

# From the Sports Career into Professional Life

- an exploratory study with former athletes

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## 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

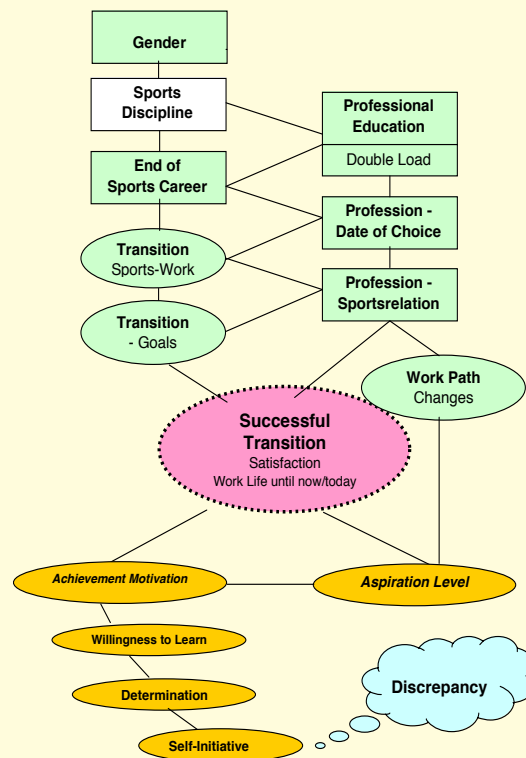
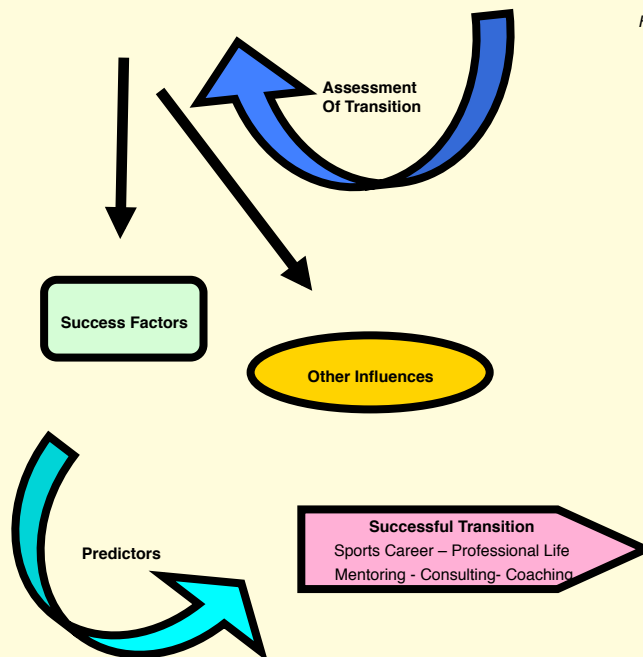
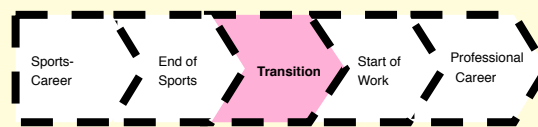
For the present study, qualitative and quantitative methods are combined. The survey of ex-athletes is done on the basis of the problem-centered interviews (s. Witzel., 1982) - consisting of a short questionnaire and a guided interview - and of two tests. The two tests examine the sports-related achievement 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. & Papathanassiou, V.** (1997). Careers after Top-Sports. Schorndorf: Hofmann.  
**Janke, W., Erdmann, G., Callus, K. W. & Boucsein, W.** (1997). Coping Questionnaire (SVF 120). Göttingen: Hogrefe.  
**Wittkowski, D.** (1994). The Interview in psychology. Opladen: Westdt. Publishing Company.  
**Witzel, A.** (1982). Methods of Qualitative Social Research. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.



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

## 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?*

*Does your current professional employment meet your ideas?*

Through 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 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 a *Willingness to Learn*. **Discrepancies** between wishes and vision of a professional career and a deviating reality create dissatisfaction and should be eliminated.

## CONTACT

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