STUDIES

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Introduction

This article examines dual career (DC) mentoring in Latvia during recent educational reforms. It explores how athletes combine academic studies with professional sports through mentoring, individualized learning, and self-management skills.

Purpose of the Article:

- To explain individualization and personalization in an athlete's dual career (DC) in education and sports, as well as the relationships and usefulness of individualization and personalization - self-management - in the collaboration between the DC mentor and athlete under conditions of educational change.

Research Question:

- What are the opportunities, under changing educational conditions, for mentor-athlete collaboration to promote the athlete's self-management skills in sports and studies?



Theoretical Background (1)

Individualization in Schools:

- Teacher adjusts instruction to meet each student's needs (Osewalt, 2020; Oxford Dictionary, 2024).
- Students learn at their own pace; differences in ability, interests, and learning styles are considered (Izglītības Kvalitātes Valsts Dienests, 2020).
- Reduces risk of failure by tailoring learning activities and assessments (Nel, 2017).

Personalization in Education:

- Students become *active participants* in learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).
- They choose *when* and *how* they learn; activities are meaningful and self-initiated.
- Focuses on motivation, autonomy, and self-directed learning processes (Lee et al., 2022).

Key Idea:

- Individualization = *teacher adapts to learner*.
- Personalization = *learner takes charge*.
- Together, they create flexible, student-centered learning environments.



Theoretical Background (2)

In Sports:

- Training adapted to age, gender, skills, and physical readiness (Kozina et al., 2015).
- Personalization involves individual goals, game roles, and motivation-based training design.
- Coaches balance challenge and engagement to achieve “flow” in skill development (Csikszentmihalyi, 2017).

Collaboration & Self-Management:

- Athlete–coach relationships require *shared responsibility* for training outcomes.
- Open communication builds trust, accountability, and personal growth (Zubičs, 2024).
- Self-assessment and self-management skills grow through purposeful, individualized practice.

Outcome:

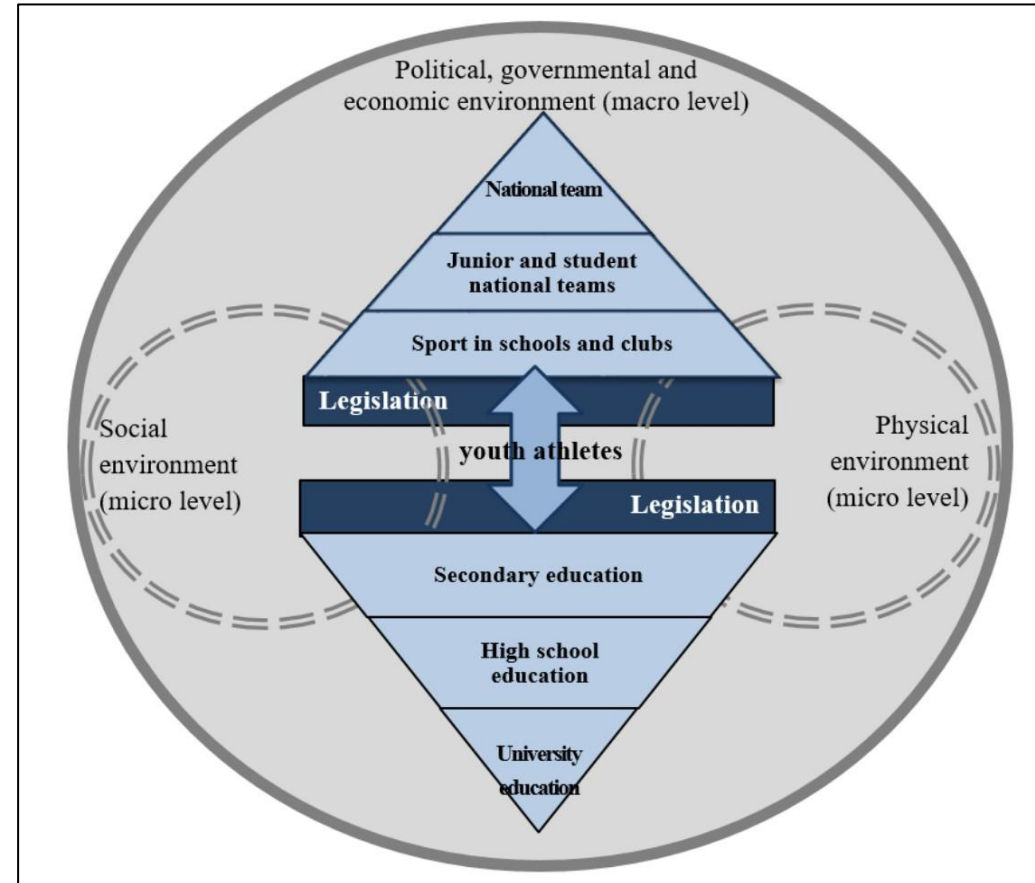
- Combining individualization + personalization improves motivation, performance, and independence in both education and sports



Dual Career Model in Latvia

Dual Career Model Components and Focus:

- Education and high-performance sports career, addressing social, physical, societal, and economic factors.
- Focus on youth (15 and above) transitioning from high-performance sports to adulthood



Dual career model in Latvia's environment

Materials and Methods

Theoretical analysis:

- Materials were analyzed on the relationships between dual career individualization and personalization in education and sports, as well as on coach-mentor collaboration in supporting athlete-mentee self-management.

Approach:

- Qualitative methods (case study + interviews).

Case study:

- One professional hockey player (master's student) and his educational mentor.
- Followed athlete's dual career journey from early childhood to higher education.

Interviews:

- 20 hockey players shared experiences of combining active sports careers with studies.



Interviews (Results)

The opinions of 20 hockey players were gathered regarding the possibility of choosing a dual career during an active sports career. The athletes acknowledged that implementing a DC was challenging due to the intensity of sports games and fatigue.

Main reasons given by athletes for not pursuing a DC:

- Not enough time to study (10 respondents).
- Too tired after training or games (10 respondents).
- Belief that industry connections are more important than education (15 respondents).
- Studying feels too difficult (15 respondents).
- Lack of quality DC programs (20 respondents).
- The academic year overlaps with the peak hockey season (20 respondents).
- Little to no understanding or support from universities (20 respondents).



Case Study (Results)

Key Elements	Role in My Dual Career
Self-management	Discipline helped me stay consistent, focused, and committed over the long term.
Time management	Careful planning allowed me to balance hockey, studies, family life, and personal time.
“Slow work” mindset	Studying a little every day—even just 10–15 minutes—kept me moving forward consistently.
Communication skills	Open and honest dialogue with teachers and staff helped solve scheduling and deadline issues.
Family support	Encouragement and understanding from my wife and brother gave me emotional and practical support.
Mentors and teachers	Guidance from supportive educators was essential to finishing my degrees.
Flexible university	Online programs and accommodating staff made it possible to combine professional sport with academics.

Table 1. DC key elements.



Discussion

- UNICEF Education Commission (2022) emphasizes the need for **transferable skills** in the 21st century: life and socio-emotional skills, digital skills, cognitive skills, job-relevant skills, and entrepreneurial skills.
- According to Davis, Keegan & Jowett (2024), four C's are important for the effectiveness of a coach's work: **competence, confidence, connection, and character**. They identify three approaches: outcome-centered coaching, athlete-centered coaching, and a person-centered approach.
- Zubičs (2024) stresses the role of **mutual communication** between the coach-mentor and the athlete-mentee in dual career collaboration.
- One practical way to support dual careers in hockey is to **offer more courses during the summer**, when there are fewer games and training camps, giving athletes the opportunity to make productive use of their off-season.



Conclusion

- The future development of the Dual Career Mentor Center faces major challenges, determined by higher education reform, the financial capabilities of the sports sector, and the overall economic and political situation in Latvia. Large universities have resources and greater opportunities to apply them in DC mentoring. Smaller universities have a greater chance to use resources through a flexible, individualized approach for each mentee.
- The greatest value lies in the collaboration between university leadership, mentors, and athletes to provide remote study options. This would allow active athletes to complete exams and assessments on time while maintaining their sports careers.
- Every professional athlete purposefully implements self-management. It is a personally meaningful activity aimed at achieving elite athlete performance. In this process, the athlete needs supportive resources.
- In mentoring, the quality of athlete-mentor unity is expressed in shared responsibility for team performance. This is ensured by skillful self-management implemented through the personalized approach of DC in individualized studies.



“Better Myself in Dual Career”

- The Latvian University Sports Federation, in collaboration with Lithuanian Sport University and Mobile Adventure Spółka z o.o., is proud to announce the launch of the **Erasmus+ funded project “Better Myself in Dual Career”**

This innovative initiative aims to support student-athletes in balancing their academic and sporting careers, helping them to succeed in both areas without compromise. At the heart of the project is the development of a dedicated mobile application designed to act as a personal support buddy for student-athletes.

The app will provide:

Self-assessment tools – allowing athletes to evaluate their dual career competences such as time management, self-regulation, resilience, social skills, and career planning.

Personalised feedback and suggestions – guiding athletes towards growth and improvement.

Progress tracking – enabling real-time monitoring of development over time.

Thank you for attention!

