

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THE DUAL CAREER OF THE STUDENT-ATHLETE

***María José Maciá-Andreu
María T. Morales-Belando
Lourdes Meroño
Antonio Sánchez-Pato
Juan Alfonso García-Roca***
Editors

 *Dykinson, S.L.*

This book has been reviewed by our Editorial Board.
For more information, see www.dykinson.com/quienes_somos

© The editors
Madrid, 2023

Editorial DYKINSON, S.L. Meléndez Valdés, 61 - 28015 Madrid
Telephone (+34) 91544 28 46 - (+34) 91544 28 69
e-mail: info@dykinson.com
<http://www.dykinson.es>
<http://www.dykinson.com>

ISBN: 978-84-1170-486-1
DOI: 10.14679/2132

Preprint:
Besing Servicios Gráficos, S.L.
besingsg@gmail.com

Academy of Physical Education in Katowice as a Participant in the Polish Program Supporting Student-Athlete's Dual-Career – National Academic Representation

RAJMUND TOMIK¹, MAGDALENA JANECKA¹ & PIOTR RODAK²

¹ *Department of Health-Related Physical Activity and Tourism. Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, Poland*

² *Institute of Physiotherapy and Health Sciences. Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, Poland*

DOI: 10.14679/2143

Abstract

The National Academic Representation (NAR) was established by the Minister of Education and Science in 2020 as nationwide project addressed to all universities in Poland. Its main aim is to support student-athletes in their learning processes and enable development of their sports careers. The curriculum of student-athletes at NAR is implemented in the form of individual organization of classes during the academic year. In the case of Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, Individual Plan and Program of Studies (IPPS) system has been created, which consists of individual course selection and convenient dates for attendance at classes and exams. The aim of the publication is to present this program and analyze the participation of the APE in Katowice in the NAR project over the last three years. Obtained results points that APE Katowice is a leader in the number of student-athletes in Poland. Thanks to the NAR project and the implementation of the IPPS system, it was possible to facilitate the combination of a sports career with studying for athletes at the highest level. As many as one third of all Polish student-athletes decided to study at APE Katowice. Individual sports, especially winter sports, are at the forefront among students.

Keywords: dual-career, student-athlete, National Academy Representation, APE Katowice.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the demands placed on the professional athletes require great dedication in the pursuit of broadly understood perfection. This means that athletes spend most of their time developing their sports career at the expense of other aspects of everyday life. At the same time, they are expected to continue their education, including studies. This is necessary to support them in their personal development and thus increase chances on the labor market after the end of their sports career. The parallel emphasis on education and sport can fail in both spheres, all because of the amount of time and work they need. The challenge is even greater when there are new responsibilities and roles in life, such as being a parent (Aquilina, 2013). In connection with these problems, the term "dual-career" began to be researched and developed. It is a successful combination of a professional sports career and education. The levels of professional sports, the age of the athletes, as well as the barriers that appear in different countries were taken into account (European Parliament, 2003).

As it turns out, education is a very helpful factor during professional involvement in sport, as it facilitates entering a new role and responsibilities. An obstacle that appears on the way of student-athletes is a limited number or a complete lack of appropriate cooperation between sports and educational institutions and the labor market. Implementing a balanced government policy in such arrangements, and thus systematic counselling, may be essential in undertaking a dual career. Implementing programs tailored to the needs of elite athletes can be crucial to their development as a student-athletes (European Commission, 2012).

An important step was the signing of an EU document that defined the dual career as a policy area requiring a properly organized system of cooperation, as well as specialized staff and regular monitoring of the effectiveness of programs. In order to avoid large differences between the countries and to strengthen their cooperation, it was decided to create platforms for the exchange of experiences and thoughts. These include sports forums, meetings of sports and education ministers or sports directors, and others (Capranica & Guidotti, 2016).

In 2015, the Digital Economy LAB Team (DELAB) from the University of Warsaw was established at the request of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism. Its task was to prepare a report on the double-track career of athletes in Poland - a diagnosis of the situation. The study covered 23 universities, taking into account their regulations, statutes, strategies, etc. The most important task was to determine the difficulties associated with taking up a career as an athlete and a pupil/student, as well as to compile statistical data showing the percentage of athletes with minor problems in combining a sports career and study or work (DELAB, 2023).

The Polish Ministry of Education and Science also responded to the hardships and requirements imposed on the athletes. In 2020, the National Academic Representation project was launched, which aims to enable the pursuit of a sports career and academic studies at the same time. Thanks to this initiative, students-athletes not only have the possibility of an individual, flexible approach to the organization of classes, but also receive funding for it.

Public and non-public universities were invited to participate in the project, where the number of full-time students is at least 200 and among them are athletes of Olympic training, medalists of sports events such as the Olympic Games, European Games, World Senior Championships and European Senior Championships, as well as medalists of Universiades (World University Games) and academic world championships and also students-athletes with disabilities, including the hearing impairment. In addition, student athletes having a Sport Champion rank or International Champion title are also taken into account (NAR, 2023).

The funding is provided directly to the university and it amounts to PLN 19 800 (approx. EUR 4 300) per year per student-athlete. This sum is intended for organizing 100 hours of individual study program conducted by academic teachers. Lectures take the form of tutoring, thanks to which the student achieves the required learning outcomes in the selected field of study while continuing his sports career. The costs also include e-learning (Polish Ministry of Education and Science, 2023).

In 2020, more than PLN 7.1 million (EUR 1.5 million) has been allocated to the program, which involved 414 student-athletes from 42 universities in Poland. In turn, in 2021, the co-financing increased to PLN 9.5 million (over EUR 2 million), and 502 student-athletes from 37 universities took part in the programme. Almost 60% of the above-mentioned athletes study at one of the six Academies of Physical Education (NAR, 2023).

The implementation of the project coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and the dissemination of remote learning at Polish universities. Interestingly, it turned out to be practical for student-athletes, because remote learning gave the opportunity to have direct contact with these students during multi-day training camps in which they often participate.

Polish universities willingly participate in the project, especially when it comes to sports universities. A common form of facilitating a dual career is the Individual Course of Study. It consists in minimizing the requirements for attendance at classes, which has been provided for in the Act of July 20, 2018 on law in higher education.

The Academy of Physical Education in Katowice is a public university specializing in sport and physical education. It is one of six universities of this type in Poland and the only one in Silesia. Recently, the university was awarded and received the A+ category in the discipline of physical culture science. According to the Act on Higher Education and Science, this proves the very high level of scientific activity conducted by the employees of the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, presented in scientific articles and monographs, patents for inventions, commercialization of research and development results, and the effectiveness of applying for scientific grants through national and foreign competitions (Polish Ministry of Education and Science, 2023).

Student-athletes of the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice also have the opportunity to improve their sports training, using modern research laboratories, e.g. in the strength and power laboratory, hypoxic chamber or human performance laboratory. This is another support in their sports career, and at the same time the opportunity to conduct research and continue education.

Moreover, The Academy of Physical Education University Sports Association Club (AZS) associates about 230 athletes in 20 sections, the majority of whom are university students. This club is known as one of the best sport clubs in Poland and in many Polish sport classifications it is ranked at the top (AZS AWF Katowice, 2023).

In the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, there was created IPPS e.g. Individual Plan and Program of Studies. This system includes individual approach and arrangements for attending classes and exam dates, as well as the possibility of extending the period of study. According to the applicable study regulations, IPPS provides support to a student who “is a member of the Polish National Team or its reserve, or the World University Games team; is an individual sports athlete of Olympic disciplines, and has the First Sports, Champion Sports rank or International Champion title; is a player in a sports team which competes in central championships organized by Polish Sport Associations” (APE in Katowice, 2022).

2. Purpose

The aim of the study was to analyze the number of student-athletes of the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice in relation to the number of participants of the National Academic Representation in Poland. The following research questions were formulated:

1. Which types of universities are most often chosen by student-athletes?
2. What is the participation of students-athletes of the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice in comparison with other Polish universities?
3. Representatives of what sports are the main ones at AWF Katowice?

3. Material and methods

This article analyzes data from the statistics of the Polish Ministry of Education and Science. They concerned all public and non-public

universities that declared their participation in the governmental NRA project. Then, on the basis of this information, those that concerned only AWF Katowice were extracted. The sample consisted of student-athletes who participated in the NRA program in Poland. Statistics are collected and made available to the public in each calendar year with the latest data supplemented.

In addition, it was undertaken to specify the sports disciplines represented by students-athletes of APE Katowice.

4. Results

Based on the collected data on the number of student-athletes at individual universities (Table 1), it can be safely concluded that the leading universities are APE in Poland (almost 60%). It is probably not surprising that sports universities stand out from the rest, although taking into account the number of APE in Poland (6) and the rest of the universities participating in the project (31 public and 5 non-public) it is a great achievement. Moreover, this number is constantly growing. For the total number of NAR participants in 2021, there was an increase of 21% compared to the previous one, and in 2022 it was another 11%.

The number of student-athletes of the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice covered by the program was 140 students in 2020, 179 students in 2021 and 161 students in 2022. The Academy is the university that educates the largest number of student-athletes in Poland (one third of all).

Table 1. Participation of universities/students in the NAR

University types	2020			2021			2022		
	N° universities	N° students	% students	N° universities	N° students	% students	N° universities	N° students	% students
University	13	53	12.8	11	59	11.75	9	58	10.34
University of Economics	2	4	0.97	2	4	0.8	2	4	0.7
Polytechnics	6	24	5.8	5	47	9.36	7	66	11.76
Academies of Physical Education	5	243	58.7	6	289	57.57	6	308	54.9
State Higher Vocational Schools	8	13	3.14	3	3	0.6	6	24	4.3
Other public universities	3	15	3.62	3	12	2.39	3	12	2.1
Public universities	37	352	85.02	30	414	82.47	33	472	84.1
Private universities	5	62	14.98	7	88	17.53	5	89	15.86
Total	42	414	100	37	502	100	38	561	100
APE Katowice		140	33.82		179	35.66		161	28.7

Source: statistics collected by the Polish Ministry of Education and Science.

There are six Academies of Physical Education in Poland - in Cracow, Gdansk, Poznan, Wroclaw, Warsaw and the only one in Silesia - in Katowice. Focusing only on sports universities, APE Katowice also takes the lead when it comes to the number of student-athletes (Table 2). In a report prepared for the Ministry of Sport and Tourism entitled "Dual career of athletes in Poland. Diagnosis of the situation", the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice is mentioned as one of the best universities in Poland in terms of supporting the dual career of students-athletes. More than half of the participants of the NAR project study here.

Over the past three years, the number of student-athletes has been changing. Compared to 2020 and 2021, NAR participants increased

by 28%. In the last year (2022), a decrease of 10% in numbers of students was noticed.

Table 2. Participation of APE Katowice among all APEs in Poland

University	2020			2021			2022		
	N° universities	N° students	%	N° universities	N° students	%	N° universities	N° students	%
Academies of Physical Education	6	243	100	6	289	100	6	308	100
APE Katowice	1	140	58	1	179	62	1	161	52

Source: own calculations based on statistics from the Ministry of Education and Science.

With regard to sports careers and sports practiced by our student-athletes, the largest group are the representatives of individual sports. Most often it is track and field, swimming or judo. A large team also represents the APE in Katowice in the winter sports, it is as much as 35% of students. Among team sports there are also NAR participants. They are mainly ice hockey and handball players.

In the last three years, the number of sports players has increased - swimming (by 57%), nordic skiing (by 33%), speed skating (by 50%), while the number of biathletes was more than doubled. When it comes to team sports, the number of handball players and ice hockey players remains at a high level, and football has increased (Table 3).

Table 3
N° of students representing sport disciplines at APE Katowice

SPORTS	2020	2021	2022
Soccer	3	3	6
Volleyball	0	1	1
Basketball	2	3	2
Handball	13	17	15
Ice Hockey	10	20	10
Other team sports	3	7	1
TOTAL TEAM SPORTS	31	51	34
Athletics	12	12	8
Swimming	7	10	11
Gymnastics	3	3	4
Nordic skiing	18	23	24
Alpine skiing	13	15	10
Biathlon	4	10	11
Speed skating	8	11	12
Canoeing	6	6	5
Other individual sports	7	13	18
Boxing	2	1	1
Judo	15	13	9
Fencing	7	5	7
Wrestling	3	3	3
Other combat sports	4	3	3
TOTAL	140	179	161

Source: APE in Katowice.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The creation and implementation of the NAR project gives a new perspective at the problems related to dual career. Student-athletes received support from the Polish government, and thus new opportunities were created for them. State funding and the individual approach of the university made it easier to combine an athlete's career with education. The proof of this is the growing number of project participants every year.

Moreover, system IPPS created by APE Katowice helps students-athletes to a large extent in reconciling a sports career with education, primarily through individual arrangements regarding attendance at classes, flexible dates of classes and exams, and the possibility of extending the period of study (Tomik et al., 2022). International research has shown that properly prepared support systems for student-athletes at the university affect not only facilitating combining two careers, but also their academic achievements and overall satisfaction (Henriksen et al., 2014). At the same time, the lack of such help leads to difficulties and problems in their sports career and education (Ryba et al., 2015). By taking the necessary steps to search for new educational solutions, new scientific and sports opportunities, the university could attract many valuable student-athletes, which would certainly translate into better results in university rankings.

The following conclusions were drawn from the conducted research:

1. The universities most often chosen by students-athletes are the Academies of Physical Education. This is a satisfactory result due to the small number of such universities in Poland (only 6). This may be due to the tradition of these universities related to facilitations for student-athletes and the specificity of offered courses.
2. APE in Katowice is a university that educates the largest number of student-athletes in Poland. In the case of sports universities in Poland (APE) it remains at the level of over 55-60%, and compared to the national background, it is one third of all student-athletes. The reason for this may be the Individual Plans and Study Programs solution dedicated to athletes.
3. The largest group of representatives are student-athletes practicing individual sports, including winter sports. This is over 70% of participants in the NAR program at APE Katowice. The university club AZS AWF Katowice specializes in these sports.

6. References

- Academy of Physical Education in Katowice University Sports Association Club (2023). <http://www.azs.awf.katowice.pl/>
- Aquilina D. (2013). A study of the relationship between elite athletes' educational development and sporting performance. *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 30(4), 374–392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2013.765723>
- Capranica L., & Guidotti F. (2016). *Qualifications/dual careers in sports - Research for Cult Committee of the European Parliament*. Directorate-General for internal policies: Policy Department: Structural and cohesion policies: Cultural and Education.
- Digital Economy LAB (2023). <http://www.delab.uw.edu.pl/>
- European Commission (2012). *EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes*. Official Journal of the European Union. https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/documents/dual-career-guidelines-final_en.pdf
- European Parliament (2003). *Combining sport and education: Support for athletes in the EU Member States*. Luxembourg.
- Henriksen K., Larsen C. H., & Christensen M. K. (2014). Looking at success from its opposite pole: The case of a talent development golf environment in Denmark. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 12(2), 134–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2013.853473>
- National Academic Representation (2023). <https://sportowieczindeksem.pl/>
- Polish Ministry of Education and Science (2018). Act of July 20, 2018 - Law on Higher Education and Science, art. 265.
- Polish Ministry of Education and Science (2023). <http://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/narodowa-reprezentacja-akademicka-iii>
- Ryba T. V., Stambulova, N. B., Ronkainen, N. J., Bundgaard, J., & Selänne, H. (2015). Dual career pathways of transnational athletes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 21, 125–134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.06.002>
- Senate of the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice (2022). Resolution No AR001-005-IV/2022 of 26 April 2022 concerning the establishment of studying regulations.
- Tomik R., Kot K., & Ardeńska, M. (2022). Student-athletes' opinions about the individual plan and program of studies at the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice. *Sport i Turystyka. Środkowoeuropejskie Czasopismo Naukowe*, 5(1), 79–92. <https://doi.org/10.16926/sit.2022.01.04>