

From the Sports Career into Professional Life

- an exploratory study with former athletes

Eva Pfaff

PROBLEM

The theme "Transition from a sports career into professional life" is examined in the present study from the retrospective (assessment of the transition). This retrospective view includes a subjective assessment of the sports career, the transition and the professional career up to the time of the survey. The exploratory-heuristic study deals with the investigation of the Successful Transition from the sports career into professional life. On the basis of Success Factors and Other Influences, which affect the transition positively, Predictors for a successful transition should be investigated. They form the basis for developing a tailored advice and support for ex-athletes on the way from competitive sports to professional life.

METHOD

For the present study, qualitative and quantitative methods are combined. The survey of ex-athletes is done on the basis of the problem-centered interviews (s. Witzel., 1982) - consisting of a short questionnaire and a guided interview - and of two tests. The two tests examine the sports-related achievement motivation (SLM according to Allmer) and the ability to cope with stress (SVF, Janke et al. 1997).

Sample

- 37 ex-athletes (21 male, 16 female)
- athletics, cycling, skiing and tennis
- end of career at least 2 years before survey national and international successes
- longstanding, intensive sports career

LITERATURE

Allmer, H. (1973). *Diagnosis of Achievement Motivation*. Dissertation. Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz.

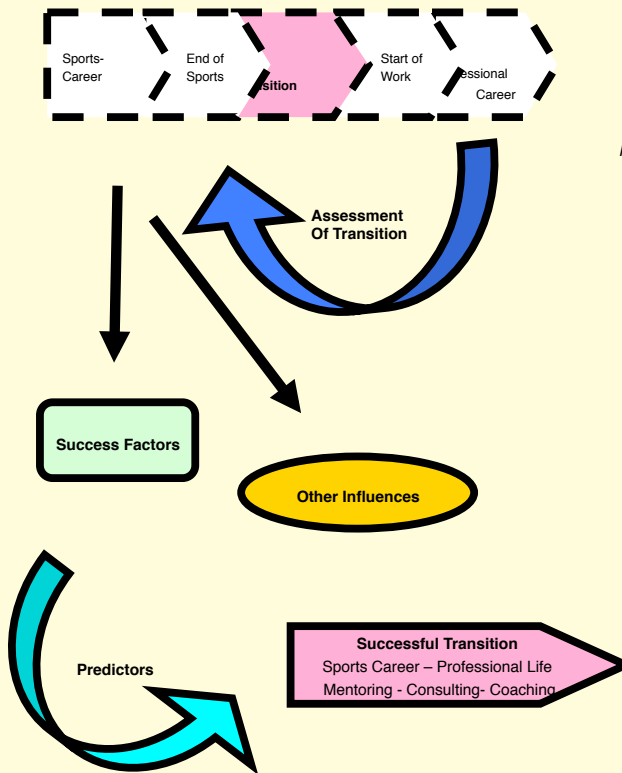
Conzelmann, A., Gabler, H. & Nagel, S. (2001). *High Performance Sport – Personal Gain or Loss?* Tübingen: Attempo-Verlag.

Hackfort, D., Emrich, E. & Papatthaniassou, V. (1997). *Careers after Top-Sports*. Schorndorf: Hofmann.

Janke, W., Erdmann, G., Callus, K. W. & Boucsein, W. (1997). *Copy Questionnaire (SVF 12)*. Göttingen: Hogrefe.

Wittkowski, D. (1994). *The Interview in psychology*. Opladen: Westdt. Publishing Company.

Witzel, A. (1982). *Methods of Qualitative Social Research*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.



Successful Transition - Criteria

The assessment of the transition takes place on the basis of the subjective assessment of satisfaction with their professional career since the end of sports career: How do you assess your professional career until now? Do your current professional employment meet your ideas? From the addition of the two 2-stage answers 3 transition-groups arise:

- Successful transition
- Partly successful transition
- Not successful transition

RESULTS

Successful Transitioners - 30

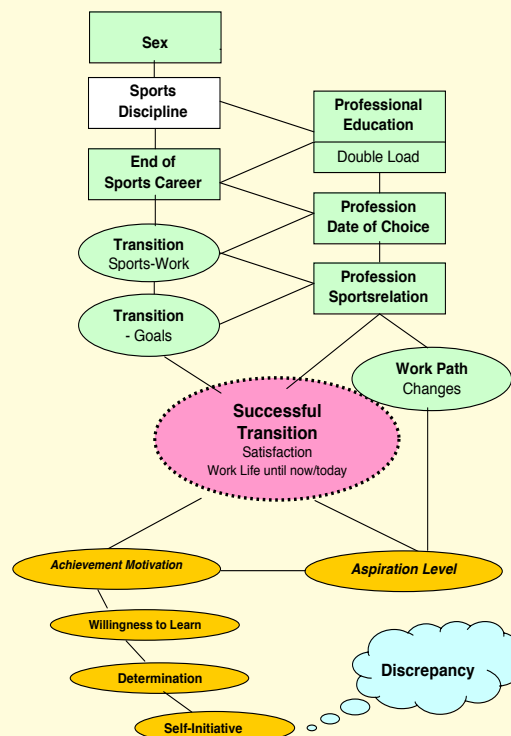
- Vocational training - 22
- partly Double Loads - 17
- earlier choice of profession - 20
- End of Sports Career - Retirement - 21
- Transition – Sports – Work - Chance - 23
- Transition - Goals - 23
- Career Path - no changes - 17

Unsuccessful Transitioners - 4

- male - 4
- no Vocational training - 2
- No Double Load - 4
- later choice of profession - 3
- End of Sports Career - Dropout - 4
- Transition – Sports – Work - Problems - 2
- Transition - No goals - 3
- Career Path - Changes - 3

DISCUSSION

In addition to Success Factors Other Influences of a successful transition were found. Upon reaching professional satisfaction traits like achievement motivation coupled with a realistic aspiration level are supportive. A successful new or re-orientation after competitive sports to a life after sports is primarily managed well by the former athletes who show a Willingness to Learn, a Determination and Self-Initiative. High demands transferred from competitive sports to a professional employment should be supported through appropriate vocational training and Willingness to Learn. Discrepancies between wishes and vision of a professional career and a deviating reality create dissatisfaction and should be eliminated.



Success Factors and other Influences
Explanations: Rectangles = quantitative data, ellipses = qualitative data

CONTACT

Eva Pfaff
www.eva-pfaff.com
E-mail: eva-pfaff@web.de
Friedrich-Ebert-Str. 8, 61462 Koenigstein
Germany