High performance athletes at school: A study of conflicting demands
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Overview

- Background
- Literature review revealed
- The essence of the problem
- Schooling models and features
- Research design
- Conclusion and feedback
Research question

- How do different models of schooling in Australia prepare the high performance athlete at school to pursue their sporting ambitions in line with other educational aims?
Research-guiding questions

- What are the differing needs of high school high performance athletes and how might they be in conflict?
- What schooling models exist in Australia for the high performance athlete of school age?
- What are the experiences of the high performance athlete at school within different schooling models?
- How do high performance athletes who have left school identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school model they were in?
Research problem: how did I come to this study?

- Personal interest in school-aged high performance athletes: the experiences of my own children and my personal experience as a teacher.

- Engaging with the literature.

- Towards the crux of the problem: linking these athletes to their experience at school.
Three concurrent phenomena that relate to the problem

One is the increasing range and number of international sports competitions e.g. kayaking.

The second is the younger age of many competitors in traditional and in newer sports e.g. Women’s football.

The third is the requirement for young people to stay at school until they are 17 years old.
Athletes are referred to as within the discipline of sport.

In the past, the term used was ‘elite’. This suggested social status rather than a reflection of performance.

The current term to describe these athletes is ‘high performance’, directly reflecting on what they actually do.

This current term is better matched as these athletes have expert judgements who undertake consistent, accurate and reliable performances (Ericsson & Ward, 2007).
High performance athlete at school

• ‘High performance athletes are both ‘physically’ and ‘mentally’ strong (Rynne, Mallet & Tinning, 2006).

• Engage in 'dedicated practice’ or ‘sustained focussed effort’ to perfect their skills (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993).

• Performance levels of each athlete therefore will vary according to the amounts of ‘deliberate practice’ they complete (Ericsson, Charness, & Feltovich, 2006).

• May have ‘innate’ or ‘inborn’ talent (Colvon, 2008).

• There are increasing numbers of high school students in Australia who are identified as high performance athletes as they engage in competitive sports at the high levels of state, national and international (ACE, 2009; ASC, 1994,).
Literature review revealed:

These students are struggling to cope with:

• **Time and allocation constraints** (Burden, Tremayne & Marsh, 2004; Radtke & Coalter, 2007)

• **Demands of the school curriculum** (Radtke & Coalter, 2007)

• **Fatigue and recovery** (Monti & Stone, 2004)

• **Additional nutrition requirements** (Department of Education, Victoria, 2006)

• **Inequities** (Broom, 1980)
The essence of the problem:

- These high performance school aged athletes are attempting to complete educational aims and high levels of sporting demands simultaneously.

- For many others, meeting one of these two sets of demands is considered a full-time occupation.
Schooling models
1. Government and Non-Government schools including the in-school programs: Excellence, Scholarships, Leadership and Specialised e.g. Surfing.
2. Sport High Schools and Colleges e.g. Westfield Sport High School
3. Specialist High Schools.
4. Specific High Schools.

External Sport Programs
1. Australian Institute of Sport (AIS).
2. State Academies e.g. Queensland Academy of Sport (QAS).
4. Rural Academies.
5. High Performance Academies.
Features of schools that could be relevant are:

1: **Pastoral care** (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2009; Sawir, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia, & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2009)

2: **Social development of student** (Arnold, 1984; Bloyce & Smith, 2009)

3: **Wellbeing, leadership, culture and life skill, values and ethos education** (Ferguson, 2009; Lines & Gallasch, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008)

4: **Goal setting for career and sport pathways** (Burden, Tremayne & Marsh, 2004; Council, 1992; Fogarty & McGregor-Bayne, 2008)

5: **Self esteem awareness program** (Barkhoff, Heiby & SELF Research Centre. Conference, 2004; Cheng, Marsh, Dowson & Martin, 2006; Haslam, 2009; Marsh, Hey, Roche & Perry, 1997)

6: **Welfare, organisation, time constraints and behaviour education** (Mullis, Byno, Shriner & Mullis, 2009; Wilson, Starvos & Westberg, 2008)
Continued…

- **7: Skill development and physical literacy** (Baker, Cote & Abernethy, 2003; Barnett & Australian Council for Educational Research, 2009; Sport for Life Brisbane, 2010)

- **8: Specific technical training and the Talent Sport Program (TSP)** (Department of Education New South Wales, 2010)

- **9: Nutrition and diet education** (Blanksby & Whipp, 2004; Ford, 2008)

- **10: Drug, alcohol and sex education awareness** (Monti & Stone, 2004)

- **11: Injury prevention and rehabilitation** (Miller & Nelson, 1973)

- **12: Strength and conditioning sessions** (Miller & Nelson, 1973)
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13: Coaches, facilities equipment, and major competition information (Rynne, Mallett & Tinning, 2006; Turner & Robinson, 2001)

14: Life after sport programs (Burden, et al., 2004; Price & University of Wollongong, 2007)

15: Support networks e.g.: AIS, ASC, NTID and SAS/SIS (Dagley, 2004; Rynne, et al., 2006; Rynne & University of Queensland(UQ), 2008)

16: Teaching of the ‘science of the sport’ programs (Shilbury, Popi, Sotiriadou, Kalliopi & Green, 2008)
Research design

- An interpretivist, symbolic interactionist paradigm (Blumer, 1969).

- Data collection involving in-depth interviews, document analysis and field observations.

- Sampling: ‘purposive’ as it is deliberate, having some ‘purpose’ or ‘focus’ in mind (Punch, 2005).
Participants will include: athletes who were school-aged high performance athletes (ethics), school officials and parents.

Substantive knowledge about the best schooling models.

Successful preparedness of these athletes to pursue their sporting ambitions in line with other educational aims.
Conclusion:

Significance: Why should we care about high performance athletes at school?

We need to care as:
- These young people go well beyond the ordinary.
- They need help to cope better in their demanding lives.

Search for:
- What do these students look for most in their schools?
- What can any school do to meet the needs of these young people?
“When considering the stature of an athlete or for that matter any person, I set great store in certain qualities which I believe to be essential in addition to skill. They are that the person conducts his of her life with dignity, with integrity, courage, and perhaps most of all, with modesty. These virtues are totally compatible with pride, ambition, and competitiveness.”

Sir Donald Bradman speaking at his Induction into The Sport Australia Hall of Fame, 1985
Reference list


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Dagley, G. (2004). The Athlete Career Education Program (ACE) : The Usefulness of ACE Services and Counsellor Training. Unpublished PhD, Victoria University, Footscray


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Price, N., & University of Wollongong (2007). *Game of two halves: preparing young elite rugby players for a future beyond the game.* University of Wollongong, Wollongong NSW.


Abbreviations:

Australian Career and Education (ACE)
Australian Institute of Sport (AIS)
Australian Sports Commission (ASC)
National Talent Identification and Development (NTID)
State Academies of Sport (SAS)
State Institute of Sport (SIS)
Queensland Academy of sport (QAS)
Sport Websites:

State Academies web sites:
http://www.qasport.qld.gov.au/sports/cycling.cfm

State wide educational web sites:
www.myschool.edu.au
www.australiannschoolsdirectory.com.au
www.isd.com.au
www.vs.moe.edu.sg
www.schools.nsw.edu.au
www.det.act.gov.au
www.en.wikipedia.org
www.eddept.wa.edu.au
www.education.qld.gov.au

National sporting associations web sites:
http://www.ausport.gov.au

Schooling Models:
http://www.westfieldsports.nsw.edu.au
http://www.matrasport-h.schools.nsw.edu.au
http://www.hillssport-h.schools.nsw.edu.au
http://www.endeavoursports.nsw.edu.au
http://www.kentst.wa.edu.au/cricket/cricket
http://www.amschool.com.au
www.scgs.qld.edu.au/sclorships
http://www.lakeonline.act.edu.au
http://www.kamohighschool.nz
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http://www.raglansurfingschool.nz