

Ilvis Ābeļkalns

University of Latvia, Latvia

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF FOOTBALL CLASS IN GENERAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study “Specific Features of Football Class in General Education Schools” is to study and analyse specific features of football class in general education schools as well as give recommendations to football club “Metta” and school administration. The author of the study performed qualitative and a quantitative research, the obtained data were analysed using such programs as AQUAD Seven, EXCEL data statistical analysis methods – descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, factor analysis, content analysis.

To obtain data there was semi-structured interview with predetermined set of open questions used in the present work. As a result, the factors prompting dual career in football players, as well as benefits and drawbacks of creating “football class” and working with students on daily basis were found out.

The author has arrived at the conclusion that such “football classes” have positive impact on the team microclimate, and they also save time. Using special programme in secondary school helps to balance study plan, and interorganizational communication should be improved to successfully deal with various questions.

Keywords: *dual career, football, football class, students, study programme.*

Introduction

Sport is an important part of social and cultural life of 21st century. It is not considered only a hobby or free time activities, but it also plays crucial educational, social, economic and health improvement role in European community. Sport is a compulsory part of the curriculum in general education schools, but this is not enough for students who wish to improve their physical condition and master one of the various kinds of sport. They need to attend additional classes which are not included in

the school curriculum, participate in study groups, visit sport schools, sport clubs, thus, students' activity schedule becomes too intensive which in turn has negative impact on studying and training process in general.

To pursue dual career, learners-athletes spend much time on their training routine. Each year both curriculum tasks and training activities become more advanced, with higher intensity of training load and growing frequency of sport competitions. This undoubtedly leads to the point when one needs to choose whether to pay more attention to his/her academic studies or training routine to build sport career in future. Football popularity in Latvia has declined dramatically reaching its lowest point – 131st place in FIFA ranking (Latvijas Futbola federācija, 2017). Nevertheless, children and young people are interested in football. The author of the present work searches for the factors determined by the age group. With the maturation of young footballers and increasing of training load studying process has not been paid enough attention to. The research focuses on how the creation of a football class in general educational schools promotes students-athletes' dual career development.

In accordance with Stambulova's (2010) interpretation, "dual career" is a harmonized activity process when an athlete has been developing his physical and academic competence as well as stimulating his psycho-social and psychologic progress (Stambulova, 2010).

The goal of a football class is to ensure growth and development of young athletes without lowering requirements of the National educational standard or reducing training load.

It should be noted that general secondary education helps to acquire skills, attitudes and values which are crucial for higher education studies and the choice of future profession, therefore, this education stage must introduce learners to versatile creative activity experience, thus motivating them to further develop their skills. General secondary education stage should give an opportunity to creatively express oneself in those areas the one is talented in and can continue developing through further education stages. As most of the learners of this age group have not yet decided about their further study direction and are prone to radically change their mind, opportunity of creativity expression must be included in all study programme directions and study subjects (Valsts kanceleja, 2012).

Fernate (2008) in sport theory points out that in the age group of 16 years the main emphasis is put on specific performance and physical condition characteristic of the particular kind of sport. Technical and tactical instruction specific to the particular kind of sport and performance in competition circumstances is accentuated with the integration of cognitive and emotional development. Young football players of this age group are advised to have specific technical, tactical, psychological and

physical training 9 to 12 times a week (Fernāte, 2008). From the above mentioned it is understood that developing learners' dual career it is significant to organize compact studying and training environment which is related to the social setting of an athlete's daily routine. Family, childhood experience, peers, friends, school environment, mass media have the greatest influence. Sport with its specific activity impact is one of the most important personality development environments both in socialization and enhancing individual competences. This impact is expressed the most in the age of adolescence. Specific environment factors in sport are:

- competition circumstances,
- continuous and monotonous repetitive activity,
- frequent influence of stress situations,
- behaviour of a personality in circumstances of maximum training load,
- expressed influence of achievement motivation on personality performance evaluation (Malina, Clark, 2003).

Education environment, in turn, has been defined as purposefully organized environment (certain set of material, social and mental conditions), where learners form their experience, values, skills, knowledge and attitudes towards themselves and the surrounding world. This is the environment which is created by a person and environment which plays great role in the creation of a person (Šūmane, 2004).

There are similar classes of ice hockey and basketball as well as general education schools with orientation to music and arts created in Latvia.

The aim of the research: to study and analyse specific features of football class in general education schools and give recommendations to football club "Metta" leaders.

Looking at general education law in the Republic of Latvia it is seen that general secondary education curriculum is determined by national general secondary education standard. General secondary education programmes are divided into the following directions:

- General education study direction determined by programme group without specially emphasized study subjects;
- Humanitarian and social study direction determined by programme group with enhanced emphasis on humanitarian and social sciences study subjects;
- Study direction of mathematics, science and technics which is determined by educational programme group putting special emphasis on the related study subjects;
- Professional study direction which is determined by educational program group where professional orientation (e.g. in art, music, commercial sciences, sport) has been accentuated.

General education programmes are implemented in secondary schools or gymnasiums where full primary education curriculum has been accomplished. A gymnasium basically carries out only general secondary education programmes but there may also be completed a part of primary education curriculum starting from Form 7. At least 2 or 3 educational programme directions is a must in gymnasium. Learners of the same class belong to one educational programme direction (Saeima, 1999).

General secondary direction-oriented programme (code: 31014011) beginning with Form 10 has been implemented in the target school of the present research. The programme focuses on commercial sciences or is sport-oriented (football).

Research Methodology

Research was performed, interview questionnaire as measuring instrument was created taking into consideration similar published studies of high-performance athletes' dual career (Wylleman, Lavallee, 2004; Aquilina, 2009). Eight teachers and trainers of the sport school took part in the present research. Three of them were "football class" teachers with work experience from 4 to 20 years, and five were sport school trainers with work experience from 5 to 12 years.

The obtained data were processed and analysed by qualitative data analysis program AQUAD Seven, EXCEL data statistical analysis methods – descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, factor analysis, content analysis.

There was conducted semi-structured interview with predetermined set of open questions applied in the present work. Using this type of the interview allows to ask additional questions in the process of the interview and obtain more detailed information if required. Open questions, in turn, reduce tendency to give fixed answers, and thus unbiased data can be obtained (Geske, Grinfelds, 2006).

Individual interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed for further analysis.

Before the interviews were performed the author of the research had personally met 8 respondents – 5 men and 3 women in order to receive their consent to be interviewed and inform about the purpose of the interview. All the obtained data and opinions only appear aggregated. All the interviews were audiotaped. The length of the performed interviews corresponded to the expected – 20 to 30 minutes.

The aim of the interviews was to collect information, views and opinions about specific features of football class in general education schools, about how young football players managed both studies at school and training routine.

Within the present research document analysis was performed in order to compare learners' average grades in study subjects (mathematics, Latvian, foreign language).

Results

The present research focuses on young football players' dual career in sport and education. Therefore, to obtain more credible data, all the respondents were divided in two groups. Respondents of the first group (R1-3) work at school, but respondents of the second group (R4-8) work at football school.

At the beginning of the study it was found out why education was important to young football players. The respondents gave long and exhaustive answers putting special emphasis on education as a means of gaining stability and a place in the society. Education gives more comprehensive self-understanding, and knowledge helps to obtain better results in sport. The author of the study performed data analysis using the programme AQUAD 7 and arrived at the conclusion that the respondents stressed the importance of future profession, but school representatives, in turn, emphasized the role of education and knowledge played in self-development and further self-advancement (descriptive code "advancement" was mentioned 10 times).

Dual career in the contest of the present research consists of two components – sport and education, therefore, it is crucial to learn respondents' opinions about what knowledge and skills young footballers developed outside the mandatory curriculum. R2 states: *"My long practice at school shows that young athletes and musicians who participate in different after-school activities usually also study well, they are focused, tend to achieve their aims and are able to manage their time."* R5 claims that *"students are able to work in a team, learn to listen to each other, respect each other"*. R8 asserts that *"football is a game where one has to make decisions independently and very quickly and take responsibility for his/her decisions. Making decisions and acting on them is crucial. Smart football player is a good player, and our players show high intellect both on the field and elsewhere"*.

Performing opinion analysis, the author concluded that learners-athletes (football players) learned from each other, gained life experience.

There were factors leading to the creation of "football classes" found out in the process of the research. The respondents R4-8 expressed the same opinion about young football players' age impact on the increase of training load and curriculum advancement – the older the athletes, the more school subjects to study and the higher intensity of training load. This resulted in learners-athletes' difficulty to manage their school studies and

high-intensity training routine. Athletic achievements can be improved by ensuring proper study and training environment. R1 states that “...it was a new challenge to attract pupils, popularize healthy life style.”

The author proceeded with clarifying the criteria of creation of “football classes”. Summary of respondents’ opinions showed that young football players were invited to voluntarily join a football class but with the preference to select the most talented adolescents according to the age group where there are football players no older than 14 years and age group with the players no older than 15 years (U14, U15, etc.) beginning with Form 7. Presently, on average there are 7 to 10 football players in one class, and they are put in one parallel class so that educational work could be planned more easily. Table 1 reflects the benefits and drawbacks observed working with “football classes” for 4 years. R1: “...on the whole, weighing all pros and cons I can admit that there are more positive things, let’s say, 60/40”.

Table 1. Benefits and drawbacks of “football classes”

| Benefits of a “football class” | Drawbacks of a “football class” |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training and studies are organized at the same place; - Unity of the team; - Predictable sustainability of the football club; - Trainers belong to the school system; - The school is attractive to more pupils; - The school becomes more prestigious; - The number of boys in secondary school grades increases; - Socialization of class mates; - More free time obtained due to organization of training activities and studies at the same place; - Close cooperation between trainers and class teachers; - Learners improve their time management skills. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupils need to change educational institution; - More complicated lesson planning; - Less free time; - Football school gives higher evaluation to football priority; - Some learners must spend more time on their way to and from school; - Planning common school events. |

In order to improve football players’ dual career, it was important to find out what aspects interfered with development in both directions. The main factor mentioned by the respondents was lack of time (descriptive code “lack of time” was mentioned 12 times) followed by “lack of motivation” (8 times) and fatigue (6 times). R3 pointed out: “...sometimes after a morning workout he is sitting at the desk with a dazed look in the eyes struggling with fatigue...”. Studying the importance of “football classes” the respondents were asked to tell about football players’ scores in study subjects. Analysing learners’ average grades in study subjects (mathematics, Latvian, foreign

language) the author of the present work came to the conclusion that football players' average grade was higher (7, 19) than class average. This fact was also mentioned in respondents' answers. R2 claimed: "...generally football players are good learners; comparing scores in all subjects I can say that they show better results in Math than language subjects and literature...". The author assumed that this could be related to football players' thinking speed and logical thinking which was crucial for successful football match. R5 stated: "in our sports school we are always aware of our athletes' grades as we have good cooperation with the teachers. There have even been cases when a player is not allowed to take part in a football match because of low grades...".

During the interviews the respondents were asked to suggest how studying and training process in "football classes" can be improved in future. Summing up the results there appeared a tendency – R1-3 wished better communication from football school (descriptive code "communication" was mentioned 13 times). R2 pointed out that "...we plan different school events, excursions, and on the day of an event football players are absent because they are in a training camp. As they (football school) do not inform us beforehand we do not know whether football players can attend our planned events". The respondents also suggested organization of educational seminars about training routine, dual career, time management for learners, parents, trainers and teachers.

Discussion

According to Wylleman, Lavalée (2004) dual career of young athletes begins to develop at the age of 13 to 15 when sports specialization stage starts, and fundamental sports skills are mastered. This stage usually runs parallel to studies at secondary school and higher educational institution. Figure 1 reflects dual career development stage of elite athletes (in the oval) corresponding to the situation in Latvia.

| | | Dual Career | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|----|--|
| AGE | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | |
| Athletic Level | Initiation | Development | Mastery | Discontinuation | | |
| Academic Level | Primary education | Secondary education | Higher education | | | |

Figure 1. High performance athletes' dual career development stage

In the figure a straight line marks the period conforming with the age of 13 when secondary schools/gymnasiums carry out a part of primary education programme beginning with Form 7, while, at the age of 15, beginning with Form 10, dual career is being developed expeditiously acquiring general secondary direction-oriented programme (code 31014011) with more profound studies of commercial sciences or sports (football). There is a study plan with the subjects of the programme reflected in the Table 2.

The respondents R5 and R6 told that secondary school learners studying in “football classes” had 8 lessons and 2 training workouts a day: “*some mornings start with a workout, other mornings we have 2 or 3 lessons followed*

Table 2. Study subjects and lesson plan of general education secondary school professionally oriented direction (football) programme

| Study subjects | Total | 10 th grade | 11 th grade | 12 th grade |
|---|-------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Latvian | 210 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| First foreign language (English) | 315 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Second foreign language (German or Russian) | 315 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Mathematics | 525 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Informatics | 105 | 2 | 1 | |
| Sports | 420 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Biology | 210 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Natural sciences | 210 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| History of Latvia and the world | 210 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Literature | 315 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Fine arts | 70 | 1 | 1 | |
| Economics | 105 | | 1 | 2 |
| Geography | 105 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Culturology | 105 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Politics and law | 70 | | | 2 |
| Psychology | 70 | 1 | 1 | |
| Health education | 35 | 1 | | |
| Basics of general pedagogy | 35 | 1 | | |
| Basics of public speech | 70 | | 1 | 1 |
| Football teaching and training methods | 175 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Organisation of sports events | 35 | | 1 | |
| LEARNER'S STUDY LOAD | 3710 | 36 | 36 | 34 |

by training workouts. Then we proceed with school studies until 4 p.m., then the second workout follows. Football players are free every day at around 6 or 6.30 p.m. and can plan their spare time activities”.

In regard to lesson planning, R3 admitted: “Lesson planning in secondary school is easier as football players have their special study subjects while other learners have other study subjects related to commercial sciences”.

Considering principles of dual career management, not only development tendencies characteristic of modern society (economic, political and social), but also dimensions characteristic of educational management – conceptual, education process management and career education specifics, must be taken into account. It should be noted that both teachers and trainers need to explain to young football players that education is highly important for building their future career.

Figure 2 shows that football players’ average grade is 7.19 which is higher than class average, and this leads to a conclusion that sports helps to improve academic achievements. The same can be said about athletes’ dual career where studying and training process is a means of self-realization and personality development. These days, the process of dual career development is accentuated leaving achievements for the future. Dual career incorporates gaining knowledge, developing various skills and effectively managing education and sport career (Ābeļkalns 2014).

Besides learners’ achievements perceptions of their future life and desired social status are being formed. Young people strongly agree that the best way to earn respect of peers is to have pleasant visual appearance

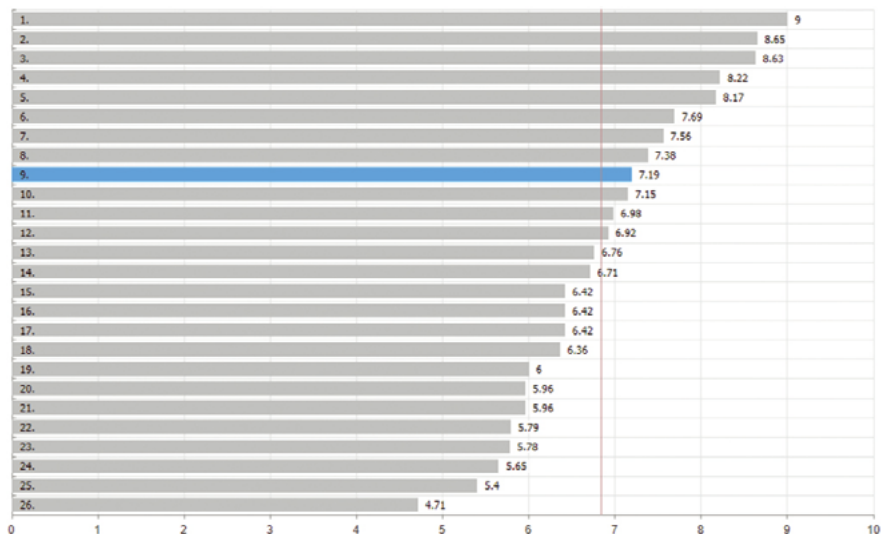


Figure 2. Average grades of a learner-football player

and athletic achievements, academic achievements are mentioned less. This means that positive motivation among young people prevails over negative, destructive motivation (Koroļeva, Rungule, 2009; Акишин, 2013).

Identity formation of young people is highly dependent on the values predominating among them, on friendships they maintain and on the support their friends give. Support from friends can play a significant role in developing sense of belonging to peer group, but lack of supportive friends and attention may lead to negative, destructive leisure activities. Several authors in their research (Koroļeva, Rungule, 2009; Ефимова, Будыка, 2003), point out that most of the time teenagers spend talking to each other when they get together. The authors also state that approximately two thirds of young people spend leisure time together with their friends outside their homes going in for sports or doing something else. "Football classes" in this context is a positive factor because football players constantly communicate with other learners during school lessons, thus, obtaining new skills and moving towards their future career.

Conclusions

On the basis of theoretical and practical analysis of the present research the author concludes that it is educationally, socially, economically important and contributes to health improvement. To pursue dual career, learners-athletes spend much time on their training routine. Each year both curriculum tasks and training activities become more advanced, with higher intensity of training load and growing frequency of sport competitions. This undoubtedly leads to the point when young athletes need to choose whether to pay more attention to their academic studies or devote more time to sport in order to achieve athletic performance mastery in future. The goal of creation of a "football class" is to ensure growth and development of young athletes without lowering requirements of the National educational standard or reducing training load.

Performing the analysis of questionnaire data, the author concludes that in the process of dual career formation young football players consider future profession highly significant, and knowledge obtained at school important to further self-development. Clarifying advantages and disadvantages of a "football class", the respondents admit that there are more advantages, approximately 60%, than disadvantages. A positive aspect is football players' average grade (7.19) which is above class average, and they score better in mathematics than language subjects. Planning of study work both meeting the requirements of training routine and general secondary direction-oriented programme (football) is crucial for successful implementation and continuation of a "football class".

Recommendations: to improve communication with school working on socialization and taking part into study work planning; to attract more learners of a certain age group to “football classes” so that positive team microclimate is created.

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