

Dual Career: student-athletes, sport and school dropout

Doppia carriera: studenti-atleti, sport e abbandono scolastico e sportivo

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Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of dropout, i.e. dropping out, in both the sports and school environments among student athletes. The main objective is to identify and analyse the factors contributing to this complex phenomenon, which has a significant impact on the personal and professional development of young athletes. Through a review of existing literature and analysis of empirical data, the research explores the interconnections between sporting pressures, academic challenges and socio-psychological factors that influence dropout decisions. In addition, the study examines the short- and long-term consequences of dropout, both on an individual and societal level. Finally, targeted strategies and interventions are proposed to prevent dropout and promote a healthy balance between sport and education in order to support the success and well-being of student athletes.

Keywords: dropout; dual career; student-athletes.

Sintesi

Questo studio esamina il fenomeno del dropout, ovvero l'abbandono, sia nell'ambito sportivo che in quello scolastico, tra gli studenti atleti. L'obiettivo principale è identificare e analizzare i fattori che contribuiscono a questo fenomeno complesso, che ha un impatto significativo sullo sviluppo personale e professionale dei giovani atleti. Attraverso una revisione della letteratura esistente e l'analisi di dati empirici, la ricerca esplora le interconnessioni tra le pressioni sportive, le sfide accademiche e i fattori socio-psicologici che influenzano le decisioni di abbandono. Inoltre, lo studio esamina le conseguenze del dropout a breve e lungo termine, sia a livello individuale che sociale. Infine, vengono proposte strategie e interventi mirati per prevenire il dropout e promuovere un equilibrio sano tra sport e istruzione, al fine di supportare il successo e il benessere degli studenti atleti.

Parole chiave: abbandono; doppia carriera; studenti-atleti.

¹ The article is the result of a common comparison between the authors. It should be noted that Lucia Martiniello wrote the paragraphs 1 and 2. Mattia Caterina Maietta and Generoso Romano wrote paragraph 3.

1. Introduction

Although Olympic athletes are celebrated for their sporting achievements, they often face serious difficulties in their post-sports careers. Development factors that influence the quality of Olympic athletes' post-sports career transition are important to recognise in the dual career development perspective. Due to intensive academic activities, athletes are often not well prepared for the labour market. If they do not acquire a sufficient financial background during their careers, this can lead to "lack of adequate financial inclusion in their post-career employment and further impact their lives. A successful Dual Career can lead athletes' lifelong excellence. The framework of athletes' DC includes professional planning and the organisation of optimal conditions for their integrated development. growing trend in recent research on athletes' DC also shows interest in studying their support system (e.g., coaches, parents, peers, educators, support staff members) and their perspectives on DC with regard to educational and work support (Stambulova & Wylleman, 2019). The importance of parent and coach support for athletes' DC is illustrated in the athletic triangle, with athlete-parent, athlete-coach and coach-parent relationships (Hakkers, 2019; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Sporting achievements are the basis of DC support and status rights for athletes. According to the European Athlete Dual Career Guidelines (EC, 2012), a talented athlete is recognised by a sport organisation as having the potential to develop an elite sport career. Elite athletes are those who have a professional contract with employer or sports organisation and/or have a recognised status as elite athlete, such as Olympic athletes. Many elite athletes experience difficulties in the transition to post-sports career employment and in fitting into the normal living environment (e.g. regular job, family) (Stambulova, 2003). Reasons for sports career termination (Küttel, 2017) can be related to athletes' employment, education, performance, sport environment, health, family, finances, personal reasons and motivation. With regard to educational status, previous studies have emphasised that athletes' educational achievements positively influence the quality of elite athletes' transition (Cecic'Erpic' et al., 2004; Guidotti et al., 2015). Career transition out of elite sport is a dynamic, multidimensional, multilevel and multifactorial process, in which nationality and culture play a crucial role in postsports careers (Alfermann et al., 2004). Different approaches have been used to study post-sports career transitions. For example, (Küttel, 2017) compared the athletic retirement of former Swiss, Danish and Polish athletes and explored the influence of factors on the quality of the post-sports career transition although athletes often have an adequate level of education, which directly demonstrates the success of DC mechanisms in education, it does not guarantee successful employment. Understanding how different factors contribute to the integrated development of individual athletes to reach their potential in sport, education and post-career sport employment is important for theorists, DC providers and stakeholders working with DC athletes. In order to develop a sufficient mechanism, DC support providers should consider education support along with financial support of athletes during their sporting careers and recognition of study-training ecosystems, based on best practices (Ferjan et al., 2021) for a successful transition to their post-sports career. Competition, both work-related and personal, can generate significant stress. The fear of not being up to scratch, of losing or of being overtaken can lead to constant anxiety. Social media and modern culture often fuel social comparison, leading to feelings of inadequacy and pressure to achieve high standards. The tendency to want to be perfect and avoid mistakes can intensify competitive pressure, leading to a cycle of stress and dissatisfaction. Having many deadlines to meet in a short period of time can cause anxiety and feelings of overwhelm, it is important for student-athletes to learn time management.

Trying to do too many things at once can reduce productivity and increase stress; multitasking is not always productive for everyone. Furthermore, a lack of good time planning and organisation can lead to a feeling of chaos and loss of control. Often the difficulty in delegating tasks can overload a person with work, leading to stress and burnout. Having unrealistic expectations of oneself can lead to frustration and disappointment but too many times looking up to the expectations of family, friends, colleagues or superiors can create significant pressure or the fear of not meeting others' expectations can generate anxiety and stress; lack of free time can also negatively affect physical and mental recovery, leading to isolation and loneliness. Student athletes may experience role conflicts, feeling torn between the identity of student and athlete. This can lead to difficulties in defining their priorities. The coach can be a stressor when he is inflexible in training schedules, while a source of support when he adapts and is understanding of his athletes' demands (<http://www.psicologiadellosport.it>).

Premature specialisation, understood as specific technical training for the acquisition of skills aimed at achieving the best possible result, is one of the most influential causes of the drop-out phenomenon, associated with various outcomes and negative consequences affecting the subject's physical health, the psycho-social aspect and some eating disorders, e.g. in sports requiring aesthetic requirements. In addition to the concept of specialisation we find the concept of a diversified approach or initiation into youth sport represented by the "Developmental Model of Sport Participation" (DMSP) (Côté, 1999; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Côté & Hay, 2002). This framework involves three distinct paths, each centered on the varied advantages that athletic involvement can offer adolescents:

1. **Recreational Involvement:** This track occurs either during the 6-to-12 age range or post-age 13. The initial phase emphasizes intentional play activities, deemed crucial for casual sports engagement. The later phase extends this, prioritizing enjoyment and well-being over competitive outcomes. Intentional play is structured to maximize inherent pleasure.
2. **Elite Performance:** This is a more achievement-focused route. It covers the specialization years (ages 13–15), where youths participate in fewer pursuits—a blend of intentional play and intentional practice. It also includes the investment years (post-16), during which young people engage exclusively in a single activity with a fully deliberate focus.
3. **Elite Performance via Early Specialization:** This path is marked by substantial intentional practice and minimal intentional play. Its context is one that emphasizes performance and success from the very beginning.

The quality of the youth sports experience, according to (Holt et al., 2006), is influenced by the interaction athletes have with significant adults (parents and coaches), which is why it is crucial to clarify the value of this experience with them.

To cope with these stressors, it is crucial for student athletes to develop time management strategies, learn how to deal with stress, take care of their physical and mental well-being, and seek support from coaches, teachers, family members and professionals. The contribution of parents not only through emotional support, but also financially, can also be important for student-athletes to feel less stress. In fact, the absence of scholarships or partial support can have a big impact on perceived increased anxiety.

As mentioned before, perfectionism can also lead to excessively high expectations and therefore many times one decides to abandon one or the other career.

2. Dropout data

In the field of sport, in particular, the failure of these drives can lead to what experts call *dropout*, i.e. the abandonment of sporting activity. This phenomenon has long been the focus of attention not only of those involved in sports psychology, but also of national sports promotion bodies. This is due to the data collected by the National Statistics Institute (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, Istat) and European surveys (EC, 2014), which show that more than a third of the Italian population report leading a completely sedentary life and that our country reports higher levels of sedentariness than the average of other European countries. More and more people aged three and over are practising physical-sporting activities in their free time, from about 34 million in 2000 to 38 million 653 thousand in 2021 (66.2 per cent). Up to 2020, the increase was mainly driven by the increase in the continuous practice of sport (from 18.0% in 2000 to 27.1%), while the occasional practice of sport remained more or less stable (around 9.5%) and the practice of physical activity tended to decrease (from 33.2% in 2000 to 28.1% in 2020). In 2021, continuous sport will decrease (from 27.1% to 23.6%), occasional sport will increase slightly (by 10.9%) and physical activity will increase more strongly (from 28.1% to 31.7%).

The practice of sport remained at or above pre-pandemic levels among the adult population, while it worsened markedly for children and adolescents aged 3-17. In these age groups there was a real collapse in the practice of sport, especially of the continuous type, which decreased by about 15 percentage points (from 51.3% to 36.2%) and was only partly compensated by the practice of some physical activity (from 18.6% to 26.9%), carried out in an unstructured manner and therefore outside the gyms and sports centres affected by the closures. In fact, sedentariness increased from 22.3% to 27.2%. In 2021, 16.8% of sportsmen and sportswomen aged three years and over said they practised sport less than once a week, 49.2% once or twice a week and 34% three or more times a week. Of those who practise sport, 35.6 per cent exercise up to two hours a week, 22.7 per cent devote between two and four hours a week to sport, while for 16.8 per cent the commitment is four hours a week or more. The frequency with which sport is practised is less high among sporty children aged three to five and grows in later ages until it reaches high levels of assiduity among sporty 15-24 year olds who, in 40.6% of cases, dedicate an average of three or more days a week to sport (Istat, 2022). This trend can also be linked to the change in lifestyles brought about by the measures to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, which have for a long time reduced the possibility of sporting activity in the enclosed environments of gyms, swimming pools and sports facilities and outdoor practice in all spaces outside the home.

Over the last 30 years, several authors have tried to analyse the drop-out phenomenon from different perspectives (Carlin et al., 2009) and in different countries (especially in the USA, Canada, Spain, France, Italy, UK) providing data, definitions and classifications of this phenomenon. In Italy, according to an Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) study, around 50% of athletes give up competitive sport before the age of 18, often due to the difficulties they encounter in reconciling sport and study. According to many studies conducted by experts in sports psychology, the main reason is the poor perception of one's own competence in sport, trivially it is the difficulty of accepting a performance comparison against another. This problem also stems from an underlying difficulty that sports clubs are accused of too much focus on performance rather than on competence, i.e. comparison with one's own personal improvements.

We should set up a corporate culture based on competence, on making children understand that to become good at a sport it is necessary to invest in oneself, rather than wasting

resources in the continuous and obsessive comparison with the adversary, if one does not experience sport as a personal satisfaction, one will abandon it as soon as the comparison becomes impossible unless one becomes a world champion, even though one will probably abandon it anyway because of too much exasperation that will have consumed energy along the way.

Having said that, however, one must understand the real phenomenon behind dropout, which is as observable as can be: boys grow up, want to become independent and create their own way especially during puberty. This is the time when instant gratification is necessary, to be sure that they are in the right place and are the right person. One must consider the personal identity of the sportsman, the human value he brings with him: sport must not be an obstacle to personal fulfilment but must foster it. Sport is a context in which one can learn new skills, become autonomous and aware of one's abilities, get involved, collaborate with others, respect rules, and accept the decisions of referees and judges. Although the benefits are widely recognised, in many countries for some years now, there has been a decrease in the practice of sport from an early age, especially among girls, who drop out before even starting a real athletic career.

Understanding the reasons that lead to dropping out of sport can serve those who organise and manage youth sport, but also those involved in health-related policies. *Dropout* is generally defined as the premature abandonment of a potential sports career, i.e. before an athlete has been able to fully realise his or her potential. Of course, there is no single reason for dropping out of sport, as this can be considered a combination of several factors. For example, the difficulty of reconciling school and sport is highlighted by young people as a frequent reason for dropping out; moreover, the period of time in which they begin to commit themselves systematically and intensively generally coincides with their high school years. Other stated reasons for dropping out also include disagreement with coaches, lack of enjoyment, presence of injuries, low perception of competence, influence of other people, poor opportunities for success. International data show drop-out rates in several countries. For example, in the United States the average is around 35 per cent, particularly between the ages of 13 and 18. As far as Europe is concerned, in Norway, the percentage is 22% between the ages of 13 and 16, while in France, similar in age and sport, the percentages in the various studies range between 14 and 17%. As far as Italy is concerned, a study carried out by the CONI School of Sport, entitled "Sport Dropout" revealed the following data: 60% do not practise any discipline, 17% have never practised; 43% have practised and abandoned. Of the 40% who have practised, 50% practise but have changed sport, the other 50% practise and have not changed sport. In a study concerning the youth drop-out of high-level players, it was found that those who drop out participated in training or started training at an early age, thus early.

It is interesting to note, therefore, how the early specialisation of young athletes, together with physical factors, e.g. training patterns, level of maturity; psychosocial factors, e.g. coach, parent and peer influences and various factors mentioned above, interact with each other influencing the decision-making processes that then lead to the phenomenon of dropping out of sport. Dropping out of sporting activity is generally linked to motivational processes, with the decline or loss of motivation being seen as a determinant for leaving the activity, sometimes even with a decrease in confidence in one's own abilities and almost with a sense of personal failure. The perception of competence may also vary over time depending on the situation the athlete is experiencing. The teacher can certainly play an active role in motivating involvement, creating a certain educational climate and thus climate, and thus directing the students' perceptions. When a coach interacts with his

students, whether in training or in competition, he uses the behaviour he considers most appropriate and appropriate and uses a particular type of communication; for example, he may emphasise individual improvement, encourage those who are and emphasise individual improvement, encourage those he sees struggling, often use competition between team members to stimulate team members to stimulate commitment, organising work groups mainly by ability or abruptly when faced with failure or defeat in a competition, in a team sport. In a team sport, make everyone play, or especially the best. In general, coaches who provide poor social support such as: pressure, unrealistic expectations, pressure, unrealistic expectations, lack of empathy, lack of trust in the athlete, an autocratic style and negative attitudes, increase the motivation to dropout and burnout.

In addressing the issue of motivation, however, it is also necessary to reflect on the role of parents, who have a strong influence on the way in which children interpret the experiences they undergo. Unfortunately, with today's cultural models transmitted by the mass media, it is nowadays quite common to meet parents who urge their child not so much to do their best, perhaps even accepting some limits or difficulties, but above all to do better than others, to surpass a friend, a companion, in a continuous comparison with someone else. In sport, for example, the way parents react to victories and defeats sends strong messages to children about the value placed not only on the sporting experience, but sometimes also on the child himself as a person. Parents must also try to clearly distinguish between their own motivations and those of their child. There are many reasons why it pleases them for their children to participate in sport, perhaps they themselves were former athletes and want their children to experience this as well. They must, however, consider that motivation is individual and that their own may not coincide with their children's motivation. Lastly, parents should also be aware that in sport, as in all other contexts of life, they represent role models and behavioural models; in the educational process, a fundamental aspect is the consistency between what adults ask of children and their own behaviour: if there is consistency, the educational message passes clearly, but if there is a discrepancy between what is said and how one behaves, the behavioural aspect becomes predominant. Parents in particular represent models of critical behaviour, such as those related to self-control, frustration management or aspects of sports ethics. In general, studies examining parental behaviour in relation to youth sport have found that parental support, encouragement, involvement and satisfaction involvement and satisfaction lead to an increase in the child's enjoyment and intrinsic motivation. Conversely, high parental pressure, high expectations, criticism and low support reduce the sense of and lead to anxiety, abandonment and burnout. From a motivational point of view, the influence that peers and friends can have in this respect should not be overlooked either. During training and competitions, boys and girls interact a great deal with peers, experience meaningful peer relationships, and gain important information from peers about their own level of ability and competence. Moreover, as children grow, moving from childhood to adolescence, the judgement of peers progressively acquires greater value and weight in the evaluation of aspects of the self, such as, for example, motor competence. It is therefore important for children to become aware of the impact that their own attitudes and behaviour can have on their peers, to reflect on their own reactions in emotionally charged moments and on the effects that comments and observations can have on others, to learn in training behaviours that can not only be useful from the point of view of the group climate, but also have a positive impact on performance itself. Peer relationships play an important role in youth sport. If the youngster has a positive relationship with his or her peers, this relationship will strengthen their enjoyment of and commitment to the activity; conversely, if the youngster is in conflict, commitment and motivation will decrease.

Participation together with best friends leads to increased commitment and involvement in sport. The peak of sporting activity is between the ages of 11 and 14.

Immediately afterwards, the decline begins: among adolescents in particular, the practice of sport declines by around 10% per year (Istat, 2022).

In presenting and commenting on the data, there is often an attempt to convey the message that this abandonment is mainly due to insufficient motivation for sport, i.e. commitment on the part of adolescents, who are easy prey to video games or other more convenient and immediate entertainment. We seem to be witnessing, once again, the adult world's attempt to offload its responsibility, making it appear that the adolescents' estrangement from sport is essentially the fault of their ineptitude and inability to grasp and pursue the values of sport. Perhaps it is precisely the world of sport, the one in which adults dominate, with its rhythms, interests, and exasperations that fuels unease to the point of producing malaise and sporting maladjustment instead of those aspects of well-being and inclusion that the rhetoric of sport is always so quick to celebrate.

Perhaps, at the age of 14, with already several years of sports practice behind him, the estrangement is nothing more than the result produced by the accumulation of "sports toxins". Just think, to give just one example of the toxins of prioritising results: one demands the harvest without having had the patience to sow and wait for the rhythms of growth. In the world of sport, there seems to be no time to wait.

The boys are placed on a path where selection is both the rule and the final outcome.

One ends up in a funnel into which many enter and from which few pass, because it is openly stated that the goal is for few to pass.

If you can't break through the tight constraints that sport imposes, sport abandons you, and the teenager is left with no choice but to take note, wounded and defeated, sometimes irreparably as early as 14/15 years of age. Competition is an integral part of the sporting experience, sport teaches and spurs one to always give one's best, not to fight to eliminate potential opponents.

On the contrary, the opponent is the most precious thing there can be, since without it, without confrontation and competition with it, it is not possible to discover and improve one's own value. In fact, the highest gift that sport can give us is not victory always and in any case, but the awareness of how much we are worth, of how much we could be worth and therefore of our limit, individually and as a team. When things work out, the adult sportsman is aware of all this and helps, or rather "trains", the boy first and the young man later to express the best of himself in sport.

When the adult is unwilling, unable or unable to cope, perhaps it is up to the youngest to lend a hand to change things, to change the perspective: to move from selection that excludes to challenge that involves.

Young people can help sporting adults by remembering and asking them to perform four actions that are of fundamental importance to a teenager:

- "point me to my quality";
- "tell me what my task is";
- "show me where I can go";
- "sense the dream I carry in my heart".

When we talk about dropping out of sport we are actually talking about a rather

heterogeneous phenomenon. It must first be made clear that the phenomenon of dropping out is not necessarily linked to a loss of motivation and that it is not necessarily a choice dictated by the will of the individual. In fact, there are forms of abandonment experienced as forced choices (Sarrazin & Guillet, 2001), such as when an athlete suffers a serious injury, when he/she is dismissed from the team, and when there is a lack of external resources to allow him/her to continue the activity, e.g. financial means or suitable facilities and equipment. With respect to voluntary withdrawal, however, two sub-types can be distinguished (Petlichkoff, 1992). The first of these consists of a withdrawal linked to a desire to devote oneself to other important commitments, e.g. family, school or professional, or simply to a greater interest in other activities (Jiménez et al., 2006). In this case, the subject can still be said to be satisfied with their sporting experience. The second type of voluntary withdrawal, on the other hand, would occur when excessive pressure is exerted on the athlete, when the coach adopts an aggressive style (<https://www.itcc.it/assertivita>), or simply due to a lack of success. This second form of intentional dropping out therefore tends to be characterised by deep dissatisfaction, from which forms of resentment towards physical activity and sport in general may arise. Experiences of this kind can lead to burnout.

In ten years (2001-2011) among children between the ages of six and ten, continuous sports participation increased by more than five percentage points, from 48.8% to 54.3%.

And in the last year, thanks to a further growth of about three percentage points, the youngest children have gained the primacy of the most sporty in Italy. Almost six out of ten (57%) practice a sport on an ongoing basis, led by swimming and dancing, percentages not recorded at any other age of life (Istat, 2022) a sign that the anti-obesity campaigns aimed at promoting correct lifestyles carried out by institutions, paediatricians, schools, with the involvement of parents, are bearing fruit. As early as primary school, however, Italian children begin to drift away from continuous physical activity and swell the ranks of the sedentary, a parabola that becomes steeper as they get older. What is worrying is not only the abandonment of sport in pre-adolescence and adolescence but also the high number of absolute sedentarians, i.e. those who do not take part in sport (either regularly or occasionally) or any other physical activity. This phenomenon mainly affects girls, with percentages ranging from 24% (between 15 and 17 years of age) to 30% (between 18 and 19 years) of the total. There is no doubt that new technologies play a role in the disconnect between teenagers and sport. The survey showed that young people spend three to four hours a day in front of screens: TV, computer or smartphone. But this is not enough to explain why the sedentary rate among Italian teenagers is more than three times that of their European counterparts. Studies carried out in a number of Italian cities have highlighted two main reasons for dropout the excessive commitment required by studies (56.5%), and the way in which physical activity is the way in which physical activity is carried out, because “doing sport has become boring” (65.4%), “it too much effort” (24.4%) and “teachers are too demanding” (19.4%). “In order to young people to physical activity and sport, it is necessary to offer them new stimuli” (Istat, 2014). Exaggerated agonism, excessive expectations and pressure risk alienating young people from sport. Even unstructured physical activity and non-competitive sporting practice must be promoted more, and this is a challenge that involves sports clubs. But the central role lies with schools, especially in middle and high schools, where sport should be encouraged and incentivised, while today it is considered a waste of time that takes away space from other more important activities. Physical education is an integral part of the psycho-physical development of adolescents, with countries such as France dedicating 15% of the total school time to this activity, a percentage that drops to 7% for Italian schoolchildren.

Approximately one third of European countries are currently working on reforms concerning physical education with various types of intervention aimed at increasing the minimum timetable, diversifying the supply, and promoting the training of those who teach it.

With reference to the reasons for dropping out, in a nutshell we can speak of four categories (Lucchetta, 2018):

- Technical issues: lack of fun, lack of success, competition stress, boredom/monotony, sports injuries, excessive fatigue, exaggerated levels of competitiveness, misunderstandings with the coach. Interpersonal relationships: lack of parental support, group cohesion difficulties;
- Inadequate parent/coach relationship;
- Social context: school difficulties, lack of time, teenage crisis, other interests prevailing, not being able to reconcile with studying, economic crisis;
- Sports context: difficulty in reaching the facility, high costs, inadequate environment, poor facilities, inconvenient hours.

3. Conclusions

To reduce the risk of abandonment, targeted strategies are crucial.

Universities offer greater flexibility through customised school programmes and adaptable sports calendars that can foster a better balance between study and sport (Capranica & Guidotti, 2016; Guidotti et al., 2015). Offering psychological counselling to student-athletes can also improve their resilience and mental well-being (Hakkers, 2019; Stambulova & Wylleman, 2019). Just as creating a supportive environment with trained coaches and parents can reduce the risk of burnout and dropout (Ferjan et al., 2021; Côté & Hay, 2002). Not least, career planning tools and job opportunities could be provided to ease the transition after the sport career (Aquilina, 2013; Ryba et al., 2016). The analysis of dropout among student-athletes highlights the need for an integrated approach involving sport institutions, schools and families. Implementing effective prevention strategies can foster a sustainable balance between sport and education, ensuring the long-term success of athletes in both academic and professional settings. For example, other possible interventions suggested by student-athletes with disabilities have already been discussed for student-athletes without disabilities (Abelkalns et al., 2021) and include financial support, increased tutoring hours and recognition of sports practice within the university curriculum, as well as the facilitation of internal relations between student-athletes and professors and an alliance with the sports federation.

During the review of the existing literature and the study of empirical data, four broad categories of factors associated with dropout came to these conclusions:

- socio-ecological;
- personal factors;
- psycho-social factors;
- factors related to the sporting activity itself.

In the field of sport, the reasons may be low family income, low schooling of the parents or lack of contact with a specialised Physical Education instructor during school.

Socio-ecological factors:

- placement in particularly strict and demanding schools, high dedication to study, low commitment to extracurricular activities, poor time and commitment management.
- motivational orientation dependent on extrinsic and contextual factors;
- laziness;
- negative attitude towards sporting activity;
- lack of fun;
- sense of insecurity about one's abilities and control one's behaviour.

Personal Factors:

- friends who do not frequent the same sporting contexts;
- parents who have been star athletes;
- difficulties in relationships with peers;
- reduced perception of autonomy support from the coach and parents;
- authoritarian style and lack of openness to dialogue on the part of the coach.

Psychosocial factors:

- monotony of training;
- competitive anxiety;
- exaggerated levels of competitiveness;

Factors related to the sporting activity itself:

- high costs;
- inconvenience of schedules;
- inconvenience in reaching the sports facilities.

From an educational perspective, when implementing a dual career programme, there is a need to reformulate teaching methods and strategies. There is a need to reformulate and constantly update the teaching methodology, in order to implement the most appropriate methods and strategies to manage the dual career programme and allow for active participation, an inclusive pathway in which the teacher does not lecture “ex cathedra” but encourages everyone’s involvement (Martiniello et al., 2023). The strategies supporting dropout prevention certainly concern distance learning, synchronous learning, easy accessibility of content and study time management.

Technology has forever changed the way education is delivered. The classroom no longer refers to a physical location, and students can learn from an environment they are comfortable in. E-learning has changed the way students think about education and pursue their degrees. Nowadays, it has become easier to receive a degree or certificate online. Students no longer need to commute to a classroom and are often able to learn at their own pace. All they need is an internet connection to access the lessons and course material. Online learning has been rapidly adopted due to wide-spread access and the many benefits it offers (Ayers, 2018).

Some of the most frequently used tools for distance learning are outlined in Figure 1.

The increase in school curricula and dual career programmes of such tools facilitates the work not only of the teacher but above all of the learner who, as we have amply said, is

busy managing so many commitments concerning not only study but also sporting careers and social life.

E-learning technologies and tools	Examples
Communication	Asynchronous: Email, Announcements, Discussion forum, SMS Synchronous (and asynchronous): Chat, Skype, Messenger, WhatsApp, Viber
Sharing and collaboration	Google Docs, Basecamp, Doodle, Pidgin, Dropbox, YouSendIt, SugarSync, Dropmark, Dropsend
Digital repositories	Google Scholar, ePortfolio, PubMed, IEEE Xplore, Scopus, Web of Knowledge, Web of Science
Assessment	QuizPedia, Moodle, ClassMarker, Propofs, Learningpod, Testmoz, Socrative, Qizizz
Image or photo sharing	Photobucket, Flickr, 500px, Canon Irista, SmugMug, Google Photos
Podcasts and streaming	Podcasts, iLecture, iTunesU, MyPod, ePodcast, Evernote, WriterDuet, Doodle, Google Hangouts On Air, Overcast
Social Bookmarking	Twitter, Pinterest, StumbleUpon, Dribble, Pocket, Digg, Reddit, Slashdot
Social Networking	Facebook, Instagram, MySpace, YouTube, Classmates, LinkedIn, DeviantArt, Qzone
Subscribed content delivery	Google Reader, Bloglines, RSS Feeds, Taboola, OneLoad, OneBrain
Blogs and microblogs	Blogger, Posterous, Dailybooth, Somo, Canva, Twitter, Tumblr, Pownce, MySay
Virtual Worlds	Second Life, Active Worlds, Minecraft, Job Simulator, ourWorld, Twinity, Club Penguin
Management and administration tools	Turnitin, Plagiarism Checker, Gradebook, Moodle, Sakai, Blackboard

Figure 1. Adapted from the original by (Craig et al., 2012).

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