



A Narrative Review on Student- Athletes in Higher Education: Barriers, Solutions and Satisfactory Post-Sport Career Transition

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyse the conciliation between sports and academic education of student-athletes in higher education. We searched the Capes Journal Platform (Portal Capes) and selected 14 articles for analysis after refinement. We noted that student-athletes encounter different barriers related to the stereotype of intellectual inferiority attributed to them, their training routine and to the preparation for life after sport. The encouragement of academic goals and the educational institutions' understanding of the difficulties encountered by student-athletes were pointed out as means of overcoming the barriers related to the negative stereotype. The participation in activities that promote vocational development in conjunction with the provision of online courses during preparation periods for competitions is indicated as a strategy for a satisfactory post-sport career transition. We raise questions and suggestions so that the dual career can be understood as an effective opportunity for the formation of elite athletes.

KEYWORDS

Sport. Athletes. Students. Higher education. Stereotypes.

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Uma Revisão Narrativa Sobre o Estudante-Atleta no Ensino Superior: Barreiras, Soluções e uma Transição Pós-Carreira Esportiva Satisfatória

RESUMO

Este estudo teve como objetivo analisar a conciliação entre esporte e formação acadêmica de estudantes-atletas no ensino superior. Pesquisamos na Capes Journal Platform (Portal Capes) e selecionamos 14 artigos para análise após refinamento. Observamos que estudantes-atletas encontram diferentes barreiras relacionadas ao estereótipo de inferioridade intelectual atribuída a eles, à sua rotina de treinamento e à preparação para a vida após o esporte. O incentivo às metas acadêmicas e o entendimento das instituições de ensino sobre as dificuldades encontradas pelos alunos-atletas foram apontados como meios de superar as barreiras relacionadas ao estereótipo negativo. A participação em atividades que promovem o desenvolvimento profissional em conjunto com a oferta de cursos on-line durante os períodos de preparação para competições é indicada como uma estratégia para uma transição de carreira pós-esporte satisfatória. Levantamos perguntas e sugestões para que a dupla carreira possa ser entendida como uma oportunidade efetiva para a formação de atletas de elite.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Esporte. Atletas. Alunos. Ensino superior. Estereótipos.

Una Revisión Narrativa Sobre Estudiantes-Atletas en Educación Superior: Barreras, Soluciones y Transición Satisfactoria Después de la Carrera Deportiva

RESUMEN

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar la conciliación entre el deporte y la educación académica de los estudiantes atletas en la educación superior. Se realizaron búsquedas en Capes Journal Platform (Portal Capes) y se seleccionaron 14 artículos para su análisis después del refinamiento. Observamos que los estudiantes atletas encuentran diferentes barreras relacionadas con el estereotipo de inferioridad intelectual que se les atribuye, su rutina de entrenamiento y la preparación para la vida después del deporte. El estímulo a los objetivos académicos y la comprensión de las instituciones educativas de las dificultades encontradas por los estudiantes atletas se señalaron como medios para superar las barreras relacionadas con el estereotipo negativo. La participación en actividades que promueven el desarrollo vocacional junto con la provisión de cursos en línea durante los períodos de preparación para las competiciones se indica como una estrategia para una transición profesional post-deportiva satisfactoria. Planteamos preguntas y sugerencias para que la carrera dual pueda entenderse como una oportunidad efectiva para la formación de atletas de élite.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Deporte. Atletas. Estudiantes Educación más alta. Estereotipos

1 Introduction

Today, more and more people aspire and opt for sports careers as a professional objective, influenced by the environment in which they live and the spectacular view shown by the media around high performance sports (BAXTER-JONES; MAFFULLI, 2003; BJORNSEN; DINKEL, 2017; CÔTÉ, 1999; SOARES *et al.*, 2011). However, to achieve the highest level of performance, athletes often begin their sports training from childhood and adolescence, thus having to reconcile their sports career with their educational development (WYLLEMAN; ALFERMANN; LAVALLEE, 2004). According to the literature, the term dual career expresses the meaning of this set of processes of sports training concomitantly with academic education or another professional career (RYBA *et al.*, 2014).

Several studies carried out in different cultures have demonstrated that the lack of a time balanced between sports and academic education and the fact that schools and clubs do not accompany dual-career athletes can result in the secundarization of a training project or even in the abandonment of either one - in general the sports (AZEVEDO *et al.*, 2017; MILLER; KERR, 2002) in addition to physical and mental exhaustion because of the difficulty in reconciling both (PINKERTON; BARROW, 1989; SUBIJANA; BARRIOPEDRO; CONDE, 2015). However, the possibility of reconciling studies with a sports career allows the athlete to be better prepared for future challenges because of the ability to acquire skills transferable between different areas, a sense of equilibrium in recognizing life beyond the sport, and professional qualifications for a career after retirement from sports (AQUILINA, 2013). Other studies have shown that the average educational level of athletes is similar (GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ; TORREGROSA, 2009) and in some cases even higher than the average of the general population at the same age (CONZELMANN; NAGEL, 2003).

It is important to stress that there is another factor affecting athletes' organization in the pursuit of a dual career in countries where basic education is compulsory, i.e., to respect national law. Different from primary and secondary school, higher education is not compulsory but is a common goal of student-athletes by permitting better remuneration, as well as by providing knowledge and skills capable of preparing them for a professional career after sport (AQUILINA, 2013; CÔTÉ; LEVINE, 1997; STAMBULOVA; STEPHAN; JÄPHAG, 2007).

Another variable that strongly influences the pursuit of a dual career is the economic potential of the sport practiced by the athlete. For example in Brazil, soccer is characterized by a highly competitive and structured market, with professional opportunities of high financial gains given its high selectivity¹ (SOARES *et al.*, 2011). However, other sports do not have a highly organized market and for these athletes higher education may emerge as a

¹ The average monthly salary of a soccer player in Brazil is around US\$ 970,00, but can reach values higher than US\$ 13.580,00 (Sabino and Garcia 2018).

possibility of socioeconomic ascent, even though they are subject to a very limited legal protection in order to be able to reconcile their sport and educational obligations (HAAS; CARVALHO, 2015; 2018). Therefore, understanding and identifying how the dual career process occurs during higher education would permit to trace better strategies for reconciling both careers.

For a decade, Brazil has been the stage of major sporting events, and because that, debates related to sports were accentuated in the Brazilian academic community, including the conciliation of academic education with a sports career of student-athletes. However, these studies have mainly focused on athletes attending primary and secondary schools (BARTHOLO; SOARES; SALGADO, 2011; MELO; SOARES; ROCHA 2014; MELO *et al.* 2016; ROCHA *et al.* 2011; SOARES *et al.* 2011; SOARES; CORREIA; MELO, 2016). Thus, analysis of the international production that debates the process of reconciling sports training with university education is fundamental to know the experiences and models developed.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to identify the state-of-the-art international literature on reconciling studies with a sports career in higher education in order to contribute to the discussion within the Brazilian context.

2 Methods

Narrative review research seeks to describe and discuss the development of a particular theme within the academic literature, allowing the author and the reader to acquire and renew knowledge about the subject in a short time, but with no methodological rigor that allows reproduction of data (ROTHER, 2007). This study analysed through the Capes Journal Portal database², research related to the conciliation between educational qualification and sports career for higher education students.

Articles were selected from August and November 2017 through the internet network of the University of Brasília using the keywords “student-athlete” and “higher education”. We chose to use the term student-athlete as it is employed in the international literature to express the situation of an athlete who is also a regularly enrolled student either in primary and secondary school or in higher education.

2.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

For better targeting the study, we chose databases within the knowledge areas of Health Sciences and Human Sciences, considering Physical Education and Sports and Education as subareas. The Capes Journal Platform compiles databases and enables the researcher to obtain a short text informing the scope of indexed articles in each database. We

² The Capes Journal Platform is a virtual library that gathers and provides access to several national and international databases. The search in Portal Capes can provide different results depending on the internet network used.

therefore chose those that contained the terms “education” and “sports” in their scope. The following databases were selected:

- JSTOR Arts & Sciences I Collection (Humanities)
- Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts - ASSIA (ProQuest)
- Project Muse
- Education Resources Information Center - ERIC (ProQuest)
- OECD Databases. Education Statistics
- Physical Education Index (ProQuest)
- SPORTDiscus with Full Text (EBSCO)

Sixty-six articles met the inclusion criteria, i.e., published in a peer-reviewed journal and in English. The abstracts were read, which resulted in the inclusion of 24 articles that contained the expression “student-athlete” and in the exclusion of one thesis. Next, the full text of the selected articles was read, which resulted in the inclusion of 14 studies that met the criterion of debating the dual career at university level. Thus, 10 articles that addressed only about college black students (and not student-athletes), policies for educational managers, or differences between eSports athletes and other sports were excluded.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria of articles.

Phase 1	Articles in English published in peer-reviewed journals	66 articles
Phase 2	Selection of articles that contained the expression “student-athlete” in their abstracts.	24 selected articles 42 articles excluded
Phase 3	Thorough reading of articles and selection of the ones which reported debates on Dual Career at university level.	14 selected articles 10 articles excluded

Source: Authors

3 Results

In the selected articles, we found a sample of studies focusing mainly on the United States of America sport/educational context, one located in Canada (CHARD; POTWARKA, 2017) and one from South Korea (CHIU *et al.*, 2017). In addition, 12 of the 14 selected papers addressed student-athletes of various modalities, while two other studies focused only on football and basketball athletes (BEAMON, 2008; NAVARRO; MCCORMICK, 2017).

After selection of the articles, we established two categories of analysis of similar texts based on what we considered fundamental for structuring the analysis and discussing the data: a) barriers encountered by college student-athletes, as well as solutions to develop their academic education, and b) barriers to satisfactory post-sport career transition.

Table 2. Barriers and possible solutions.

Title of article	Authors	Journal
An Exploring the Relative Importance of Factors That Influence Student-Athletes' School-Choice Decisions: A Case Study of One Canadian University	CHARD, C.R. & POTWARKA, L.R.	Journal of Intercollegiate Sport
Priorities and preferences for collegiate athletic goals and processes in South Korea	CHIU, W. <i>et al.</i>	Social Behaviour & Personality
The Influence of Student Engagement and Sport Participation on College Outcomes among Division I Student Athletes	GAYLES, J.G. & HU, S.	The Journal of Higher Education
Examining Academic and Athletic Motivation Among Student Athletes at a Division I University	GASTON-GAYLES, J.L.	Journal of College Student Development
The Influence of Climate on the Academic and Athletic Success of Student-Athletes: Results from a Multi-Institutional National Study.	RANKIN, <i>et al.</i>	The Journal of Higher Education
The Mis-Education of the African American Student-Athlete	HARRISON JR, L. <i>et al.</i>	Kinesiology Review
Examining the Inclusiveness of Intercollegiate Team Climate and Its Influence on Student-Athletes' Cross-Racial Interactions	JONES, W.A. <i>et al.</i>	Journal of College Student Development
"Used Goods": Former African American College Student-Athletes' Perception of Exploitation by Division I Universities	BEAMON, K.K.	The Journal of Negro Education
Not So Black and White: A Multi-Divisional Exploratory Analysis of Male Student-Athletes' Experiences at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Institutions	COOPER, J. N., DAVIS, T. J., & DOUGHERTY, S.	Sociology of Sport Journal
Predictors of Collegiate Student-Athletes' Susceptibility to Stereotype Threat	FELTZ, D.L. <i>et al.</i>	Journal of College Student Development

Source: Authors

Table 3. Barriers to preparation for post-sport career transition.

Title of article	Authors	Journal
An Examination of the Alignment of Student Athletes' Undergraduate Major Choices and Career Field Aspirations in Life After Sports	NAVARRO, K.M.	Journal of College Student Development
Transition experiences of division-1 college student-athletes: coach perspectives	BJORSEN, A.L. & DINKEL, D.M.	Journal of Sport Behaviour
Outcomes-Based Career Preparation Programs for Contemporary Student-Athletes	NAVARRO, K. & MCCORMICK, H.	Journal of Applied Sport Management
Understanding the Challenges and Opportunities Associated With Online Learning: A Scaffolding Theory Approach	MCNIFF, J. & AICHER, T.J.	SPORTDiscus with Full Text (EBSCO)

Source: Authors

The articles were included in either category considering the central point presented by the authors' objectives in their studies. The theme of barriers encountered by student-athletes during the process of dual career conciliation appeared more frequently – in 10 articles – versus four articles addressing barriers to the post-sport career transition. It may be suggested that the main concern in the studies analysed is the harmonious relationship between the two careers of the student-athlete. Even though we investigate how students-athletes cope with the idea of a post-sport career, this topic may be a natural consequence of the conflicts that occurred during basic education regarding sport-school conciliation. In general, it is assumed that the satisfactory transition to the post-sport career is dependent on a less rugged education process in the dual career.

4 Analysis and discussion

4.1 Barriers and possible solutions

The organization of the dual career involving sports training and academic education has created different barriers for higher education student-athletes. Many young people consider dedicating their lives to sport a professional possibility, which is influenced by the media's focus on some sports (BERRY; SORENSSEN, 1981; LEE, 1983). For these student-athletes, the demands of elite sports have a great impact on their academic education since they usually devote 15 to 38 hours per week to training and other related activities in order to achieve a satisfactory sports performance (JAYANTHI *et al.*, 2015; NCAA, 2017; SHAW *et al.*, 2004). This routine can compromise the time available for family, friends and studies – especially when compared to non-student-athletes.

In countries with elite university sporting competitions such as the United States, higher education institutions encourage greater sport commitment since better competition results can increase university revenue. However, this incentive may reduce the time devoted to academic responsibilities on the part of student-athletes (BEAMON, 2008).

The sport experience will eventually put the student-athlete in a group with its own signs, characteristics that differentiate him/her within the general context of young people and identify him/her with peers who share similar experiences in a network of relations within society. This athletic identity (BREWER; VAN RAALTE; LINDER, 1993) allows the individual to recognize himself and be recognized by social groups as belonging to a specific “tribe”, endowed with its own ethos and which consequently assumes for itself the habits, customs, values, beliefs, judgments and ideas of the institutions where it circulates. These identity characteristics surround student-athletes and distinguish them, as well as attribute to them social roles that do not always fit in the spaces of institutional relations.

The athletic identity is the product of a process of incorporation of habitus, guaranteed by years of coexistence and submission to the rules of the sport. This submission is understood not as a mechanism of passivity of the individual, but as part of the strategies of

consolidation of the student-athlete's career project. These artifices are used to form support and influence networks, which can be determinant for student-athletes to reach their goal and increase investment in the career (ROCHA, 2017).

Distinguishing yourself from the crowd is somehow natural and is perceived in the behaviour of individuals in complex societies. However, belonging to a group with such specific signs can have negative consequences for the student-athlete. To analyse the conditions of the individual in a dual career, it is necessary to understand that he/she actively participates in two independent institutions - at least in case of the model established in Brazil. On the one hand, there is education represented by schools and universities whose goal is to form citizens able to live in society and to attribute a role them; on the other hand, there is the sport represented by clubs whose main mission is to prepare for athletic performance. Although the common characteristics of both institutions are preserved, sports and education essentially require priority of the student-athlete in order to achieve either purposes. Thus, conflicts are inevitable. The question in this regard is whether the demands of elite sports and the negative consequences of a strong athletic identity may negatively affect the educational performance of an athlete in higher education (ARIES *et al.* 2004; COMEAUX; HARRISON, 2011; EITZEN, 1987; EMERSON; BROOKS; MCKENZIE, 2009; PURDY; EITZEN; HUFNAGEL, 1982).

Concerning what elite sports usually demand, the process of training an athlete requires time and dedication and, during periods of competition, the student-athlete's training camp is more intense. Furthermore, years of preparation and training are necessary so that an athlete can satisfactorily play his role in the elite sports market. Consequently, these specific characteristics of the sport, coupled with a strong athletic identity that leads athletes to have characteristics and behaviours that set them apart from other students, likely create the image that the student-athlete does not devote much time to educational obligations. In view of all these factors, an idea that gained momentum among individuals who usually do not belong or who do not recognize the ethos of sports is that students-athletes are less intelligent than other students, creating a stereotype for this group (COUTANT *et al.*, 2011; FISKE; NEUBERG, 1990; HARRISON JR. *et al.*, 2017). In this case, when the characteristic that defines a stereotype discredits a person, there is a risk that the individual will conform to this characteristic and reinforce it in himself (STEELE; ARONSON, 1995). It is important to point out that the negative stereotype adds to the stigmatized group the low expectation of others in relation to its project.

In the case of student-athletes, the possible consequence would be a low expectation of teachers, managers and other students in relation to their educational project, producing a cycle of developments that are detrimental to their academic performance. This also suggests that the negative stereotype regarding intelligence might be reinforced in student-athletes, focusing on the athletic identity and drawing them away from academic and intellectual activities (HARRISON JR. *et al.*, 2017). This difficulty is demonstrated by Feltz *et al.* (2013) and Cooper, Davis, and Dougherty (2017) who report that those with a strong athletic identity are more likely to suffer stereotype threat. Black student-athletes are more susceptible to this

threat because, for generations, they have suffered from stereotypes related to their race, recognizing them as physically superior but intellectually inferior, leading to the reinforcement of this group's identity as more prone to physical activities, such as sports or manual labour (SAILES, 1993).

This reality has a great influence on the way students-athletes perceive their inclusion in the academic environment. According to Cooper, Davis, and Dougherty (2017) and Jones, Liu and Bell (2017), student-athletes report few positive and inclusive perceptions within the university environment, especially those with a strong athletic identity. The stigmatization of student-athletes in university and the low teacher expectations regarding their educational progress did not contribute to the use of the links to these institutions with the same intensity.

How can we then reduce the damage caused by the stereotype threat to student-athletes? Gaston-Gayles (2004) proposes a factor that is related to the academic motivation of athletes. According to the authors, satisfactory academic performance of a student-athlete is associated with the definition of academic objectives, regardless of sporting aspiration. Therefore, educational institutions need to show the student-athlete that, in addition to what is expected in competitions, participation in academic activities is also required. Within this context, studies indicate that student-athletes tend to look for universities that allow a satisfactory academic education rather than being only a reference in sports activities (CHARD; POTWARKA, 2017; CHIU *et al.*, 2017).

Furthermore, the low academic performance of student-athletes is often the result of study demands without taking into account their sports responsibilities. The demands of elite sports often prevent the student-athlete from achieving satisfactory dedication and, consequently, equal or superior results compared to others. Awareness of this situation is of great importance for educational institutions that develop sports programs. These institutions, composed of faculty staff, students and managers, must be in the condition that Goffman (1990) describes as “wise”. “Wise” people would be “normal” people, i.e., individuals who are not subject to stereotyping, but sympathize and understand the difficulties of stereotyped individuals. When they are “wise” of the situation and the needs of student-athletes in order to dedicate themselves to the sport, the “normals” - in this case, the educational institution - can be more understanding. This understanding may allow the development of strategies that enable student-athletes to reconcile their sports and academic career in a more balanced way, gaining even better perception of their academic environment.

The study of Cooper, Davis, and Dougherty (2017) showed that NCAA Division III student-athletes perceived an overall greater positive impact of their academic experience than student-athletes of other superior divisions. The authors explain this finding by the fact that Division III institutions emphasize the sport as an extension of the academic experience and not as the focus of their training - with shorter sports seasons than other divisions - and have better strategies for managing dual careers. Furthermore, Gaston-Gayles and Hu (2009) indicate that the interaction with the academic community (teachers and students), as well as the participation in university activities, has a great impact on the student-athletes' concept of

themselves and on the gain of learning and communication skills, regardless of race, gender or the sport practiced. Rankin *et al.* (2016) also show that the interaction between the educational institution and the student strongly influences academic success, suggesting that the greater the student-athletes' interest in faculty staff, the better will be their performance. This interaction between the educational institution and students directly influences the perception of a more inclusive and welcoming environment by the athletes. Moreover, a greater participation and interaction with the academic community and its activities will enable the student-athlete to develop an identification with roles other than those related to sport. Developing an identity beyond sports is extremely important for the student-athletes to engage in other academic activities equally with their athletic effort, enabling positive experiences in other areas and a better academic/vocational career planning (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2012; MOISEICHIK *et al.* 2019).

We can also highlight the importance that Goffman (1990, p. 23) attributes to “own” within a group of individuals who suffer from a negative stereotype, so that:

[...] have a tendency to come together into small social groups whose members all derive from the category, these groups themselves being subject to over-arching organization to varying degrees. And one also finds that when one member of the category happens to come into contact with another, both may be disposed to modify their treatment of each other by virtue of believing that they each belong to the same `group'.

In this situation, the “own” of student-athletes would be their companions who share the same pains and, therefore, better understand the dual career condition. Within a group of individuals who share the same stereotype, it is common to find those who serve as “representatives”. The “representatives” often have the role of serving as an example for other members and of communicating with non-members. In the case of student-athletes, coaches, members of the technical team and experienced athletes can serve as representatives in a university. This role has a great influence on student-athletes as they are much more susceptible to listen to the advice of their coach and teammates than to that of other people (BJORNSSEN; DINKEL, 2017). These “representatives” need to use this influence to guide student-athletes during their athletic and academic career so that they are able to balance both. Feltz *et al.* (2013), Jones, Liu and Bell (2017) and Rankin *et al.* (2016) emphasize this point, stating that coaches who value and encourage academic education and good academic results tend to positively influence their athletes to focus on their studies.

Therefore, developing and strengthening a positive relationship between athletic and academic education, understanding the student-athlete as a subject with a routine differing from that of non-student athletes, may enable them to improve their academic performance. To overcome the barrier of time organization and routine adjustment, it is necessary that educational institutions understand the student-athletes' condition and to devise strategies for reconciling their sports and academic obligations.

4.2 Barriers and facilitators to preparing for the post-sport career transition

Conciliating academic and athletic demands involves sport and education agents, as well as student-athletes and their families, around the project and the necessary adjustments in athletic and educational requirements, never losing sight of professional expectations. This complex network could have effects capable of raising competition among those relations. Considering that time management is one of the most important variables in order to have a successful dual career; the amount of time dedicated to sports could exceed thirty hours per week; and schools demands could exceed twenty hours per week, a student-athlete reaches, or even overcomes, fifty hours of activities.

One of the key aspects for the understanding of the training of an elite athlete is that it is not an event but rather a process. Proposed by Wylleman, Alfermann, and Lavalée (2004), the holistic perspective of the sports career described the phases of transition at different levels: athletic, academic/vocational, psychosocial, psychological, and financial. However, for athletes who have no prospect of achieving a professional sports career after higher education, the retirement period occurs before the period predicted by these authors, a fact producing a greater need for students-athletes to be better prepared for their post-sport career.

This is the theme of the four articles selected for this category of analysis. Interviewing NCAA Division I football student-athletes, Navarro and McCormick (2017) sought to understand the involvement of these athletes in activities that would prepare them for developing their careers after sport. The respondents stated that the responsibilities with their team and with the requirements for maintaining their student scholarship were a barrier to acquire skills not related to their sport. Similarly, Bjornsen and Dinkel (2017) highlighted that travels to competitions and other sporting events reduce the time available for student-athletes to acquire skills that prepare them for a career after sport.

In the United States, students freely choose their course subjects during undergraduation. However, certain courses are not considered because of their compulsory workload (EP-NUFFIC, 2016) that comes into conflict with their sports routine. This was observed in the study of Navarro (2015) in which most athletes of Division I institutions reported that the time available for dedication to their sport was determinant for the choice of their undergraduate major, regardless of whether their sports were considered by the university a “revenue-producing sport” (football and basketball) or a “non-revenue-producing/Olympic sport” (athletics, swimming, rowing, tennis). Therefore, the major choice is based on the possibility envisaged by athletes to prioritize their sports training, i.e., they choose courses that allow a viable conciliation routine (BEAMON, 2008). The sports obligations of student-athletes during their training often reduce the time devoted to activities that would prepare them for their post-sport career.

In view of the above, Bjornsen and Dinkel (2017) and Navarro and McCormick (2017) highlight the importance of student-athletes to become involved in activities that promote the development of their career, such as the choice of specific subjects during their

education or offered by the NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills Program, as well as participation in internships in their future field of work and contact with athletes and former athletes. Besides the concurrence of athletic and academics qualifications, there is still a drawback related to reaching high salaries in the sports market. Young athletes pursue the economic status stimulated by media, however, they must be aware of how difficult, demanding and excluding this path can be, since very few will be granted with a wealthy career. Concerning this topic, Azevedo *et al.* (2017) presents data extracted from NCAA³, showing that the odds of reaching success in professional leagues are lower than 2% for university students competing in the sports analysed: basketball, football, hockey and men's soccer. This difficulty can be found in the Brazilian reality within other sports as well, as demonstrated by Proni (2000) and Damo (2007) in soccer; Romão, Costa and Ferreira Neto (2016) in volleyball; Costa (2012) in women's futsal; Klein and Bassani (2016) in men's futsal; Rocha and Soares (2016) in horse racing.

Another possible strategy to allow student-athletes to balance their educational and sports obligations is based on online disciplines and tutoring (MCNIFF; AICHER, 2017). In view of the need for dedication to training and the frequent travels to competitions, the use of technological resources appears as a tool to facilitate the athlete-university relationship. According to McNiff and Aicher (2017), online learning provides flexibility for student-athletes to balance their sports and academic demands, rendering them more independent and responsible for organizing their study routine. Education through online access to academic contents is also accompanied by a tutor, who will work together with the athlete. Similar examples have been reported in the European Union where courses and materials are offered online to compensate for face-to-face lessons during periods of travel for training and competitions (AQUILINA; HENRY, 2010; SÁNCHEZ PATO, *et al.* 2014). However, despite such benefits, McNiff and Aicher (2017) emphasize that it is necessary to analyse in advance whether the student-athlete is prepared for online courses and tutoring.

5 Notes related to the Brazilian context

Considering Brazil's situation, it can be observed that the national research indicates similar issues in the dual career balance process regarding the conciliation between the school's schedule and the high-performance sport's demands. Simultaneously, it can be noted that the family support project, along with actions taken by collaborative networks are essential in order to define in which career – educational or athletic – the student-athlete will choose to invest the most (MELO, 2010; COSTA, 2012; ROCHA, 2013, 2017; CORREIA, 2014, 2018).

Nevertheless, it is necessary to call attention to the fact that, in Brazil, the dual career reality is not based on institutional programs or public policies that aim to mediate the

³ Available at: <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-professional-athletics>.

interaction the student-athletes build with sports and school. The national scenario shows a lack of attempts to provide balance to sports dual careers. The responsibility for the fulfillment of institutional requirements in observance of the current legislation is delegated to the agents engaged with this context, however, this legislation does not consider the student-athlete's figure from its legal perspective (ROCHA, 2017). In the face of this situation, the negotiations to reduce dual career complications during student-athletes' education in Brazil are developed individually and without pattern (PERES; LOVISOLO, 2006). Consequently, school regulation is often bent to favor the student-athletes' permanence; or, even more often, student-athletes migrate to education institutions which are notorious for having less quality and prestige, in order to conclude their educational cycle (MELO, 2010; ROCHA, 2013, 2017).

It is acknowledged that the dual career condition for student-athletes requires further investigation from Brazilian researchers in order to contribute to public policies or institutional programs capable of improving the process of conciliation between educational and athletic routines. Nowadays, most part of national production is focused on dual career athletes enrolled in basic education, since there are few cases of student-athletes in higher education (COSTA, 2012; MARTINS, 2019; SCREMIN, 2019). In Brazil, it is noted that the higher the academic qualification, the more likely individuals will be able to find a job and earn better salaries. Therefore, student-athletes who invest all of their time in sports and neglect school activities might jeopardize their professional future in other areas (MELO, 2010; ROCHA, 2013). Notice that this statement is beyond student-athletes' control, limiting their actions to imposing educational and sports institutional regulations.

Regarding public intervention in this process, there is little political mobilization. For that matter, Bill number 2.493/2019, currently in course in the Brazilian Senate, should be mentioned as an effort to change certain statements in the law that regulates education in Brazil (Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional – LDB, 1996), as well as the Law number 12.711/2012, which rests in arguments from dual career investigation to create protection mechanisms for the student-athletes' right to education. Bill number 4.393/2019 should also be mentioned due to its purpose of providing distance or face-to-face pedagogical support to student-athletes who compete in various levels. The significance of these actions must be emphasized as a strategy to put the dual career issue in the public policies agenda, however, these means are considered insufficient to overcome student-athletes' problems in a decent level.

Considering the results observed throughout this investigation, it is worth mentioning that, among the factors reported by student-athletes – as well as education and sports agents – as elements that make dual career routines easier, besides shortening the distance between the training center and the school, diminishing time loss with the commute, there are teachers, coaches, school and sports leaders and family members who become co-responsible in the dual career conciliation process. These social actors are crucial to avoid a negative stereotype of punishment for student-athletes, especially in the educational segment, due to a possible lack of control over time and routine.

Apart from that, even if the challenges derived from dual career's objective conditions, such as time and routine management, could be minimized, previous academic articles indicate that student-athletes face obstacles related to how their image is perceived by educational agents. The belief that student-athletes are privileged individuals with effortless gains is one of the reasons behind certain educational aspects negligence. Nevertheless, the articles examined show that student-athletes appreciate when teachers and school leaders recognize their adversities and assist them with extra activities and mentoring.

6 Conclusions

The construction of a routine of dedication to sport and studies requires strategies and the ability to choose the right priorities. Considering sports training as a long-term process – in conjunction with the obligations of basic education and the social value attributed to higher education – the dual career is a subject of research and important results have been reported in different countries. It could be noted that the main obstacles mentioned in the academic articles examined are limited to the exhausting routine created due to training and education activities. As a result, student-athletes strive to accomplish their obligations. The negative consequence provoked by this amount of work is the difficulty in concentrating and learning important topics to academic qualification. Even though student-athletes have the intention of fulfilling their educational obligations and athletic demands, at some point, they will choose to prioritize one career.

This review showed that a large part of the literature addresses the need of student-athletes to obtain a qualified academic education concomitant with their sports activities. However, most students-athletes encounter barriers during this education, particularly time management accompanied by important aspects of the construction of stereotypes. When stigmatized, either due to racial or intellectual reasons, student-athletes have to cope with another stress during their education. In this respect, monitoring strategies are fundamental so that the athlete can have quality sports and academic education.

Studies investigating the barriers to reconciling the dual career were found to be more frequent in the databases analysed. This suggests that, to address the dual career, it is necessary to understand the investment of the student-athlete in this career. We therefore identified that all the training time of the student-athlete in the dual career contributes to the formation of an athletic identity, which may also be responsible for the assimilation and incorporation of the sport's habitus. This process creates a network of support and relationships that can influence the student-athlete's investment in the sport to the detriment of academic education.

While the dedication to the sport intensifies, also due to the norms of the institution, the perception of student-athletes about the support that they receive from educational institutions may contribute to whether or not the dual career conciliation will be harmonious. We observed in the studies analysed that, when the support network of the educational

institutions recognized and considered the difficulties of simultaneous dedication to sports and studies, adjusting the educational project to the conditions of the student-athlete, the latter perceived a sense of belonging to the educational space. This fact indicated that this type of relationship between the educational institution and student-athlete could produce better effects on dual career conciliation and greater dedication to studies, probably permitting a more satisfactory transition to the post-sport career.

This process involves explaining to the academic community the reality faced by elite athletes at different times during their sports career in order to permit a balanced development of this phase of life. For many modalities, entrance into higher education coincides with the athletic apex, a fact that requires even greater sensitivity of managers, teachers and coaches. Brazil, a country where sports and academic education are dissociated, complies with the legal provisions foreseen to protect the student. This means delegating to the faculty staff the understanding of the elite athletic condition of the (also) student (COSTA; ROCHA; AMAYA CADAVID, 2018).

The National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional – LDB) provides autonomy to universities to create strategies for welcoming and monitoring the academic education of athletes considering their sporting condition - the merit of the question under discussion may be who actually deserves to enter this specific framework of attention. We also observe that these strategies must go beyond the pardoning of missed classes and the replacement of individual assessments. The academic monitoring program of athletes should consider their athletic calendar, the possibility of tutoring, monitoring and adaptation of class schedules to the trainings, and the prioritization and permission to enrol in equivalent courses, as well as the possibility of obtaining temporary leave from the course due to sporting excellence (opportunities for international exchanges, for example). Taking into account the relevance of this subject and the legal conflicts found by Haas and Carvalho (2015; 2018), it can be inferred that the interventions aimed to mediate dual career routines in Brazil have been initialized and, for that reason, it has become worthwhile to promote public debates in order to discuss proper actions, capable of facilitating the dual career conciliation, always keeping in mind the subjective conditions within this process.

Considering the state of the art presented, future studies discussing the social role of education, especially university as a space of human development, are urgently needed and should address the specificity of (young) elite athletes and strategies for their inclusion in higher education.

6.1 Limitations of the study

The state-of-the-art literature found regarding “student-athlete” and “higher education” mainly originated in the United States. This fact might be explained by the keywords used for the article search that could have limited the results obtained, excepting the European context, which, since 2012, has been promoting the mediation between sports

and higher education or work according to the expression “dual career” (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2012; GUIDOTTI; CORTIS; CAPRANICA, 2015).

It could also be observed that, along with this study development, there is a relevance to analyzing educational and athletic legal instruments in Brazil from the dual career perspective. We recognize that the mentioned initiatives are important actions towards a dual career debate, however they are not enough to supply young student-athletes in development with their needs⁴.

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⁴ For more information, access Associação Brasileira sobre Dupla Carreira Esportiva: https://www.duca.unb.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22:parecer-pl-2493&catid=2&Itemid=373.

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